As the United States ushered in the nineteenth century, it had developed into a fiercely independent nation. The first half of the century saw not only tremendous growth, but also increasing dissension. Indeed, nationalist and sectionalist interests intensified. These would ultimately lead to the Civil War. But out of the ravage that tore the nation apart, a new union emerged. At the same time, the new industrial age was taking hold. Reviewing the critical events of the nineteenth century will enable you to recognize the forces that shaped the current United States of America.

The information needed to achieve this goal is presented in the textbook *A History of the United States*. The original textbook has been repurposed for this course; that is, it has been redesigned to meet your learning needs as a distance education student. For instance, the repurposed textbook integrates directions and other course components directly into the text. It introduces the material presented in the textbook, and it identifies the learning objectives for each lesson. For your convenience, it includes glossary
terms at the beginning of each lesson. You will find these glossary terms in the section titled “Terms to Know.” The repurposed textbook also includes the review questions and assignments that enable you and your instructor to evaluate your progress throughout the course. In addition, it describes some material presented visually in the original textbook.

The textbook is extremely long. Therefore, it has been divided into the following courses:
U.S. History: Discovery to Jacksonian Era
U.S. History: The Nineteenth Century
U.S. History: World Wars
U.S. History: Post-World War Years

Each course is divided into modules. The three modules in this course are based on Units 4–6 of the textbook. These modules are further divided into lessons, which are based on the textbook chapters.

As previously stated, the goal of this course is to review how the critical events of the nineteenth century helped shape the current United States of America. Module 1 examines the increasing expansion and reforms that were taking place during the first half of the nineteenth century. These years of growth
would nevertheless be marred by the nation’s failure to find a peaceful solution to its problems at home.

Module 2 focuses on the Civil War. It describes not only the causes and events of the Civil War, but also the difficult years of recovery that followed.

Module 3 reviews the new industrial age of 1865–1900. It discusses the nation’s transformation and the many challenges of urban life. The final lesson examines the political climate as the nation was about to enter a new century.

No prerequisites are necessary before starting any course in the series. Although you’re advised to take the courses in sequence, it is not necessary to complete them all. For instance, if you’re interested in the discovery of America, the first course would be a logical place to start. If, however, you would like to learn more about the Civil War, this course is more appropriate. You decide which courses can best meet your needs.

To complete this course, you will need the materials that The Hadley School for the Blind has provided and writing materials in the medium of your choice. If you
are taking the audiostream version of this course, you will also need your own tape recorder.

The review questions that follow each section are for your personal development only. Do not mail your answers to your Hadley instructor. Rather, check your comprehension by comparing your answers with those provided. Note that the answers to some review questions occasionally provide more information than you will find in the textbook.

You are required to submit the assignment that concludes each lesson. Remember to wait for your instructor’s feedback before submitting your next assignment. If you mail your assignments, send them as Free Matter for the Blind provided they are in braille or large print (14 point or larger), or on cassette or computer disk. Mailing labels are enclosed for your convenience. The enclosed contact information card indicates your instructor’s fax number and email address in case you prefer to send your assignments electronically.

Now, if you’re ready to explore the events that took place as the United States entered the nineteenth century, begin Module 1: A Nation Growing and
Dividing 1800–1860.
Lesson 2: Reforming and Expanding

The half-century before the Civil War was a time of ferment in the United States. Factories were built, instant cities were created, immigrants poured in. From Missouri, long lines of wagons headed west to their promised lands—Texas, California, and Oregon. The Americans who stayed home looked for a more perfect society where they lived. These two movements of expansion and reform forced the nation to face an issue many Americans wished to avoid: What was the future of slavery in the United States? Familiarizing yourself with the reform and expansion in the 50 years before the Civil War will enable you to identify the forces that shaped the current United States of America.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to
1. discuss the reform movements that occurred before the Civil War
2. examine the development of the abolition movement
3. describe the westward expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century
4. summarize the conflicts over Texas and Oregon
5. analyze the Mexican War of 1846–1848

Terms to Know

The following terms appear in this lesson. Familiarize yourself with their meanings so you can use them in your course work.

*abolitionist:* a person seeking the legal end of slavery in the United States

*annex:* to attach new territory to an existing area, such as a city or country

*gag rule:* a rule in the House of Representatives in 1836 that prevented the discussion of any antislavery petition

*Manifest Destiny:* the idea, prevalent especially in the 1840s and 1850s, that it was America’s obvious (manifest) and inevitable fate to occupy the entire continent

*temperance:* when referring to alcohol, total abstinence from, or prohibition of, intoxication beverages
Reading Directions

Now read Section 1. After reading this passage, answer the section review questions and compare your answers with those provided.

1. An Age of Reform

In a land where even cities could appear overnight it was easy to believe that a perfect world could be created. Many Americans, like the first settlers, continued to feel that they were a “City upon a hill.” For the whole world to see, they wanted to create a nation where there was no injustice, where all had an equal chance to succeed, and where citizens ruled themselves. They wanted to help the insane, the orphans, the prisoners, and the blind. Americans organized themselves into groups working for peace, for temperance in the use of alcohol, for improved education, for women’s rights—and for the abolition of slavery.

A religious age

There was a Christian church to suit every taste and every temperament. Unitarians tried to bring together all men and women of goodwill without any dogma or
sharp theology. Millerites proclaimed that the world would come to an end in the year 1843 and urged their fellow Americans to repent while there was still time. Shakers and Rappites and others each believed they had the one and only formula for an ideal community. Visitors from abroad came to think that there were as many denominations as there were Americans. A perceptive English lady, Mrs. Trollope, saw religious Americans “insisting upon having each a little separate banner, embroidered with a device of their own imagining.”

The Protestant churches moved away from the old Puritan belief in a stern God who had decreed in advance the fate of each person for all time. Instead churches now emphasized how close each individual was to God and how much freedom each possessed to improve the world and make his or her own future. The world of Christians seemed more democratic, more self-governing than ever before.

These ideas were stressed between the 1820s and the 1850s in the religious revivals which constantly swept the land. Perhaps the greatest single force in this movement was Charles Grandison Finney. He used
every means to excite his listeners to a sense of their
sinfulness and to save their souls. His revival meetings
and those of other preachers brought many Americans
to support a wide variety of reforms.

The Transcendentalists

One small group of intellectuals had an influence all out
of proportion to their numbers. They called themselves
“Transcendentalists.” They believed that the most
important truths of life could not be summed up in a
clear and simple theology but actually “transcended”
(went beyond) human understanding and brought
together all people—high or low, rich or poor, educated
or ignorant. For them God was an “oversoul” who was
present showing everybody what was good or evil. It is
not surprising then that Ralph Waldo Emerson, their
most eloquent voice, declared:

What is man born for but to be a Reformer, a
Reformer of what man has made; a renouncer of
lies; a restorer of truth and good….

Reader’s note: The preceding excerpt is from Ralph
Waldo Emerson’s journals, June 1846. End of note.
Since man was good, in time the whole world would become perfect. Then, of course, there would be no need for government.

Each person had to find his or her own path to heaven. Henry David Thoreau found his lonely way to the good life in a solitary cabin on the shores of Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts. While he stayed there by himself for two years, he earned his living making pencils and only went to town for groceries. He found his own way to protest against the policies of his government that he believed to be evil. When the nation waged war against Mexico—to add new slave states, he thought—he simply refused to pay his taxes. For this he spent only one night in jail, since to his irritation his aunt paid the tax for him. But his explanation for his protest—in his *Essay on the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (1849)—rang down the years and reached across the world. A century later when Mahatma Gandhi led the people of India in their struggle for independence, he declared himself a follower of Henry David Thoreau.

Theodore Parker, another member of the group, was a born reformer who joined movements and attacked
slavery from pulpits and lecture platforms. Bronson Alcott was a mystic and a dreamer who worked for perfection but failed at everything. His educational ideas—which included physical exercises for students, attractive classrooms, and the pleasures of learning—seemed shocking to people of those times when schools were grim and discipline harsh. Alcott’s school failed as did his attempt to build a new Eden at “Fruitlands.” Alcott was never able to earn enough to live comfortably until his practical and courageous daughter Louisa May made a great success with her book *Little Women* (1868).

The Transcendentalists loved to tell what they thought. While Thoreau wrote and Parker and others preached, Emerson both wrote and lectured. Bronson Alcott talked. In his popular “conversations”—wandering monologues—Alcott entertained large audiences in the East and Northwest.

The “conversation” was also used by brilliant Margaret Fuller. She gathered a group of young Boston women around her and instructed them. From this experience came her influential book, *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), which spurred on the women’s rights
movement. Fuller also edited the *Dial*, the Transcendentalist magazine, and worked as a literary critic for Horace Greeley on the *New York Tribune*.

**Reform in education**

America—a new nation, full of open land and business challenges—was a wonderful laboratory for reformers. It is not surprising that the reformers focused on education. The ability to read and write, they argued, was the foundation of a democratic life.

The modern public school movement began in the 1830s in Massachusetts. This was quite natural because the Puritan founders of New England in the 1630s had believed in education. Now, 200 years later, the determined Horace Mann worked to fulfill the Puritan dream of an educated citizenry. He had hated the dull teaching he received as a boy, so he gave up a successful legal career to work for educational reform. Mann was appointed the first secretary of the new state board of education in 1837, and for the next twelve years he tried hard to better the training and pay of teachers, to erect new school buildings, to enlarge school libraries, and to improve textbooks. In other states crusaders followed Mann’s example.
By 1860 the fruits of these efforts were impressive. The states were generally committed to providing free elementary education. Many pupils were still poorly taught, and laws did not yet require all children to attend school, but the nation had begun to realize that education was the foundation of a republic.

For students who wished more than a grammar school education, there were only 300 public high schools in the whole country and almost 100 of these were in Massachusetts. There were, however, an additional 6000 private academies, many of which charged only a small tuition to poor children. By 1860 many states were thinking of providing high schools open to all, but even by 1890 it was unusual to go to school beyond eighth grade.

**Higher education**

Colleges and universities were still small—few had over 100 students—and ill equipped, but their numbers had increased since colonial times. In fact, there had been a college-founding mania. Just as every instant city needed a newspaper and hotel even before it contained any people, so it needed what was loosely called a college. Usually the college was started by one of the
many religious denominations, but the hopeful cities-of-the-future quickly joined in. Julian Sturtevant, founder in 1830 of Illinois College, said, “It was generally believed that one of the surest ways to promote the growth of a young city was to make it the seat of a college.” So before the Civil War 516 colleges were founded—many little better than the private academies—but only 104 survived to the 1900s. These “colleges” were still chiefly concerned with educating young men for the professions and public life.

In many American cities, so-called mechanics’ institutes were started for those who wished to learn the mechanical arts. And in 1824 a new kind of institution of higher learning, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, opened at Troy, New York, to instruct men “in the application of science to the common purposes of life.”

**Education for girls and women**

In colonial days girls were taught the household arts but were not expected to learn to read and write. People thought that “book learning” would put an undue stress on their delicate minds and bodies! It was a long while before women were allowed to show their
full vigor. Progress came slowly and step by step. In Massachusetts girls began to attend summer sessions of the public grammar schools in the late 1700s. Still, in Revolutionary times only about half the women of New England could sign their names. By 1840 the efforts of reformers were showing results, and nearly all New England women could read and write.

But it was a while before women were given their chance at a college education. At first, small numbers of them were allowed to attend the boys’ academies until secondary schools were set up especially for women. Finally in 1836 (200 years after Harvard College was founded for men) Wesleyan College in Georgia was chartered as the first college for women. Then the very next year Oberlin College in Ohio started the new era of coeducation. At last it was possible for at least some men and women to hear the same lectures and treat each other as intellectual equals.

The mentally ill and retarded

For centuries people who were mentally ill or retarded had been treated like criminals and stigmatized as “insane.” They were feared, imprisoned, and tortured. But the American reformers felt pity for them and took
up their cause. Their heroic champion was Dorothea Dix, a young Boston schoolteacher who taught a Sunday School class in the women’s department of a local prison. There she found people, whose only “crime” was their mental illness, being confined and punished.

In 1843, after two years spent investigating the jails and poorhouses in Massachusetts, she submitted her epoch-making report to the state legislature. She had seen the innocent insane confined “in cages, closets, cellars, stalls, pens! Chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience.” She asked the legislature and all her fellow citizens to share her outrage. But old ways of thought and old fears were strong. Many would not believe the shocking truth, and others accused her of being softhearted. She stood her ground.

Finally Dorothea Dix succeeded in persuading the Massachusetts legislature to enlarge the state mental hospital. She began a new crusade—which lasts into our own time—to treat the mentally ill with compassion and medical aid. She traveled in America and in Europe
pleading her humane cause. Seldom has a reform owed so much to one person.

**Women’s rights**

Dorothea Dix always found it best to let men present her findings to legislatures. It was widely believed that there was something unladylike about a woman speaking in public. It was difficult for women to secure permission even to attend reform meetings.

The Industrial Revolution had freed many women—married and unmarried alike—from having to make many of the things necessary for the home and family. While in the early days thread had to be spun and cloth woven in each household, now cloth was mass-produced in factories. Crude, ready-made clothing could be bought in stores. At the same time, the role of the homemaker became more specialized. Now, as factory processes made the price of manufactured goods cheaper, more women could afford to buy many of the things they had once made for themselves. No longer did they have so many of the varied tasks of the frontier wife. Women found new work outside the home. The factories of Lowell and other New England
towns were largely staffed by women. And the new public schools created jobs for women teachers.

By the rules of English law, brought here in colonial days, married women had no rights to property—in fact their only legal existence came through their husbands. All of a woman’s property became her husband’s when she married, including her wages if she worked. She could not even make a will without his approval!

The lowly position of women had long been obvious to some women. The strong-minded Abigail Adams, for example, had made the point again and again to her husband, President John Adams. But now in an era of reform, when women were eager to lead movements to improve education, to treat the insane more humanely, and to free the slaves, the rights of women seemed essential to a better America. A new status for women—their opportunity for an adequate education and the right to speak out in public—would mean a richer life for all.

Leaders of the women’s rights movement

Two energetic and outspoken reformers, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, organized a Women’s
Rights Convention that met at Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19, 1848. The convention finally issued a clever statement based on the Declaration of Independence. The preamble stated that “all men and women are created equal.” Their list of grievances was not against King George but against men, who had deprived women of their rights. They demanded that women “have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.” They even went so far as to demand the right to vote, although many of the women delegates feared this was asking too much.

Similar conventions were held in other states. But there were plenty of people foolish enough to think that they could stop the movement by breaking up the meetings. In 1851, when the Ohio convention in Akron was disrupted, a careworn black woman of commanding stature rose and, to the surprise of all, began her eloquent appeal. The unexpected speaker, named Sojourner Truth, had been born a slave in New York. She replied to a minister’s charge that women needed special assistance from men by pointing out that she had never received any help from men.
I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns.... And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear de lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen ‘em mos’ all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?

It took a while, but within a generation Sojourner Truth’s message about the equality of women began to spread across the land.

The reforming women, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were, of course, widely ridiculed and accused of acting more like men than women. But they did make progress. New York led other states in giving women control over their own property, a share in the guardianship of their own children, and the right to sue. Divorce laws were liberalized.

But the right to vote still seemed far in the future. In 1853 a leading national journal, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, proclaimed that the very idea of women
voting was “infidel ... avowedly anti-Biblical ... opposed to nature and the established order of society.”

Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell braved male opposition and actually became qualified medical doctors. Maria Mitchell became an astronomer, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the first professor of astronomy at the new Vassar College for women when it opened in 1861. Sarah Josepha Hale edited the influential magazine *Godey’s Lady’s Book* for nearly 50 years, and in its interesting pages she recounted the progress of women and argued their rights to be free, fulfilled Americans.

**Section 1 Review**

1. Identify: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Theodore Parker, Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Horace Mann, Dorothea Dix, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, the Blackwells, Maria Mitchell, Sarah Josepha Hale.

Ralph Waldo Emerson: eloquent spokesperson for the Transcendentalists
Henry David Thoreau: author of *Essay on the Duty of Civil Disobedience*

Theodore Parker: Transcendentalist preacher who attacked slavery

Bronson Alcott: devised popular utopian schemes that failed

Louisa May Alcott: author of *Little Women*

Margaret Fuller: editor, literary critic, and author of *Women in the Nineteenth Century*

Horace Mann: promoter of educational reform

Dorothea Dix: crusaded for better treatment of people with mental illnesses

Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton: organized the Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848

Sojourner Truth: former slave who worked for the rights of women and black people

Susan B. Anthony: leader in the fight for women’s rights
Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell: women who became medical doctors

Maria Mitchell: woman who became an astronomer

Sarah Josepha Hale: editor of an influential magazine called *Godey’s Lady’s Book*

2. By 1860 what advances had been made in (a) public education? (b) the education of women?

   a. Many states were providing free elementary education, and there were some public high schools.

   b. Some progress was also being made in the education of women. In New England, nearly all women could read and write. A few boys’ academies were admitting small numbers of women. The first college for women, Wesleyan College in Georgia, and the first coeducational college, Oberlin College, had opened.

3. What changes did Dorothea Dix seek in the treatment of the mentally handicapped?
She sought better facilities for people with mental disabilities. She urged that they be treated with compassion and medical care instead of as criminals or worse.

4. How were women’s rights restricted? What gains were made between 1828 and 1860?

Women’s rights were restricted in significant ways. Women could not vote. In some states, women had no legal rights because they had no legal existence apart from their husbands. Between 1828 and 1860, some states liberalized divorce laws and gave women control over their own property, the right to sue, and a share in the guardianship of their children.

5. Critical Thinking: Identifying Central Issues. What developments in religion were linked to the movements for social reform?

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Protestant churches in the United States began preaching that individuals could improve the world.

If you are satisfied with your answers, proceed to the next section. If you found the previous questions
difficult, however, review this material before moving on.

📚 Reading Directions

Now read Section 2. After reading this passage, answer the section review questions and compare your answers with those provided.

2. The Abolition Movement

The first moves to end slavery had come in the North at the time of the American Revolution. But even in the South men like Washington and Jefferson were unhappy about slavery. Jefferson had actually inserted in the Declaration of Independence an item attacking George III for promoting the slave trade to America. It was finally taken out in deference to southern prejudices. Many other Southerners of goodwill who opposed slavery comforted themselves with the thought that it was a dying institution. Then the cotton gin led to a new demand for slaves to raise cotton. More than ever before, Southerners came to believe that slavery was the very foundation of the South.
The southern antislavery movement

Still, some Southerners continued to look for a way to get rid of slavery. In 1816–1817 the South became the center of an antislavery movement built around the American Colonization Society. Since its members believed that the blacks could never be assimilated into American life, they raised money to send all the blacks back to Africa. The Society established a colony in Africa in what is now the nation of Liberia.

In its first twenty years the Society was able to send only 4000 blacks back to Africa—and many of those were not slaves. By 1830 there were 2 million slaves in the United States, and their number was increasing through new births at the rate of 500,000 every ten years.

Most blacks did not want to go back to Africa. In 1817 a group of free blacks in Philadelphia stated positively, “We have no wish to separate from our present homes for any purpose whatever.”

As the attacks of northern abolitionists became more bitter, talk of freeing the slaves became more and more dangerous in the South. Southerners like James G. Birney of Kentucky and Sarah and Angelina Grimké of
South Carolina who opposed slavery felt obliged to go north. The last debates over slavery in the South were those in Virginia. By 1831 many people in Virginia were worried about slavery. The new governor, who himself owned twelve slaves, tried to persuade the state legislature to make a plan for gradually abolishing slavery. The Virginia legislature held a great debate on slavery which lasted most of the month of January 1832. Then they voted 73 to 58 to keep slavery. The vote was a tragic mistake. It made it almost inevitable that if slavery was to be abolished in Virginia, it would have to be by force from the outside.

By 1833 no reform was welcome in the South. If one reforming “ism” (even pacifism) entered their section, Southerners feared that it might soon be followed by that worst “ism” of all—abolitionism. So the South turned inward and cut itself off from the outside world, keeping out northern books, checking the mails for abolitionist literature, and even preventing the discussion of slavery in Congress.

The movement heats up

The problem for Southerners was that the abolitionist attacks had become so strong. Many abolitionists were
devout Christians. They believed that Jesus hated slavery. “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” You do not want to be a slave yourself. What right, then, have you to enslave others? Christianity, they said, was the religion of love—love for everyone. The abolitionists wanted to preach love. But before very long they were also preaching hate.

It was easy enough to go from hating slavery to hating slaveholders. And easy enough, too, to go from hating slaveholding Southerners to hating all white Southerners. Since abolitionists were more interested in horror stories than in statistics, they did not advertise the fact that most white Southerners were not slaveholders. In their hatred of slavery they painted a picture of the South that had no bright spot in it. If there was any virtue in the South, why had not Southerners already abolished this monstrous evil for themselves?

The abolitionists were printing all the worst facts about slavery. Of course there were plenty of horrifying facts to be told about the mistreatment of individual slaves and the separation of black families.
Theodore Dwight Weld, a New England minister, started his career on a crusade against alcohol. Then, inspired by English abolitionists, he began to fight slavery. In 1839 he published *Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, put together from items he had sifted from 20,000 copies of newspapers.

The book was a chamber of horrors. His purpose, Weld wrote, was to “see the inside of that horrible system…. In the advertisements for runaways we detect the cruel whippings and shootings and brandings, practiced on the helpless slaves. Heartsickening as the details are, I am thankful that God in his providence has put into our hands these weapons [these facts] prepared by the South herself, to destroy the fell monster.”

Nearly everybody likes to read horror stories. The book spread through the North. Within the first four months it sold 22,000 copies, within a year more than 100,000. Northerners now began to get their picture of the South from Weld’s lurid book and from others like it.

The abolition movement grew larger and more outspoken. William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* and one of the
most angry of the abolitionists, actually burned a copy of the Constitution of the United States. He called the Constitution a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell—because it allowed slavery. Garrison’s extreme attacks angered even his fellow Northerners. They mobbed and nearly killed him several times.

Elijah Parish Lovejoy was a convinced reformer like many others. He was against lots of things—including alcoholic drinks, the Catholic church, and slavery—all of which he attacked in his newspaper in Missouri. But Missouri was a slave state. So Lovejoy moved to Illinois, where slavery was not allowed, to find a safer place for his newspaper. Even there the aggressive proslavery forces reached across the border.

His printing presses were destroyed by proslavery ruffians again and again. Each time that he set up a new press the armed proslavery mob came back to destroy it. Lovejoy’s press was protected by 60 young abolitionists who begged him to leave town for his own safety. But instead of fleeing he preferred to die for a just cause. One night during an attack on the warehouse where Lovejoy was guarding his new press, the proslavery men set the warehouse on fire. When
Lovejoy leaped out, he was shot dead. Elijah Parish Lovejoy thus became a martyr for abolitionists everywhere.

Both sides were collecting their heroes and martyrs. It was becoming harder and harder to imagine that the people of the North and the South could be kept within a single nation.

**Section 2 Review**


   James G. Birney, Grimké sisters: abolitionists who were born and brought up in the South, but whose outspoken views eventually forced them to move to the North.

   Theodore Dwight Weld: compiled newspaper stories on slavery into a best-selling horror book titled *Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*.
William Lloyd Garrison: outspoken militant abolitionist and agitator who also edited an abolitionist newspaper

Elijah Parish Lovejoy: newspaper owner and editor who became a martyr for the abolitionist cause when a pro-slavery mob killed him

American Colonization Society: group that raised money to return black Americans to Africa

_The Liberator_: abolitionist newspaper edited by William Lloyd Garrison

2. Critical Thinking: Expressing Problems Clearly. As of 1833 the South tried to isolate itself from the rest of the nation. Explain.

Growing pressure from northern abolitionists made many Southerners feel that they had to protect themselves and their way of life from the rest of the nation.

If you are satisfied with your answers, proceed to the next section. If you found the previous questions difficult, however, review this material before moving on.
3. Westward Ho!

The national differences over slavery might not have come to a head so soon if the nation had not been growing and moving so fast. But Americans were pushing into Texas, into New Mexico, into California, and into the vast Oregon country north of California. The transplanted Americans out there naturally wanted their new homes to become part of the United States. In the East, stay-at-home Americans dreamed of a grand Empire for Liberty stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

The push into Texas

In the Mexican province of Texas, Stephen F. Austin started an American settlement in 1821. A Virginia-born man only 27 years old, he had attended Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky, and did not look or act like a frontiersman. Seeking his fortune, he had lived for a while in Missouri before moving on to
Arkansas and then to Louisiana. He had run a store, directed a bank, edited a newspaper, and served as an officer in a militia unit. Though only five feet, six inches tall, Stephen F. Austin had strong features and was a natural leader.

Austin’s original grant from the government of Mexico allowed him to bring 300 families into Texas. Each family was to receive free of charge one labor of land (177 acres) for farming and one league (4428 acres) for stock grazing. In return the settlers were expected to become Roman Catholics and to pay 12 1/2 cents per acre to Austin for his services. At this time the government of the United States was charging $1.25 per acre in cash, and the nation was still suffering the effects of the depression of 1819. No wonder that Texas was greeted as a land of opportunity!

It seemed not too hard to reach Texas from the eastern states. If you had enough money, you could travel comfortably on a boat around the Gulf of Mexico and up one of the broad rivers. Or if you lacked money and were hardy, once you had crossed the Mississippi River you could ride your horse or bring your wagon over the rolling open prairie.
Austin had no trouble finding people to join his new colony. He was a good-natured dictator and his people prospered. The number of immigrants to Texas from the United States grew rapidly until by 1830 there were nearly 8000. More than half of them lived on Stephen F. Austin’s grants.

**Traders and trappers in New Mexico**

At the same time, other daring men were pushing into a more populated part of Mexico. In New Mexico an isolated Spanish-Mexican frontier community included some 35,000 people. They lived in large towns, like Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and in scores of remote villages. They made their living by raising sheep and growing corn. From the 1600s to 1865 these Spanish and mestizo settlers were constantly at war with neighboring Indian tribes—Apache, Ute, Navaho, and Comanche. Like the Indians they fought, they came to think of their captives as prizes of war to be kept as slaves or exchanged in commerce.

In their midst the Pueblo Indians were living and farming in their own way. Often the Pueblos and New Mexicans fought side by side against the other Indians.
Under Spain this separate society had been barred from contact with the United States. Traders who made their way to Taos or Santa Fe were most likely to end in jail and lose their trading goods.

All of this changed, however, with the Mexican declaration of independence in 1821. Suddenly contact with New Mexico was allowed. That same year Captain William Becknell of Missouri, who had gone west to trade with the Indians, happened into New Mexico. There, much to his surprise, he was given a friendly reception. The next year Becknell put together a large expedition of wagons loaded with goods for trade in Santa Fe. On this trip Becknell established the famous Santa Fe Trail. For decades to come, it would be a frontier highway for wagon trains headed west.

American influence in New Mexico grew through an influx of traders like Charles Bent and fur trappers like Kit Carson. They settled in Taos, Santa Fe, and other New Mexican towns. These men often married Spanish-Mexican women and soon formed a growing “American” faction.
The mountain men

The trappers who traveled through the West seeking furs discovered the hidden valleys and the easy passes across the mountains. They learned the language and the customs of the Indians, who often became their friends. The fur trade had drawn explorers to the West from early colonial times, but their great days were in the years after 1825. By 1840, however, the Rocky Mountains were nearly trapped out. As one mountain man remarked, so little was left that “lizards grow poor, and wolves lean against the sand banks to howl.” Meanwhile the fur-trapping mountain men, who marked off and explored the cross-country trails, became the pathfinders for later generations of westward-moving pioneers.

On to Oregon

On the Pacific Coast in the far Northwest, the pioneers were American sailors. Soon after the Revolution they had visited the Oregon ports to pick up furs with which they sailed to China to trade for tea and other exotic goods. The first attempt by an American to set up a permanent settlement in the Oregon country was made by John Jacob Astor, a hard-driving German immigrant.
He had already made a small fortune in the fur trade and was to become the richest man in America before his death in 1848. The men of his Pacific Fur Company built Astoria on the Columbia River in 1811, but during the War of 1812 they sold the fort to the British.

In 1832 Nathaniel J. Wyeth of Massachusetts, a successful 30-year-old businessman and inventor, led a small group overland to trade in the Oregon country. His route became famous as the Oregon Trail—an another grand pioneer-way to the promised lands of the West. The adventures of that trail were later vividly described by another young New Englander, Francis Parkman. His book, *The Oregon Trail* (1849), soon became an American classic.

Wyeth’s attempts to make money in Oregon were failures, but he blazed the way for others. On his second trip, in 1834, he escorted a party of Methodist missionaries headed by mild, easygoing Jason Lee. When Lee arrived in Oregon at the fort of the Hudson’s Bay Company, he and his party were welcomed by a huge, bearded Canadian, Dr. John McLoughlin, the director of the company’s fur-trading operations in Oregon. McLoughlin helped Lee, as he was to assist
many American settlers, and persuaded him to settle in the Willamette Valley.

The news of the success of the Methodists in establishing a mission encouraged other denominations to follow. In 1836 the Presbyterians sent out Dr. Marcus Whitman and Henry H. Spaulding, who founded a mission at Walla Walla. The missionaries’ wives, Narcissa Prentice Whitman and Elizabeth Hart Spaulding, accompanied them. Their feat as the first white women to cross the Rockies inspired other families to make the long trip to Oregon.

Father Pierre de Smet, the friendly and learned Jesuit whom the Indians called “Blackrobe,” went to Oregon in 1844. During the next few years he assisted in setting up a number of Catholic missions in the Oregon country.

By 1843 there were about 1000 American settlers in Oregon. They had come to this promised land because of the financial depression that had begun in 1837 and because they had heard tall tales that Oregon was a fertile country where it was always springtime.
Since Congress paid little attention to the small settlement, they followed the example of earlier pioneer communities and made their own government. In an old barn belonging to one of the missions, on July 5, 1843, they adopted a constitution “for the purposes of mutual protection and to secure peace and prosperity among ourselves…. until such time as the United States of America extend their jurisdiction over us.”

Nearly 1000 settlers came to Oregon during the course of 1843 in the first successful mass migration. The next year brought 1500 more settlers. And the following year an additional 3000 arrived. The government back in Washington could neglect the distant “republic” of Oregon no longer.

**California in the 1830s**

The first Americans to reach the Mexican province of California came by boat. They traded to the missions and the ranches all kinds of goods in exchange for the products of the cattle ranches—tallow for their candles and hides for shoes and saddle bags. This trade and the beauties of California, as well as the life of common sailors of those days, were described by Richard Henry Dana in *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840).
The Mexican government broke up the Christian missions in 1834. The lands were supposed to go to the Indian converts but instead were carved into huge ranches. American traders, who lost some of their most reliable customers, the Franciscan fathers of the missions, now appointed trading agents in California towns. These agents, who supervised dealings with the ranchers, later became important in the drive to make California part of the United States.

In the 1830s there were only about 4000 Mexicans scattered along the California coast between the two deep-water ports of San Francisco and San Diego. Americans from the crowded eastern seaboard thronged westward in long wagon trains to the magical country that sailors and traders had extolled. Most of these found their way to the West Coast by following the Oregon Trail to Great Salt Lake and then heading southwest to California. A thriving center sprang up in the Sacramento Valley. A focus of community life was the fort built by John Sutter. A wandering Swiss citizen who had arrived in California in 1839 from Hawaii, he received an enormous grant of land from the Mexican government.
Wagon towns moving west

From the very beginning of American history, the people who came here came in groups. And when Americans decided to move farther west in the years after the Revolution, they seldom went alone. Americans traveling to Oregon and California also moved in groups. You might start out alone with a few friends and family from the settled states. But you were not likely to reach very far into the unknown West unless you soon joined with 50 or 100 others.

Most of the West was still unknown except to the mountain men and the explorers. The few wagon ways that had been marked by the explorers were the only paths through the wilderness. The most important trails started from a little Missouri town called Independence 200 miles west of St. Louis.

At Elm Grove, just outside Independence, people from all over collected because they wanted to go west. Some had never seen one another before. Just as people in Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and a hundred other places were quickly coming together and forming their instant cities, so these people with wagons were
forming their own kind of instant towns. These were wagon towns, towns made to move.

It was not safe to travel alone. Indians were apt to attack a small party, but a large group might frighten them off. And with enough wagons in your party, you could make a kind of fort every night. The wagons would be formed into a hollow circle or square, which was like a small walled town. People were protected while they cooked their meals. They could sing and dance, or hold meetings to talk about the problems of the trip. If the Indians attacked, women and children could be safe in the hollow center while the men and boys shot back at the Indians from behind the wall of wagons.

The covered wagon used for crossing the continent was about 10 feet long and 8 1/2 feet to the top of the canvas. It was usually drawn, not by horses, but by three pairs of oxen. Even if two oxen were lost, the four that remained could still pull the wagon. When fully loaded, it could carry a ton.

Getting this heavy wagon up a hill, across rivers, and down steep inclines was never easy. But it was much easier if you were in a large party. Then the whole
party could help push or pull with their teams or their muscles.

The trip across the continent was long and slow. From Independence on the lower Missouri River to Sutter’s Fort in California, it was about 2000 miles on the wagon trail. The normal speed for a wagon was only two miles an hour. Even with good luck, the wagon ride from Independence to the Pacific might take five months.

When so many people lived together for so long, they had to be organized. They had to make rules for health and safety. They had to appoint commanders and judges, select juries, and punish criminals. They had to keep order, arrange marriages, and perform funerals. They felt all the needs of people in Cincinnati or Chicago or St. Louis, and had additional problems, too. If the trip was not to take forever, the group had to see that everybody did a share of the work and risked a share of the danger.

What they did was very much like what the Pilgrims on the Mayflower had needed to do 200 years before. They made a government for themselves. Like the first pilgrims, each wagon train made its Mayflower
Compact. Each had its own do-it-yourself government. They wrote out their own laws, which everybody signed. They elected a captain, who was like the captain of a ship. He had the difficult job of assigning tasks and settling quarrels. The fate of the whole wagon train might depend on his good humor and good judgment.

The Mormons move to Utah

The best organizers were the best captains of wagon trains. The Mormons were remarkably successful. With their new American religion they looked to the West for their promised land. They set up instant cities of their own in Missouri and Illinois. When the Mormons prospered, however, their envious neighbors believed all kinds of strange stories about them and persecuted them. In late June 1844 the founder of their religion and their leader Joseph Smith as well as his brother Hyrum were killed by an Illinois mob that feared and hated these distinctive people. The Mormons had to move on.

In February 1846 their new leader, the able Brigham Young, began taking them across Iowa toward the faraway land near Great Salt Lake. There they would
be hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement. They traveled in carefully organized groups, building their own roads and bridges as they went. They even planted seeds along the trail so Mormon wagon trains the next season could harvest the crops for food as they came by. One wagon train that reached Utah in October 1847 brought 1540 Mormons in 540 wagons, together with 124 horses, 9 mules, 2213 oxen, 887 cows, 358 sheep, 24 hogs, and 716 chickens.

By cooperation, discipline, and hard work, the Mormons made the dry land bloom. They dug elaborate irrigation systems and laid out a city with broad avenues. In time they were to create many towns and cities in their distant, difficult land.

The Mormons were not the only ones who expected to find a promised land in the unknown West. Hundreds of other wagon towns were held together by their own vague hopes of a prosperous future.

Section 3 Review

1. Identify: Stephen F. Austin, William Becknell, Charles Bent, John Jacob Astor, Jason Lee, the Whitmans, Francis Parkman, Pierre de Smet.
Stephen F. Austin: obtained a grant from the Mexican government to settle Texas in 1821, where he founded Austin and attracted 8000 immigrants.

William Becknell: led a group of settlers to Santa Fe and established the Santa Fe Trail.

Charles Bent: American trader who settled in New Mexico and attracted other American settlers to the area.

John Jacob Astor: made a fortune in the fur trade and was the first to attempt to create a permanent American settlement in Oregon.

Jason Lee: led a group of Methodists to settle in Oregon.

The Whitmans: husband-and-wife missionary team; Mrs. Whitman was one of the first two American women to cross the Rockies.

Francis Parkman: New Englander who provided vivid descriptions of his journey on the Oregon Trail.
Pierre de Smet: Jesuit priest known to the Indians as “Blackrobe”; he set up a number of Catholic missions in Oregon

2. How did the Mormon migration differ from most of the other migrations?

The Mormons had to move west to escape persecution from other Americans. Their migration was more organized than most.

3. Critical Thinking: Making Comparisons. How were wagon train parties similar to the earlier voyage of the Pilgrims across the Atlantic Ocean?

They were similar in that they had to set up their own government for the sake of defense and survival. Specific members of the group were given authority to keep the established order and to divide the workload among members of the group.

If you are satisfied with your answers, proceed to the next section. If you found the previous questions difficult, however, review this material before moving on.
4. Texas and Oregon

The first opportunity for the flag to follow the American people into the new lands of the West came in Texas. But this question soon divided the nation. And it also led to war with Mexico.

The Lone Star Republic

By 1835 there were nearly 30,000 settlers from the United States living in the huge Mexican state of Coahuila-Texas. They had become Mexican citizens, but they had complaints about Mexican rule. Saltillo, the state capital, was 700 miles away from their settlements on the Brazos and Colorado rivers. These settlers from the eastern United States were in a majority in Texas proper. But they were only a small minority in the vast state of Coahuila-Texas. They had only a few representatives in the state legislature. They missed the Bill of Rights and all the guarantees of the
United States Constitution, including especially the right to trial by jury.

These new Texans had come mostly from the southern United States. Since they had brought their slaves with them, they were outraged that the Mexican government tried to outlaw slavery. When that government imposed heavy customs taxes and stationed troops among the settlers, their thoughts naturally went back to the American Revolution. In 1835 they revolted and drove out the Mexican troops. Like the colonists who had revolted against George III 60 years before, the Texans declared their independence on March 2, 1836.

The convention that issued the declaration also elected a temporary government. David G. Burnet, an emigrant from Ohio who in his youth had fought for Venezuelan freedom from Spain, was elected president for the time being. Lorenzo de Zavala was made vice-president. He was an ardent republican who had been exiled from Spain. He had fought for Mexican independence and served that new nation as a state governor, cabinet minister, and ambassador to France. In 1834 when
General Santa Anna took over the government and began to rule as dictator, de Zavala fled to Texas.

General Santa Anna led an army to crush the Texas rebellion. The first battle took place at San Antonio. The Texas defenders were led by William B. Travis, a 27-year-old lawyer, and James Bowie, reputed inventor of the bowie knife. The force included Davy Crockett, the famous frontiersman, two black slaves, and many Mexican Texans. Greatly outnumbered, they fortified themselves in an abandoned mission, the Alamo. In the end, 183 died in the siege, but they killed or wounded 600 of the 2400 Mexican soldiers. This bloody battle, which ended on March 6, 1836, was a military defeat. But it was also a kind of spiritual victory, for it provided the battle cry “Remember the Alamo,” which Texans would never forget. The fury of the Texans was kept hot when three weeks later all the defenders at Goliad were massacred after they had surrendered.

The Texan army was led by tall and magnetic Sam Houston, a veteran of the War of 1812, onetime governor of Tennessee, Indian trader, and adopted son of the Cherokees. Houston retreated with his small army until he felt the right moment had come to fight.
Then he turned and attacked. In the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, Houston’s army routed the Mexican army, captured Santa Anna, and forced him to sign a treaty recognizing Texas independence. A republic was set up with Houston as the first president. A constitution modeled on those of the states of the Union was adopted. To reassure the settlers from the southern United States, the constitution of Texas forbade the Texas Congress from interfering with slavery. The new Republic of Texas offered the curious spectacle of people who had fought for their right to govern themselves—and for the right to keep thousands of their fellow Texans in slavery.

Reader’s note: This section includes a map of the state of Coahuila-Texas where these events took place. For the most part, this state was a vast piece of land with the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, and some unorganized territory at its eastern border. The map shows the Alamo in the southeastern portion of this land. The Alamo is the abandoned mission where General Santa Anna crushed the Texas rebellion in San Antonio. Three weeks later, another massacre took place in Goliad, south of San Antonio. Soon after at San Jacinto, along the northern part of the Gulf of
Mexico coastline, Sam Houston defeated Santa Anna and his army, leading to the creation of Texas as an independent republic. End of note.

Texas at once asked for admission to the Union. But Texas was so big that there was no telling how many new states might be carved from its territory. Since all Texas was slave country, the northern states saw that the balance of North and South might be upset forever simply by creating numerous small slave states there. Some Northerners said that Texas was nothing but a slave owners’ plot to smuggle a lot of new slave states into the Union.

The gag rule

Northerners were especially sensitive about slavery at this time because of the so-called gag rule in Congress. Faced with a flood of abolitionist petitions in 1836, the House of Representatives refused to discuss any further petitions against slavery. Northern opponents of slavery called this the “gag rule.” Former President John Quincy Adams, now a representative from Massachusetts, protested that such a restriction of free speech in the Congress was “a direct violation of the Constitution of the United States, of the rules of the
“Old Man Eloquence,” as Adams came to be called, angered members of the House with his lengthy orations against the gag resolution. He finally managed to secure its repeal in 1844 by convincing members that limiting free speech endangered the Union.

Southerners tried every measure—legal and illegal—to prevent the delivery of abolitionist literature into their states. When extremists in Charleston, South Carolina, seized and burned a sack full of abolitionist pamphlets, the Congress agreed with the Postmaster General that southern postmasters did not have to deliver such mail.

The passions of the slavery issue blazed high over Texas. It seemed that to placate the slavery forces by bringing Texas into the Union would incite war with Mexico and so cost American lives. Texas was kept out of the Union. The government of the United States recognized the Republic of Texas as a separate nation in 1837 and opened diplomatic relations with the new country. First Andrew Jackson and then Martin Van Buren refused to propose bringing Texas into the Union. The question played no part in the rowdy “log-
cabin” campaign of 1840 when the Whig candidates, Harrison and Tyler, were elected.

The Texas question reopened

A surprising turn of events prevented the election of the Whig President William Henry Harrison from producing the results that voters intended. The aged Harrison caught a cold during his inauguration and died a few weeks later. Vice-President John Tyler, a states-rights Virginia Democrat, had been put on the Whig ticket with Harrison simply to attract votes. The Whig leaders expected that he, like Vice-Presidents before him, would be inactive. They never dreamed that he would do more than preside over the Senate. Now, to their shock and dismay, they had actually put him in the White House!

President Tyler left not a moment’s doubt that he was a full-fledged President and would follow his own policies whether or not the Whigs liked it. He vetoed Whig bills to create a new Bank of the United States, and he opposed a higher tariff. The desperate Whig leaders could do nothing but read him out of the Whig party (to which he had never really belonged). They labeled him a “traitor” and a “President by accident.”
All of President Harrison’s Cabinet resigned, except Secretary of State Daniel Webster. He waited until 1842 in order to complete negotiations for the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

Tyler as a Virginia Democrat naturally wanted to annex Texas. And of course he could expect no support from the Whigs, who by accident had put him in the White House. He was forced to look to the South. At first, he hoped to avoid a violent showdown over the slavery question. So he simply evaded the problem of Texas. But Great Britain soon made him face the issue.

Tyler learned that Texas was negotiating with Great Britain for aid and protection. The adept British diplomats saw that if they could make a firm alliance with Texas, they might block the south-westward expansion of the United States. At the same time they would secure a new source of cotton and a promising new market for manufacturers. The French government, too, supported an independent Republic of Texas.

Alarmed by this unexpected willingness of Texas to enlist the great powers of Europe, Tyler saw a new urgency in the issue. He quickly began negotiating with
the government of Texas. In April 1844 John C. Calhoun, who was now Secretary of State, concluded a treaty that provided for the independent Republic of Texas to enter the United States as another state of the Union.

Unfortunately for the treaty’s chances in the Senate, Calhoun used it as one more time to defend slavery. This merely confirmed Northerners in their belief that the annexation of Texas was a slave owners’ plot. Over all brooded a fear that annexation would bring on war with Mexico. The treaty was rejected by the decisive vote of 16 to 35.

**The election of 1844**

While Calhoun’s treaty was being discussed in the Senate, the national conventions met to choose their candidates for President. To no one’s surprise, at Baltimore on May 1 the Whigs ignored Tyler and named Henry Clay. At Clay’s request, the Whig platform was silent on the subject of Texas. The Democrats also met at Baltimore, where it was expected that they would nominate their best-known leader, Martin Van Buren, who had already been President once. But Van Buren
had committed himself against annexing Texas in order to gain the votes of the North. So he was passed over.

Then for the first time in American history a party nominated a “dark horse,” a man who was not nationally known and who had not been thought of as a candidate. If there were few arguments in his favor, there was little to be said against him. Such a candidate, they thought, might have wider appeal than some famous man who had won loyal friends but also had made bitter enemies. The “dark horse” was James K. Polk, once governor of Tennessee and a loyal Democrat. The Whigs ridiculed the Democratic choice. Earlier that year the polka had become the most popular dance in Washington. “The Polk-a dance,” they said, “will now be the order of the day. It means two steps backward for one step forward.”

There was a surprise in store for the Whigs. The unknown Polk soon proved to be an adept politician. His formula for compromise was a single watchword: Expansion! To annex Texas all by itself expanded the slave area and seemed a menace to the North. But if at the same time you annexed the vast Oregon Territory, you had something to give the North in return. That
was Polk’s platform. Expand everywhere at once, and then there would be something for everybody. The very thought of stretching the nation all the way to the Pacific was exhilarating. Perhaps the nation could be united simply by marching westward together. In a divided nation, growth itself was a kind of compromise, something that everybody could agree on.

Henry Clay saw that Polk had found a popular issue. Clay had published a letter on April 27 (when he thought that Van Buren would be the Democratic candidate) opposing annexation. When he saw himself running against the expansionist Polk, he changed his tune. Clay was so anxious to be President that there were few things he would not do to smooth his path to the White House. Now he wrote that he “would be glad to see Texas admitted on fair terms” and that “slavery ought not to affect the question one way or another.” But Clay misjudged the voters. His shifty behavior caused Conscience (antislavery) Whigs in New York to switch their votes to James G. Birney, the candidate of the small antislavery Liberty party. As a result Polk carried New York by a slim margin, which made it possible for him to win a close election. Henry Clay had outsmarted himself.
Ignoring the narrowness of Polk’s victory, President Tyler, who had always wanted to annex Texas, called the election a “mandate” from the people. Not even waiting for Polk to come into office, in February 1845 he secured the passage of a resolution in both houses of Congress admitting Texas to the Union. The measure also provided that with the consent of Texas not more than four additional states might some time be carved from its territory, and that the Missouri Compromise line would extend westward above Texas. That was something for the South. Later that year, living up to his campaign promise, Polk claimed for the United States the whole vast Oregon Territory, which we had been sharing with Great Britain. That was something for the North.

**Manifest destiny**

Americans were thrilled by the vision of their Empire for Liberty reaching to the Pacific. “Why not extend the ‘area of freedom’ by the annexation of California?” asked the usually conservative *American Whig Review*. “Why not plant the banner of liberty there?” Then there would be no question of Old World monarchies existing in America.
The catch phrase for this whole expansive movement was provided by a New York newspaperman, John L. O’Sullivan, who wrote that it was “our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.” Manifest destiny! The idea that the American destiny was clear (or manifest) challenged, elated, and exhilarated. It was an up-to-date, expanded 1800s-version of an old American refrain. The Puritan City of God, their “City upon a hill,” was transformed into a continental Empire for Liberty. Both would be beacons for the world.

Fifty-four forty or fight

Polk at first demanded a stretch of Oregon that reached all the way up to the borders of Alaska (then owned by Russia). “All Oregon or none!” shouted American champions of manifest destiny. “Fifty-four forty or fight!”—a reference to the latitude of the territory’s northern border—became their slogan. But when the annexation of Texas brought on war with Mexico, Polk prudently decided not to risk war also with Great Britain. The two countries agreed in June 1846 to
extend the 49th parallel as the border between the United States and Canada all the way to the Pacific. Western expansionists were outraged. They felt that Polk had broken his campaign promise and put the whole nation into the hands of the dreaded Slave Power.

**Section 4 Review**

1. Identify or explain: Santa Anna, Sam Houston, gag rule, John Tyler, “dark horse,” James K. Polk, Conscience Whigs, Liberty party.

   Santa Anna: Mexican dictator who tried unsuccessfully to crush the Texas rebellion

   Sam Houston: led the Texan army that defeated Santa Anna and became the first President of the Lone Star Republic

   gag rule: decision by the House of Representatives to not hear any more petitions against slavery

   John Tyler: Harrison’s Vice-President who became President when Harrison died after a few weeks in office
“dark horse”: expression that refers to a relatively unknown person seeking a public office, such as James K. Polk in the presidential election of 1844

Conscience Whigs: antislavery Whigs in New York who refused to vote for Henry Clay because he advocated admitting Texas to the Union

Liberty party: small antislavery party in New York that enabled Polk to win the election by preventing Clay from carrying the state

2. Locate: Coahuila-Texas, the Alamo, Goliad, San Jacinto, the “fifty-four forty” line.

Coahuila-Texas: large area bordered by Mexico, the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, and some unorganized territory to the east and north

the Alamo: abandoned mission in the southeastern portion of Coahuila-Texas where General Santa Anna crushed Texan rebels

Goliad: location south of San Antonio where Texan defenders were massacred after they had surrendered
San Jacinto: location in southeast Texas along the northern part of the Gulf of Mexico coastline, where Sam Houston’s army captured Santa Anna

“fifty-four forty” line: reference to the latitude of the Oregon Territory’s northern border before Great Britain and the United States agreed to establish the 49th parallel as the border between the United States and Canada

3. How was the annexation of Texas linked to the slavery issue?

Admitting Texas to the Union would disrupt the delicate balance between free and slave states in the U.S. Senate.

4. How was the Oregon issue settled?

The United States and Great Britain agreed that the 49th parallel would be the boundary line separating the United States and British North America. This agreement was reached because the United States did not want to risk war with Great Britain.
5. Critical Thinking: Recognizing Ideologies. How did the idea of “manifest destiny” echo the Puritans’ belief in a “City upon a hill”?

The idea of “manifest destiny” was linked to the words of John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony some 200 years earlier. Winthrop had preached to his followers that North America offered them the opportunity to create a fortress of godliness as an example for the rest of the world. The belief in manifest destiny opened up the possibility of creating an empire of democracy as a similar example.

If you are satisfied with your answers, proceed to the next section. If you found the previous questions difficult, however, review this material before moving on.

📖 Reading Directions

Now read Section 5. After reading this passage, answer the section review questions and compare your answers with those provided.
5. War with Mexico

The nation’s troubles with Mexico were far from settled. Mexico considered the annexation of Texas (which it said was still a part of Mexico) to be an act of war by the United States. It also disputed the boundary of Texas. Meanwhile, the American settlers in California were a new trouble spot. Following the example of Texas, they too wanted to join the United States. Polk was also eager to bring California into the Union. But he hoped to find a way that would avoid war.

The declaration of war

Polk sent an agent to Mexico to offer as much as $30 million for New Mexico and California. In addition the United States would assume all claims of its citizens against Mexico if Mexico would accept the Rio Grande instead of the Nueces River as the border of Texas. But Mexico was on the brink of a revolution. Feelings against the United States ran high. Both claimants for the presidency of Mexico played upon these feelings, even refusing to meet Polk’s agent.

President Polk then decided on “aggressive measures.” He sent General Zachary Taylor with 2000 regular
troops to the Rio Grande. The Mexicans ordered Taylor to withdraw from the disputed territory. When he refused, a Mexican unit crossed the Rio Grande and ambushed a scouting party of Americans, killing or wounding sixteen men (April 25, 1846).

Polk had already drafted a message asking Congress for a declaration of war against Mexico. Upon receiving news of the attack upon Taylor’s troops, he tore up his first draft and wrote a new one. Now he declared that, in spite of his efforts to keep the peace, the war had already begun “by the act of Mexico.” He asked Congress to recognize that a state of war existed and then to provide funds and troops to fight it.

Northerners feared that victory over Mexico might add still more territory and lead to even more slave states in the Southwest. But once the fighting had begun, patriotic passions prevailed. The opposition proved weak, and Congress voted for war.

Reader’s note: The map in this section shows the movements of U.S. and Mexican forces during the Mexican War of 1846–1848. In particular, it places the Nueces River east of the Rio Grande River. Both of these rivers were along the disputed area between
Texas and Mexico. Monterrey and Buena Vista, in the northern part of Mexico, represent American victories by General Taylor’s army. Mexico City, further south, was captured by the Americans under the command of General Winfield Scott in 1847. End of note.

Northern fears proved to be well founded. After United States victories by General Taylor’s army at Monterrey in northern Mexico (September 21–23, 1846) and at Buena Vista (February 22, 1847), Mexico City was captured by an army commanded by General Winfield Scott (September 14, 1847). The helpless Mexican government then gave up.

The conquest of New Mexico and California

In June 1846, upon hearing of the war with Mexico, the explorer John C. Frémont and his band of frontiersmen helped American settlers in California to set up a republic under the famous “Bear Flag.” But soon the navy arrived and the flag of the United States replaced the Bear Flag. Meanwhile, soldiers under General Stephen Kearny marched from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe and raised the United States flag over New Mexico. Then, with a small unit of cavalry, Kearny continued on his 1800-mile journey to
California. When they came out of the mountains in December 1846, Kearny and his little force met brief but stiff resistance from Mexican Californians. With the aid of the navy, Kearny was able to put down this opposition and give the United States complete control of California.

The peace treaty and the Gadsden Purchase

In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) Mexico dropped all its claims to Texas and agreed that Texas belonged to the United States. But that was only the beginning of Mexican losses. In addition it handed over all the lands between Texas and the Pacific. That included California, New Mexico, and most of the present states of Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and Colorado. In return, the United States paid Mexico $15 million and assumed claims of our citizens against Mexico of some $3 million.

After the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842) had finally resolved the long-disputed border between Maine and Canada, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) nearly filled in the outlines of the present United States except for Alaska and Hawaii. The final piece, a small strip of land south of the Gila River in Arizona and New
Mexico, was bought from Mexico in 1853 for $10 million in the Gadsden Purchase. This piece of land was believed to offer the best rail route across the southern Rockies to the Pacific.

The lands (including Texas) taken from Mexico after the war were larger than all the Louisiana Purchase or all the United States when the Constitution was adopted. This should have satisfied any American’s yen for expansion. Yet when President Polk asked the Senate to approve the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a dozen senators voted against it because they wanted to annex the whole of Mexico. “We believe it is a part of our destiny to civilize that beautiful country,” the New York Herald proclaimed. Antislavery men also opposed the treaty, as did Whigs who envied Polk and the Democrats their success. So the treaty only squeaked through the Senate by 38 to 14, just 3 more votes than the necessary two-thirds.

It took no prophet to predict that more western lands spelled more trouble. Every new acre was a subject for debate, for a quarrel—or even for a battle. Southerners and Northerners alike thought of nothing but whether the new lands would spread the Slave Power.
In the bitterly divided nation, every stroke of national good luck struck a note of discontent. Each section somehow was afraid that the other would gain more. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in his journal as the United States invaded Mexico, “The United States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows the arsenic, which brings him down in turn. Mexico will poison us.”

Section 5 Review

1. Identify or explain: Zachary Taylor, Winfield Scott, John C. Frémont, “Bear Flag.”

   Zachary Taylor: American general in the Mexican War who captured Monterrey in northern Mexico

   Winfield Scott: American general who captured Mexico City in September 1847

   John C. Frémont: explored the West and helped Americans set up a republic in California to speed the American conquest of the area and prevent any other nation from seizing it
“Bear Flag”: name given to the flag that briefly flew over California when it was an independent republic

2. Locate: Nueces River, Rio Grande, Monterrey, Buena Vista, Mexico City, Gadsden Purchase.

Nueces River: river east of the Rio Grande River

Rio Grande: river that, along with the Nueces River, bordered the disputed area between Texas and Mexico at the time of the Mexican War

Monterrey, Buena Vista: locations in the northern part of Mexico

Mexico City: Mexican city south of Monterrey and Buena Vista

Gadsden Purchase: 1853 purchase of a small strip of land south of the Gila River in Arizona and New Mexico that was believed to offer the best rail route across the southern Rockies to the Pacific

3. Critical Thinking: Recognizing Cause and Effect. How did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo change the geography of the United States?
The treaty stated that Mexico would give up all claims to Texas and hand over to the United States all the lands between Texas and the Pacific. It nearly filled in the present-day outlines of the United States, except for Alaska and Hawaii.

If you found the previous questions difficult, review this material before moving on. If you are satisfied with your answers, however, complete the assignment that follows.

Assignment 2

Once you have received feedback on your last submission, complete this assignment in the medium of your choice. Begin by giving your full name, address, and phone number. Also indicate the course title, Assignment 2, your instructor’s name, and the date. Then provide your answers. Be sure to indicate the question number along with each answer. Note that this assignment is worth 100 points. Instructions for sending assignments can be found in the Overview to the course.
Indicate whether the following statements are true or false. If the statement is false, reword it to make it true. (3 points each)

1. Henry David Thoreau, who wrote on the duty of civil disobedience in defense of his protest of the Mexican War, refused to pay taxes.

2. Elizabeth Cady Stanton started the crusade for more humane treatment of the mentally ill.

3. The American Colonization Society was a northern antislavery movement that established a colony in what is now the African nation of Liberia.


5. The first American pioneers in Oregon were frontiersmen.

6. The Mormons’ migration was unique because they traveled west to escape persecution.

7. James K. Polk led the Texas army to independence and became the first President of Texas.
8. Manifest destiny refers to the idea that it was God’s will that the United States gain possession of the entire continent.

9. When President Polk heard about the attack on the U.S. scouting party at the Rio Grande, he declared that the war with Mexico had already begun “by the act of Mexico.”

10. The gain of more western lands after the war with Mexico triggered conflict between pro-slavery and antislavery forces.

Answer the following multiple-choice questions by choosing the correct answer. (3 points each)

11. Prior to 1850, which issue(s) led to reform by many Americans?
   a. women’s rights
   b. treatment of the mentally ill
   c. education
   d. all of the above

12. Which religious group preached that the world would end in 1843?
   a. Millerites
   b. Shakers
c. Rappites
d. Transcendentalists

13. Which man died a martyr for the abolitionist movement?
   a. James G. Birney
   b. William Lloyd Garrison
   c. Frederick Douglas
   d. Elijah Parish Lovejoy

14. Which of the following was not a southern reaction to the antislavery movement?
   a. voting to end slavery
   b. banning antislavery literature
   c. discussing the issue of slavery in the Virginia legislature
   d. limiting the discussion of slavery in Congress
15. The wagon trains moving west could be compared to actual towns for each of the following reasons except which one?
   
a. Both required cooperative action.
   
b. Both performed community functions.
   
c. Both could provide defense from Indian attacks.
   
d. Both were made up of people from the same towns.

16. Which of the following was considered a negative factor by many American settlers in the Mexican province of Texas?
   
a. price of the land
   
b. attitude of Stephen Austin
   
c. ease of travel to Texas
   
d. Mexican government’s attempt to outlaw slavery
17. The slogan “Fifty-four forty or fight!” refers to a boundary dispute between the United States and which country?
   a. Spain
   b. Great Britain
   c. France
   d. Mexico

18. Which of the following statements about the Texas movement for independence is true?
   a. The settlers in Coahuila-Texas were not allowed to become Mexican citizens.
   b. Texans declared their independence from Mexico after the government imposed heavy customs taxes and stationed troops among the settlers.
   c. The constitution of the new Republic of Texas prohibited slavery.
   d. After winning independence from Mexico, Texas did not want to join the United States.

19. Which of the following did not contribute to war with Mexico in 1846?
   a. annexation of Texas
   b. disagreement over mineral rights
c. disputed Texas boundary
d. U.S. troops sent to the Rio Grande River

20. Which of the following areas became part of the United States in order to provide a railroad route through the southern Rockies?
   a. Texas
   b. Gadsden Purchase
   c. Mexican cession
   d. Oregon country

Answer the essay question that follows. Limit your answer to two print pages, five braille pages, or a 2-minute recording. (40 points total)

21. Describe the forces of reform and expansion in the years before the Civil War by addressing the following issues:
   a. Humanitarianism, or concern for human welfare and dignity, was at the heart of many reform movements. Identify one violation of human welfare and dignity that existed during that time. What reform was proposed to deal with this violation? Name at least one proponent of this reform. (15 points)
b. Referring to Lesson 2, identify one person who contributed to the settlement of the West and give two examples of this person’s contribution. (15 points)

c. Name five land acquisitions that expanded U.S. territory following the Mexican War. What effect did this expansion have on national unity? (10 points)

Once you have completed this assignment, mail, fax, or email it to your instructor. Then proceed to Lesson 3: The Failure of the Politicians.