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**History 1301**  
**U.S. to 1877**

Chapter 12

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Antebellum Culture &  
Reform

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# Antebellum Culture:

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- *Expansion* key to America 1820 – 1860
  - Geography
  - Economic complexity
    - Major divisions between Slave and Free Labor Capitalism
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- Desire for “good old days” vs. Opportunity of future
- Two basic premises prevailed:
  - Optimism and the inevitable triumph of Man
  - Man is perfectible
    - Time, effort, guidance will allow the inner spirit to curb the inner vice
  - Modern society erodes traditional social and personal virtues
    - Traditional mores and institutions and order must be reestablished
    - New institutions, rules and regulations needed to re-integrate traditional social values

# Romanticism:

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- Romanticism – Liberation of the human spirit
  - Held in contempt by intellectuals
  - Painting – spectacular landscapes
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  - Literature – The Quest of Liberation
    - James Fennimore Cooper Last of the Mohicans 1826
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      - independent spirit and innate goodness
    - Walt Whitman Leaves of Grass -1855
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  - Transcendentalists – nature to inspire, not develop / Reason and Understanding
    - All for the good of society yet free from the confines of society
    - Nathaniel Hawthorne – against Ego and community
    - Henry David Thoreau
      - independence from materialism and group – individual morality
  - Utopias - social arrangements – belief in the prospect of human perfectibility
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    - Brook Farm – 1841 – communal living – self realization
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    - Oneida – 1848 – Perfectionists – free love or freedom from male lust
    - Shakers – 1840s Midwest – complete celibacy
    - Mormons – Joseph Smith 1830 – Communal ties

# Reforming Society:

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- Revivalism 1820 – 1840 “Betterment of Society”
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- Revival of morality and order:
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  - Perfectibility of the individual – every person capable of salvation / improvement
  - Evangelical Protestantism – against social vice
    - - 1840 Temperance became a major focus in US
      - Maine becomes dry in 1846
  - Public health and medical science
    - Cholera
    - Small pox
    - Ether in 1844
    - Hand Washing
  - Education - 1850s Universal public education
    - 72% in North enrolled
    - by 1860 – 94 North were literate / 83 of whites in South
  - Rehabilitation – people are fixable
    - Benevolent Empire institutions for handicapped and broken
    - Modern jails and penitentiaries – free from laxness
    - Asylums for the insane
    - Indian Reservations

# Feminism and Anti-Slavery:

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- Feminism was an outgrowth of work in reform movement – resent social and legal restrictions and barriers
  - Pressed the boundaries of acceptable feminine behavior
  - 1848 – Declaration of Rights and Sentiments by Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott – after rejection from World Antislavery Convention
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- Anti-Slavery
  - 1817 – American Colonization Society – buy Blacks and ship them elsewhere for freedom – 1830 established Liberia
- William Lloyd Garrison 1831 – Liberator newspaper
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  - 1832 American Antislavery Society – immediate action
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  - Frederick Douglass – escaped and antislavery speaker in 1838, purchased his freedom in 1847
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    - Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass 1845 which damned slavery
  - Increasingly rejecting gradualism

## Anti-Slavery – II:

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- Moderates and American and Foreign Anti - Slavery Society 1840:
  - Theodore Weld - split by increasing radicalism of Garrison
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  - Long, patient, peaceful struggle
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    - Northern states personal liberty laws – against aiding recapture of runaways
    - 1840 Liberty “free soil” party – no slavery in territories
    - Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin – 1852 – gave slavery a face - 300K copies in first year Anti-Abolitionism:
- Anti-Abolitionists:
  - Majority in North and South
    - Idealism vs “the present state of affairs”
  - What to do with them when they’re free?
  - Pro-slavery arguments of south
  - US Constitution / States Rights