**Women’s Rights**

**Document 1**

**Sarah Josepha Hare, An editorial Godey’s Lady’s Book (1845)**

“The mass of mankind are very ignorant and wicked. Why is this? Because the mother, whom God constituted the first teacher of every human being, has been degraded by men from her high office. She has been denied those privileges of education which can help fulfill her duty to her children with discretion and effect. . . . If half the effort and expense had been directed to enlighten and improve the minds of females which have been spent on the other sex, we should now have a very different state of society.’’

**Document 2**

**David Kennedy, American Pageant (2005)**

When the nineteenth century opened, it was still a man’s world, both in America and in Europe. A wife was supposed to immerse herself in her home and subordinate herself to her lord and master (her husband). Like black slaves, she could not vote; like black slaves, she could be legally beaten by her overlord “with a reasonable instrument.’’ When she married, she could not retain title to her property; it passed to her husband. Gender differences were strongly emphasized in nineteenth-century America. Women were thought to be physically and emotionally weak

**Document 3**

**New Yorkers Ridicule Feminists (1856)**

“…the ladies always have the best place and choicest food at the table. They have the best seat in the carriages, and sleighs; the warmest place in the winter, and the coolest place in the summer. They have their choice on which side of the bed they will lie. A lady’s dress costs three times as much as that of a gentleman; and, at the present time, with the prevailing fashion, one lady occupies three times as much space in the world as a gentleman….If there is any inequality or oppression in the case, the gentlemen are the sufferers.”

**Document 4**

**Seneca Falls, Declaration of Sentiments (1848)**



**Abolition of Slavery**

**Document 5**

**Angelina Grimke, American Slavery As It Is (1838)**

Persons who own plantations, often take children from their parents as soon as they are done breast-feeding, and send them into the country; because they do not want the time of the mother taken up by attendance upon her own children, it being too valuable to the mistress.

**Document 6**

**Harriet Jacobs, The Risks of Being a Female Slave (1861)**

When I entered my fifteenth year…my master began to whisper foul words in my ear. I tried to ignore them and treat them with contempt. But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things…There is no law to protect me from insult, from violence, or even from death.

**Document 7**

**Frederick Douglass, A Slave Boy Learns a Lesson (1827)**

“Mrs. Hugh seemed proud of my progress and told her husband that she had taught me to read. Master Hugh forbade his wife to give me any further reading instruction, telling her in the first place that to do so was unlawful, as it was also unsafe. “For,” said he, “if you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world. If he learns to read the Bible, it will forever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it. As to himself, learning will do him no good, but a great deal of harm, making him disconsolate and unhappy. If you teach him how to read, he’ll want to know how to write, and this accomplished, he’ll be running away with himself.”

**Document 8**

**Frederick Douglass, A Former Slave Exposes Slavery (1850)**

“A master is one who claims and exercises a right of property in the person of a fellow man. This he does with the force of the law and the sanction of Southern religion. The law gives the master absolute power over the slave. He may work him, flog him, hire him out, sell him, and in certain contingencies kill him with no penalty. The slave is a human being, stripped of all rights-reduced to the level of a brute-placed beyond the circle of human brotherhood-cut off from his kind. His name is recorded in the master’s receipts next to horses, sheep, and swine.

In law a slave has no wife, no children, no country, and no home. He can own nothing, possess nothing and aquire nothing. He eats rotten meat, so another may eat the bread of fine flour. He labors in chains at home, under a burning sun and biting lash, that another may ride in ease and splendor abroad. He rests on the cold, damp ground, so that another may rest on the softest pillow.

**Public Education**

**Document 9**

**Horace Mann, Poverty and Education (1848)**

…A State should seek to solve the following problems: To what extent can intelligence solve poverty? Can we free ourselves from the ignorant and vicious? How much suffering, in all its forms can be relieved or prevented? Can crime and the number of criminals be diminished?

The difference between the poor and the rich in society is increasing. With every generation, fortunes increase for the rich, and some new problem is thrown on the poor. Large private fortunes are among the greatest dangers to the happiness of a country.

Nothing but universal education can counter the tendency of the domination of the rich over the poor. If education is equally distributed, a more equal distribution of wealth will follow. It is very impractical for an intelligent and educated man to be permanently poor.

Education, then, is the great equalizer of mankind. It gives each man the independence and the means by which he can resist the selfishness of other men. It prevents being poor.

**Document 10**

**Horace Mann, Common School Journal (1838)**

The 6 main principles of our public school systems should be: 1) The public should not continue to remain ignorant; 2) Education should be paid for, controlled, and sustained by an interested public; 3) Education will be best provided in schools that embrace children from a variety of backgrounds; 4) Public education must be non-religious; 5) Public education should help citizens live in a free society; and 6) Public education should be provided by well-trained, professional teachers.

**Document 11**

**Joy Hakim, Liberty for All (1994)**

Before 1830, there were few free public schools outside New England. Wealthy children had private tutors or went to private academies. The Constitution didn’t mention education, because the founders expected states to control schooling. Thomas Jefferson believed that the American experiment in government would only work in a country where every citizen was educated. After all, how can you vote and make decisions if you can’t read? “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be,” wrote Jefferson.

**Document 12**

**David Kennedy, American Pageant (2005)**

Early free schools stayed open only a few months of the year. Schoolteachers, most of them men in this era, were too often ill trained, ill tempered, and ill paid. They frequently put more stress on “lickin’” (with a hickory stick) than on “larnin’.’’ These knights of the blackboard often “boarded around’’ in the community, and some knew scarcely more than their older pupils. They usually taught only the “three Rs’’—“readin’, ’ritin’, and ’rithmetic.’’ To many rugged Americans, suspicious of “book larnin’,’’ this was enough. Reform was urgently needed

**Prison/Mental Asylum Reform**

**Document 13**

**Dorothea Dix, Horrible Conditions Endured by the Mentally Ill (1843)**

…I have seen many who, part of the year, are chained and caged. The use of cages is universal. Chains are less common; mistreatment is frequent, and the ignorant are frequently abused for their misunderstandings. I encountered during the last three months many poor creatures wandering reckless and unprotected through the country. I have heard many responsible people refuse to provide them shelter. These insane men and women, left on the highways, unfriended and incompetent, sometimes have found refuge in the hospital, and others have not been traced. In traveling the state, I have found hundreds of insane persons whose lives are the saddest pictures of human suffering and degradation.

**Document 14**

**Dorothea Dix, Conditions in the Danvers Almshouse (1843)**

Long before reaching the house, wild shouts, rude songs, and obsence language, fell upon the ear. When I entered “the home”, a young woman, exhibited a condition of neglect and misery. She had been a respectable person, industrious and worthy. But now, she stood clinging to or beating upon the bars of her caged apartment, which was only big enough to accumulate filth. There she stood with naked arms and disheveled hair, her unwashed body was dressed with fragments of unclean garments. The air was so extremely foul, that it was not possible to remain in the room for more than a few moments. Skin irritations, produced by the utter filth in the cage, caused her to tear off her skin, inch by inch. Her face neck and person were thus disfigured to hideousness. To my horror, the mistress replied: “We can’t help it, we can do nothing with her, it makes no difference what she eats, for she consumes her own filth as readily as the food which is brought to her.”

**Document 15**

**David Kennedy, American Pageant (2005)**

Imprisonment for debt continued to be a nightmare. As late as 1830, hundreds of penniless people were languishing in filthy holes, sometimes for owing less than one dollar. Sufferers from so-called insanity were still being treated with incredible cruelty. The medieval concept had been that the mentally deranged were cursed with unclean spirits; the nineteenth-century idea was that they were willfully perverse and depraved—to be treated only as beasts. Many crazed persons were chained in jails or poor-houses with sane people.

**Document 16**

**Alan Brinkley, Antebellum Culture and Reform (2007)**

Criminals of all kids, debtors unable to pay their debts and the mentally ill were crowded together into prisons and jails, which in some cases were literally holes in the ground; one jail in Connecticut was an abandoned mine shaft. Many prisons turned into little more than warehouses for criminals, with little emphasis on rehabilitation.

**Temperance**

**Document 17**

**Edward Hitchcocks, An Essay on Alcoholic and Narcotic Substances (1830)**

The principles of the Bible require us to avoid temptation. Presently, 30,000 to 50,000 individuals in our land become drunks every year by moderate drinking. The great law of Christian benevolence requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

What then is that man doing to others when he refuses to stop using alcoholic and narcotic substances? By his example, he contributes to a practice, which brings annual expense upon his fellow countrymen, of more than 100 million dollars. He helps reduce 50,000 to 100,000 families to extreme poverty and wretchedness. He helps shut 50,000 men annually into debtor’s prison. He helps send 90,000 murderers, robbers and thieves to make havoc in society. He pours out upon the land, such a flood of corruption it threatens to ruin our social, intellectual, political and moral character.

**Document 18**

**Lyman Beecher, Intemperance is the Sin of Our Land (1829)**

Intemperance (drunkenness) is the sin of our land, and is coming upon us like a flood. Every intemperate and idle man, whom you behold tottering about the streets, regards your houses and lands as pledged to take care of him. He puts his hands deep, annually, into your pockets…

What then is the universal, natural, and national remedy for intemperance? It is the banishment of alcohol. Like slavery, drunkenness must be regarded as sinful, impolite, and dishonorable.

**Document 19**

**Daniel Okrent, Last Call**

In 1810, there were 14,000 alcohol distilleries in the country. Out in the countryside most farmers kept a barrel of hard cider by the door for family or anyone who might drop by. In the cities, it was widely understood that common workers would fail to come to work on Mondays, staying home to wrestle with a hangover from a weekend binge. By the 1820s liquor was so plentiful and so freely available, it was less expensive than tea. By 1830, American adults drank an average of seven gallons of pure alcohol a year. It could be said that Americans drank from the crack of dawn to the crack of dawn.

**Document 20**

**David Kennedy, American Pageant (2005)**

The ever-present drink problem attracted dedicated reformers. Custom, combined with a hard and monotonous life, led to the excessive drinking of hard liquor, even among women, clergymen, and members of Congress. Weddings and funerals all too often became disgraceful brawls, and occasionally a drunken mourner would fall into the open grave with the corpse. Heavy drinking decreased the efficiency of labor, and poorly safeguarded machinery operated under the influence of alcohol increased the danger of accidents occurring at work. Drunkenness also fouled the sanctity of the family threatening the spiritual welfare—and physical safety—of women and children. Heavy drinking men hurt their families economically by spending their wages on drink. Women had no recourse: the laws of the time gave men complete financial control of the household, and divorce was difficult as well as socially unacceptable.