

chained to the walls with little or no clothing, often in unheated cells. To her further horror, she learned that some of the inmates were guilty of no crime—they were mentally ill persons. Dix made it her life’s work to educate the public as to the poor conditions for both the mentally ill and for prisoners.

✓ Reading Check Identifying How did Dr. Samuel Howe help the visually impaired?

Cultural Trends

The changes in American society influenced art and literature. Earlier generations of American painters and writers looked to Europe for their inspiration and models. Beginning in the 1820s American artists developed their own style and explored American themes.

The American spirit of reform influenced **transcendentalists**. Transcendentalists stressed the relationship between humans and nature as well as the importance of the individual conscience. Writers such as Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau were leading transcendentalists. Through her writings, Fuller supported rights for women. In his poems and essays, Emerson urged people to listen to the inner voice of conscience and to break the bonds of prejudice. Thoreau put his

beliefs into practice through **civil disobedience**—refusing to obey laws he thought were unjust. In 1846 Thoreau went to jail rather than pay a tax to support the Mexican War.

The transcendentalists were not the only important writers of the period. Many poets created impressive works during this period. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote narrative, or story, poems, such as the *Song of Hiawatha*. Poet Walt Whitman captured the new American spirit and confidence in his *Leaves of Grass*. Emily Dickinson wrote simple, deeply personal poems. In a poem called “Hope,” written in 1861, she compares hope with a bird:

“ ‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all— ”

Women writers of the period were generally not taken seriously, yet they were the authors of the most popular fiction. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote the most successful best-seller of the mid-1800s, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Stowe’s novel explores the injustice of slavery—an issue that took on new urgency during the age of reform.

✓ Reading Check Describing What was one of the subjects that Margaret Fuller wrote about?

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

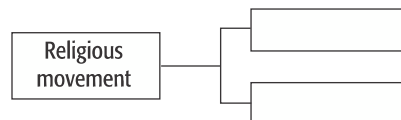
- 1. Key Terms** Use each of these terms in a sentence that helps explain its meaning: **utopia, revival, temperance, normal school, transcendentalist.**
- 2. Reviewing Facts** What were the three accepted principles of public education in the 1850s?

Reviewing Themes

- 3. Civic Rights and Responsibilities** How did Thoreau act on his beliefs? What impact might such acts have had on the government?

Critical Thinking

- 4. Drawing Conclusions** What did Thomas Jefferson mean when he said that the United States could not survive as a democracy without educated and well-informed citizens?
- 5. Determining Cause and Effect** Re-create the diagram below and describe two ways the religious movement influenced reform.



Analyzing Visuals

- 6. Picturing History** Study the painting of the school room on page 414. What is pictured that you still use in school today?

Interdisciplinary Activity

Research Interview your grandparents or other adults who are over 50 years old to find out what they remember about their public school days. Before you do the interview, write six questions about the information that interests you.