Changing the Nation

Religious ideas and reform movements in the 1800s

6-12.US1.34 "Investigate the Second Great Awakening and various reform movements such as prison, education, and women's rights, as they formed the greater story of the United States in the 19th century."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one idea from the Second Great Awakening that could inspire reform. Circle three changes reformers sought, then number the places where the passage shows a limit to reform.

Who Could Change Society?

1. In the early 1800s, large outdoor religious meetings drew crowds across the United States. During the Second Great Awakening, many Protestant preachers said people could choose to change their lives and help improve society. This message encouraged some listeners to fight problems they saw around them, including poverty and slavery. Women helped organize meetings and raise money, even though they had little power in most churches. Reform did not follow a single plan. People disagreed about what needed fixing and who should lead. Still, the belief that human effort could make society better helped connect several movements.

2. Consider two places reformers wanted to change: a jail and a school. In the 1840s, Dorothea Dix visited jails and poorhouses and found people with mental illness confined in harsh conditions. She urged state lawmakers to fund hospitals where they could receive care. At the same time, Horace Mann argued that public schools should serve more children. As a leader of education in Massachusetts, he promoted better teacher training and schools supported by taxes. Both campaigns asked state governments to take responsibility for people's well-being. Yet access remained unequal: many Black children faced exclusion or segregated schools.

3. Reform work also raised questions about women's place in public life. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott helped organize a women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Its Declaration of Sentiments argued that women deserved equal rights, including the right to vote. Women who had spoken out against slavery were among those pressing for change. Their experience showed a conflict: reform movements needed women's work, yet women lacked political rights. The convention did not speak for all women, and its demands were not quickly met. Together, these campaigns show how Americans challenged institutions while disagreeing about equality.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a belief from the Second Great Awakening have encouraged Dix's campaign? Use details from both paragraphs.

2. How did Dix and Mann each ask state governments to help people? What was different about the help they sought?

3. What conflict in women's reform work helps explain the call for women's rights at Seneca Falls?

4. Choose one limit to reform described in the passage. How does it complicate the idea that reform improved society for everyone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence letter to a state lawmaker in 1848. Choose two movements from the passage, give one historical detail about each, and propose a new way they could work together. Explain how your proposal reflects a belief from the Second Great Awakening, whom it would help, and one group it might otherwise leave out.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.US1.34

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one idea from the Second Great Awakening that could inspire reform. Circle three changes reformers sought, then number the places where the passage shows a limit to reform. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a belief from the Second Great Awakening have encouraged Dix's campaign? Use details from both paragraphs.	**Preachers taught that people could help improve society. Dix acted on a similar belief when she asked lawmakers to improve care for people with mental illness who were held in harsh conditions.**
2	How did Dix and Mann each ask state governments to help people? What was different about the help they sought?	**Dix asked states to fund hospitals for people with mental illness. Mann promoted tax-supported public schools and better teacher training so more children could receive an education.**
3	What conflict in women's reform work helps explain the call for women's rights at Seneca Falls?	**Women organized reform efforts, including work against slavery, but lacked political rights. The Seneca Falls convention demanded equal rights, including the vote.**
4	Choose one limit to reform described in the passage. How does it complicate the idea that reform improved society for everyone?	**Many Black children were excluded from schools or attended segregated schools, so the push for public education did not benefit all children equally. Accept another supported limit and explanation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Lawmaker, please open free evening classes for women and girls in public school buildings, with lessons on how laws are made. Horace Mann promotes tax-supported schools, while the Seneca Falls convention demands women's right to vote. This plan follows the Second Great Awakening's belief that people can act to improve society. The classes would help women learn about laws they hope to change. Make sure Black women and girls can attend, since many Black children have faced unequal access to schooling.

Accept connections that accurately use passage evidence rather than claim the Second Great Awakening caused every reform campaign. For the letter, look for a new, plausible joint action and all requested details in five sentences.