

Unit 5: *The Antebellum Years*

Lecture 5.1 • *The Second Great Awakening*

A “Great Awakening” is a period of spiritual and intellectual revival and reform. A time when new ways of thinking prosper, and new religions emerge.

America’s Second Great Awakening lasted from the 1820s to the 1840s.

Religious Revivalism

- Up until the 1820s, the most popular Christian denominations in American cities were the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Quakers, all of which taught that God had a destiny planned for every man and woman.
- In rural America though, where people had to be self-sufficient, a new type of faith arose which taught that man has free will, and must be active in living a godly way of life.
- As advocates of this new kind of faith were shunned from the main stream, they moved into the wilderness and started conducting outdoor revival meetings.
- This led to a rise in missionary work and evangelism, which was a central component of manifest destiny during that time.
- The Baptist, Methodist, and Mormon churches are all examples of this new type of religious practice.



America's 4th Great Awakening was in what decade?

evangelism:
actively spreading the Christian faith

Lecture 5.2 • *Transcendentalism*

A New Philosophy

- As religious revival spread through the Midwest & South, a new philosophical belief called transcendentalism was spreading across New England.
- The transcendentalists first suggested that as people grow, and form their beliefs about what is “true” in life, that those beliefs are traditionally influenced by two powerful social institutions: **government & church**.
- However, the transcendentalists argued, real truth transcends — or goes beyond — or is bigger than, the laws and rules of what they saw as petty, corrupt, and deceitful social institutions.
- So the transcendentalists suggested turning away from government and church for meaning in one’s life...and looking instead at one’s own natural sense of right and wrong, and truth.
- The two most prominent transcendentalist writers were ...

Ralph Waldo Emerson (*Nature*, 1836) and

Henry David Thoreau (*Walden*, 1854).



Who is this?

- Naturally, the transcendentalists were not very popular with authority figures in government and church.
- Thoreau actually spent time in jail because he refused to pay his taxes during the US-Mexican War.
- Thoreau further suggested that if a law is **unjust**, citizens not only have the **right** to disobey it, they should feel **obligated** to disobey it ... non-violently. Even if that means going to jail, or being beaten, or worse.

Lecture 5.3 • *Antebellum Reform*

The intellectual rebirth of the Second Great Awakening led to a wave of social activism and artistic expression that spread across the country during the antebellum (before the war) years.

Reform Movements

- During the mid-1800s, **Horace Mann** fought to reform public education by pushing for increased spending, opening special schools for the deaf and blind, and making education through 8th grade free for everyone.
- At the same time, **Dorothea Dix** fought for prisons reform by releasing debtors (people who owe money) from prison, and by having the mentally ill placed in special institutions.



Who was featured on America's first dollar coin?

Equal Rights for Women

- For hundreds of years, women in England and America had lived under a legal ideology called **coverture**, which denied them rights based on the idea that they were protected under the authority of their husbands.
- Under this system, not only were married women subject to legal domestic violence, but they were also prohibited from owning property, saving their own money, filing lawsuits, sitting on juries, running for public office, and voting.
- Naturally, many women compared their situation to slavery.
- To try and change this system, in 1848, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized the first large women's rights meeting ... the **Seneca Falls Convention**.
- Using the Declaration of Independence as a model, they drafted a list of demands which included fair wages, social equality, protection from domestic abuse, and the rights to hold public office, and vote.

antebellum:
the period before a war; esp. the U.S. Civil War

Lecture 5.4 • *The Romantic Movement*

The Second Great Awakening also led to a wave of reform in art and literature during the Antebellum period.

Romanticism... in art

- Over the first half of the 1800s, many artists and authors embraced the **Romantic Movement**, and turned away from wars and royalty as their subjects, and turned toward the splendor and mystery of nature.
- In art, the painters of the Hudson River School focussed on painting landscapes which depicted the beauty of the natural world.

George Caleb Bingham, Thomas Cole, and Albert Bierstadt were the most prominent Romantic artists.



The Simpsons did a version of *The Raven* on their very first Halloween special. What are those special episodes titled?

Romanticism... in literature

- The Romantic Movement also influenced many writers. These authors also focussed on the grace, power, and darkness of the natural world, and also on the hypocrisy of government and church.

Walt Whitman

Leaves of Grass, 1855, poetry

James Fenimore Cooper

Last of the Mohicans, 1826

Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Scarlet Letter, 1850

Washington Irving

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, 1820

Herman Melville

Moby Dick, 1851

Edgar Allan Poe

The Raven, 1845

Lecture 5.5 • *The North ...*

By the early decades of the 1800s, the eastern U.S. had become clearly divided into two sections ... the North, and the South.

A Land of Industry

- In the North from 1800 to 1850 steam-powered industry was growing, and new inventions changed the face of daily life.

1825 - John Deere invents the lightweight **steel plow**

1829 - America's first **railroads** begin moving goods from city to city

1838 - maiden voyage of the *S.S. Great Western*; America's first trans-Atlantic **steamship**

1844 - Samuel Morse makes nearly-instantaneous communication a reality with the **telegraph**

1846 - I.M. Singer invents the **sewing machine** and speeds up the manufacturing of textiles

- With factories manufacturing cheap goods, and railroads distributing them, Americans for the first time began to turn away from making what they needed, and started buying them.

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C - - - •	L - - - •	U • - -
D - • •	M - -	V • • • -
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F • • - -	O - - -	X - - - •
G - - - •	P - - - •	Y - - - -
H - - - - •	Q - - - •	Z - - - - •
I • •	R - - - •	

How do you write your name in Morse code?

Exploring New Values

- 96% of Northerners were white. Most of them were part of a new wage-earning **middle class**. For them, life revolved around the growing industrial cities.
- During this same period, a million **Irish** immigrants came to America seeking refuge from the potato famine in Ireland, and swelling the ranks of the industrial working class.
- Driven by the 2nd Great Awakening and its emphasis on "natural rights" and social justice, more and more Northerners started turning away from *traditional* values, and toward *new* values.

Wage labor became the norm in the North, and bolstered by the influx of Irish immigrants, many workers started to form small labor unions to try and improve their jobs.

This focus on personal freedom also led to renewed belief in **individual liberty**; as opposed to rights based on race and class.

Also, spurred on by transcendentalism and advances in science, many Northerners abandoned religious faith, and turned instead to **intellectual reason**.

Lecture 5.6 • *The South ...*

King Cotton

- In **1800**, cotton production measured in at **3,000** bales per year. By **1850**, it had risen to a staggering **2,000,000** bales per year!
- By mid-century, cotton was worth **\$1 billion** to the Southern economy (**\$26 billion** in 2010 dollars).
- In **1800**, there were **800,000** enslaved people in the South. By **1850**, that number had risen to over **three million** ... one third of the entire population of the South!



What famous fast food chain borrows its image from the 19th Southern planter class?

Population of the South

- 31% of Southerners were enslaved black people.
- 2% of Southerners were free blacks who lived in the cities and were descended from slave families.
- 50% of Southerners were poor or middle class, non-slave owning yeoman farmers.
- 16% of Southerners were white “**planters**” ... wealthy and powerful plantation owners whose lifestyle came to epitomize Southern culture.

Defending Traditional Values

- Having descended from English colonists, the culture of the South was heavily based on formal codes of conduct and aristocratic rule. Living a life defined by *traditional* values was very much a matter of decency and honor.

At the core of this class-driven culture was the existence of **slave labor**.

In the South, liberty was not an individual right. Freedom, and whether you had it or not, was based upon your **race & class**.

Bolstered by the birth of evangelical Christianity in the 1830s and ‘40s, the South continued to hold true to its belief in **religious faith**.

yeoman:

a person who owns and farms a small parcel of land