SECTION 1

Social Reform

Guide to Reading

Main Idea
During the early 1800s, many religious and social reformers attempted to improve American life and education and help people with disabilities.

Key Terms
utopia, revival, temperance, normal school, transcendentalist

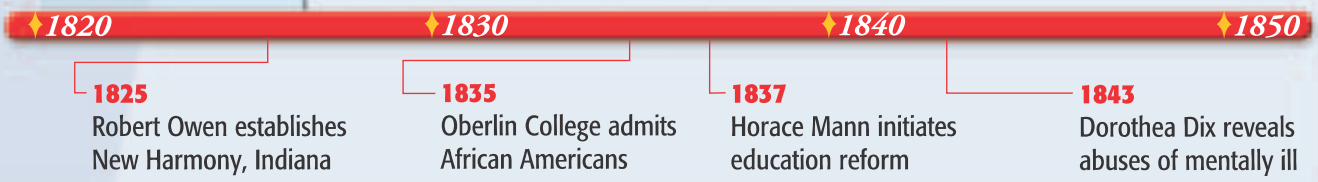
Reading Strategy
Taking Notes As you read section 1, re-create the diagram below and identify these reformers' contributions.

	Contributions
Lyman Beecher	
Horace Mann	
Thomas Gallaudet	
Dorothea Dix	

Read to Learn
- how religious and philosophical ideas inspired various reform movements.
- why educational reformers thought all citizens should go to school.

Section Theme
Civic Rights and Responsibilities
Many reformers worked for change during this era.

Preview of Events





Henry David Thoreau

AN American Story

According to folklore, Henry David Thoreau sat on the hard, wooden bench in the jail cell, but he did not complain about its stiffness. He felt proud that he had stood up for his beliefs. Thoreau had refused to pay a one-dollar tax to vote, not wanting his money to support the Mexican War. As he looked through the cell bars, he heard a voice. "Why are you here?" asked his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson. Thoreau replied, "Why are you *not* here?" He would later write, "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."

The Reforming Spirit

Thoreau represented a new spirit of reform in America. The men and women who led the reform movement wanted to extend the nation's ideals of liberty and equality to all Americans. They believed the nation should live up to the noble goals stated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

The spirit of reform brought changes to American religion, politics, education, art, and literature. Some reformers sought to improve society by forming **utopias,** communities based on a vision of a perfect society. In 1825 Robert Owen established New Harmony, Indiana, a village dedicated to cooperation rather than competition among its members.

Founded on high hopes and sometimes impractical ideas, few of the utopian communities lasted more than a few years. The Shakers, the Mormons, and other religious groups also built their own communities. Only the Mormons established a stable, enduring community.

The Religious Influence

In the early 1800s, a wave of religious fervor—known as the **Second Great Awakening**—stirred the nation. The first Great Awakening had spread through the colonies in the mid-1700s.

The new religious movement began with frontier camp meetings called **revivals.** People came from miles around to hear eloquent preachers, such as Charles Finney, and to pray, sing, weep, and shout. The experience often made men and women eager to reform both their own lives and the world. The Second Great Awakening increased church membership. It also inspired people to become involved in missionary work and social reform movements.

(See page 967 of the Appendix for a primary source account of a revival meeting.)

War Against Alcohol

Religious leaders stood at the forefront of the war against alcohol. Public drunkenness was common in the early 1800s. Alcohol abuse was widespread, especially in the West and among urban workers. **Lyman Beecher,** a Connecticut minister and crusader against the use of alcohol, wanted to protect society against "rum-selling, tippling folk, infidels, and ruff-scruff."

Reformers blamed alcohol for poverty, the breakup of families, crime, and even insanity. They called for **temperance,** drinking little or no alcohol. The movement gathered momentum in 1826 when the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance was formed.

Beecher and other temperance crusaders used lectures, pamphlets, and revival-style rallies to warn people of the dangers of liquor. The **temperance movement** gained a major victory in 1851, when Maine passed a law banning the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Other states passed similar laws. Many Americans resented these laws, however, and most were repealed, or canceled, within several years.

The temperance movement would reemerge in the early 1900s and lead to a constitutional amendment banning alcohol.

Reading Check **Analyzing** What were the effects of the Second Great Awakening?

Reforming Education

In the early 1800s, only New England provided free elementary education. In other areas parents had to pay fees or send their children to schools for the poor—a choice some parents refused out of pride. Some communities had no schools at all.

The leader of educational reform was **Horace Mann,** a lawyer who became the head of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837. During his term Mann lengthened the school year to six months, made improvements in the school curriculum, doubled teachers' salaries, and developed better ways of training teachers.

Partly due to Mann's efforts, Massachusetts in 1839 founded the nation's first state-supported **normal school,** a school for training high-school graduates as teachers. Other states soon adopted the reforms that Mann had pioneered.

Education for Some

By the 1850s most states had accepted three basic principles of public education: that schools should be free and supported by taxes, that teachers should be trained, and that children should be required to attend school.

These principles did not immediately go into effect. Schools were poorly funded, and many teachers lacked training. In addition, some people opposed compulsory, or required, education.

Most females received a limited education. Parents often kept their daughters from school because of the belief that a woman's role was to become a wife and mother and that this role did not require an education. When girls did go to school, they often studied music or needlework rather than science, mathematics, and history, which were considered "men's" subjects.

In the West, where settlers lived far apart, many children had no school to attend. African Americans in all parts of the country had few opportunities to go to school.