Chapter 12: “Age of Reform, 1830-1840” Study Guide

Identify and give the historical significance of each of the following terms, events, and people in a paragraph or two.

1. Abby Kelley  
2. William Lloyd Garrison  
3. institution building  
4. Shakers  
5. Oneida  
6. freedom celebrations  
7. common schools  
8. American Colonization Society  
9. Grimké sisters  
10. Declaration of Sentiments  
11. Elijah Lovejoy  
12. burned-over districts

Potential Essay Questions:

1. The various reform communities that sprang up throughout America during the first part of the nineteenth century typically understood the meaning of freedom differently from mainstream Americans. Analyze the various meanings these groups gave to the word “freedom,” and compare those meanings with the ones given by mainstream America. Your essay ought to give the reader a sense of what these communities were rejecting about mainstream society.

2. The abolitionists’ greatest achievement lay in shattering the conspiracy of silence that had sought to preserve national unity by suppressing public debate over slavery. Explain how the abolitionists achieved this, and comment on how successful the movement was or was not.

3. Explain how the religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening popularized the outlook known as perfectionism, which held that both individuals and society at large were capable of indefinite improvement. How did this idea of perfectionism relate to the various reform movements that arose in the antebellum period?

4. What were the women at Seneca Falls advocating? Be sure to explain how they understood freedom and liberty. What methods were the feminists using to promote their cause?

5. One person’s reform in some cases may be considered an attack on another person’s vital interests. Describe how the antebellum reform movements—particularly temperance, colonization, abolition, and women’s rights—involved conflict between different sets of ideas and interests.