

# Antebellum American Culture

An Interpretive Anthology

David Brion Davis  
Yale University



The Pennsylvania State University Press  
University Park, Pennsylvania

# Contents

*Introduction: Organization and Themes* xix

## UNIT ONE

---

**Socialization and the Problem of Influence** 1

### 1

*The Art and Responsibilities of Family Government* 9

A. Family Government and National Government 9

• Heman Humphrey (1840)

B. The Mission of American Women 13

• Catharine Beecher (1842)

C. The Feminine Regeneration of Everyday Life 18

• Mrs. A. J. Graves (1843)

### 2

*The Discipline and Self-Discipline of the Young* 21

A. Instilling a Capacity for Self-Government 21

• Samuel Goodrich (1838)

• Lydia M. Child (1831)

B. Neutralizing Sibling Rivalry 24

• Catharine Sedgwick (1841)

• Jacob Abbott (1841)

C. The Problem of Unwilling Submission 29

• Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents (1829)

• Prison Discipline Society (1829)

• Thomas L. Harris (1850)

### 3

<i>The Schoolroom as an Extended Family</i>	35
A. The Demand for Public Schools	35
• Philadelphia Working Men's Committee (1830)	
• Philadelphia <i>National Gazette</i> (1830)	
B. The "Parental" State	39
• Horace Mann (1846)	
C. The Dilemmas of Democratic Discipline	43
• Horace Mann (1844)	
• Joseph Hale (1845)	
D. A Struggle for Mastery	48
• Edward Eggleston (1871)	
E. Schools and Mills for Girls	51
• Lucy Larcom (1889)	
F. Lessons on "A House Divided"	55
• William H. McGuffey (1857)	
G. "What Is a Young Man Fitted For, When He Takes His Degree?"	58
• Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College (1830)	

### 4

<i>Advice on Self-Culture and Sexual Identity</i>	67
A. Self-Culture	67
• William Ellery Channing (1838)	
• <i>Manual of Self-Education</i> (1842)	
• Henry Ward Beecher (1846)	
B. The "Restless, Anxious Longing" of American Women	73
• <i>Young Lady's Own Book</i> (1833)	
• William Alcott (1850)	
• Sarah C. Edgerton (1843)	
• Catharine Beecher (1846)	

### 5

<i>Feminist Alternatives</i>	85
A. Militant Mill-Girls	85
• Harriet Robinson (1898)	

B. The Discovery of Female Enslavement	88
• Sarah Grimké (1838)	
• Wendell Phillips (1840)	
• "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848)	
• The <i>Lowell Courier's</i> Response (1848)	
C. "Discordant and Disordered Households"	93
• <i>The Lily</i> (1849 and 1855)	
D. A House Divided: Divorce	95
• Ernestine Potowsky Rose (1860)	

## UNIT TWO

---

### Struggles Over Access to Wealth and Power 99

#### I

#### "*The Anxious Spirit of Gain*" 105

##### A. The Discontents of Limitless Aspiration 105

- Alexis de Tocqueville (1840)
- J. N. Bellows (1843)
- Henry W. Bellows (1845)

##### B. Speculation and Community 115

- Timothy Flint (1826)
- D. W. Mitchell (1862)
- Harriet Martineau (1837)
- Walter Colton (1850)
- Bayard Taylor (1850)

#### 2

#### *Access to Land* 129

##### A. The Demand for Land as a Natural Right 129

- Memorial to Congress, *Mechanics' Free Press* (1828)
- Thomas Skidmore (1829)
- *True Workingman* (1846)

##### B. The Right of Access Versus the Rights of Landlords 136

- James Fenimore Cooper (1845)
- Debates on a Homestead Bill (1852)

## 3

<i>The Changing Uses of Law</i>	145
A. Two Versions of Law for the Frontier	145
• David Crockett (1834)	
• Joseph Story (1821)	
B. The Common Law in America	150
• Joseph Story (1829)	
• Henry Dwight Sedgwick (1824)	
C. Modifications	155
• <i>Van Ness v. Pacard</i> (1829)	
• Gullian Verplanck (1835)	
• <i>Farwell v. Boston and Worcester Railroad</i> (1842)	
• John Ramsey McCulloch (1826)	

## 4

<i>“Improvements”: Transportation and Corporations</i>	163
A. The Charles River Bridge	163
• Isaac Parker (1829)	
• Roger Taney (1837)	
• Joseph Story (1837)	
B. Canals and Railroads	169
• Ohio Board of Canal Commissioners (1824)	
• Ohio Board of Canal Commissioners (1825)	
• Nathan Hale (1837)	
C. Financing Internal Improvements	173
• Charles Francis Adams (1840)	
• <i>American Railroad Journal</i> (1851)	
D. Corporations and the Public Interest	179
• <i>American Jurist and Law Magazine</i> (1830)	
• William Leggett (1834)	

## 5

<i>The Politics of Opportunity</i>	183
A. Antimasonic Revivalism	183
• Moses Thatcher (1830)	

- B. Democratic Ideology 187  
 • Andrew Jackson (1837)
- C. Whig Ideology 195  
 • Calvin Colton (1844)

## 6

- The Fear of Sectional Exclusion* 199
- A. Beginnings of Sectional Rivalry 199  
 • Thomas Hart Benton (Recalling 1828)
- B. “What Is It That Has Endangered the Union?” 201  
 • John C. Calhoun (1850)

## UNIT THREE

---

- The Plight of Outsiders in an “Open Society”** 209

### I

- The Protestant Establishment* 217
- A. The Limits of Religious Dissent 217  
 • Stephen Colwell (1854)  
 • *Commonwealth v. Kneeland* (1838)
- B. Excluding Mormons and Catholics 222  
 • Anti-Mormonism in Illinois (1845)  
 • Thomas R. Whitney (1856)

### 2

- The Problem of Aborigines: Assimilation Versus Removal* 231
- A. The Hope of Christianization 231  
 • American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1824)  
 • Henry Benjamin Whipple (1860)
- B. The Rationale for Removal 237  
 • James Monroe (1817)  
 • Andrew Jackson (1830)
- C. Indian Responses 242  
 • Pushmataha (1811)  
 • *Memorial and Protest of the Cherokee Nation* (1836)

- D. The Indian as an Object of Sympathy and Hate 247
- George Catlin (1841)
  - *Western Monthly Magazine* (1833)

### 3

*The Discovery of Cultural Polarities* 253

- A. Hispanic Americans 253
- William W. H. Davis (1857)
  - Juan Nepomuceno Cortina (1859)
- B. A Chinese-American Protest 262
- Norman Assing (1852)
- C. The Five Points: The Response to Outsiders Inside 265
- The Old Brewery (1854)
  - *McDowall's Journal* (1834)

### 4

*The Nonfreedom of "Free Blacks"* 273

- A. "Getting Rid of Them" 273
- Thomas Jefferson (1824)
- B. "We See, In Effect, Two Nations—One White and Another Black" 278
- William Chambers (1854)
- C. "Though We Are Not Slaves, We Are Not Free" 283
- Protest from Black Philadelphia (1817)
  - Abraham Camp (1818)
  - A Black Memorial to the Citizens of Baltimore (1826)
- D. A Revolutionary Appeal 287
- David Walker (1829)
- E. Organizing Free Blacks 293
- First Annual Convention (1830)
- F. The Coercion of a Black Priest 295
- Peter Williams (1834)
- G. The "Killing Influence" of Prejudice 298
- Theodore S. Wright (1837)
- H. A Militant Appeal to Slaves 300
- Henry Highland Garnet (1843)

I. An Appeal for Black Skilled Labor	304
• Frederick Douglass (1853)	
J. Black Disillusionment	308
• Martin Delany (1852)	

## 5

<i>The Polarized South: Outsiders Inside</i>	315
A. "So the Last Shall Be First, and the First Last" (Matthew, 20:16)	315
• Nat Turner (1831)	
B. Slave Labor	318
• Solomon Northup (1855)	
C. Slave Voices	322
• George Skipwith (1847)	
• Lucy Skipwith (1863)	
• Maria Perkins (1852)	
D. Managing Slaves and White Overseers	325
• <i>De Bow's Review</i> (1855)	
• <i>Farmers' Register</i> (1837)	
• Stancil Barwick (1855)	
E. "A Distinct and Rather Dispicable Class"	330
• Frederick Law Olmsted (1856)	
F. The Proslavery Argument	332
• Thomas R. Dew (1832)	
• William Harper (1837)	
G. Polarized South, Polarized Nation	340
• Hinton R. Helper (1857)	

## UNIT FOUR

---

### Ideals of Progress, Perfection, and Mission 345

<b>I</b>	
<i>Science, Machines, and Human Progress</i>	353
A. The Influence of Baconian Philosophy	353
• Samuel Tyler (1843)	



- B. A Defense of “Mechanism” and Technology 359  
• Timothy Walker (1831)
- C. The Motors of Perpetual Progress 362  
• Thomas Ewbank (1849)

## 2

### *Revivals, Holiness, and the American Conversion of the World* 367

- A. True Progress Depends on Christianity 367  
• *New Englander* (1847)
- B. The Science of Revivalism 370  
• Charles Grandison Finney (1835)  
• Frances Trollope (1832)  
• Lyman Beecher (1831)
- C. The Promise of American Protestantism 379  
• William Ellery Channing (c. 1831)  
• Philip Schaff (1855)
- D. Holiness Through Submission 385  
• Phoebe Palmer (1851)  
• *Quarterly Christian Spectator* (1853)

## 3

### *The Temperance Reformation* 393

- A. Moral Influence: The Diffusion of Knowledge 393  
• Lyman Beecher (1826)  
• Thomas S. Grimké (1833)
- B. Compassion for the Fallen 400  
• John Bartholomew Gough (1869)  
• Abraham Lincoln (1842)
- C. Coercion Replaces Moral Suasion 407  
• *American Temperance Magazine* (1852)

## 4

### *Abolitionism and Moral Progress* 411

- A. The Lessons and Imperatives of History 411  
• William Goodell (1853)

B. The Burden of All Reformers	418
• William Lloyd Garrison (1860)	
C. Explaining “Immediate Emancipation”	422
• The New-England Anti-Slavery Society (1833)	
• Declaration of National Anti-Slavery Convention (1833)	
• Instructions to Theodore Dwight Weld (1833)	
D. Conflicts of Conscience and Priority	428
• Theodore Weld to Lewis Tappan (1835)	
• Charles Grandison Finney to Theodore Weld (1836)	
E. Chattel Slavery Versus “Wages Slavery”	432
• William West (1847)	
F. Reinterpreting the Constitution	434
• Lysander Spooner (1845)	

## 5

<i>The Quest for New Social Harmonies</i>	441
A. Man the Reformer	441
• Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841)	
B. A Manifesto Against Individualism	444
• Robert Owen (1825)	
C. The Completion of Perfection	447
• John Humphrey Noyes (1837)	
• <i>Declaration of Sentiments</i> , Boston Peace Convention (1838)	
• Albert Brisbane (1843)	

## 6

<i>Transcending Human History: Americans as “Pioneers of the World”</i>	453
A. “We Have Monopolized the Best of Time and Space”	453
• Gullian C. Verplanck (1836)	
• Bronson Alcott (1834)	
• Walt Whitman (1846)	
B. “The Past Is Dead, and Has No Resurrection”	457
• Herman Melville (1850)	
C. America as the Modern Rome	459
• Arnold Guyot (1849)	

D. Slavery as the Barrier to Fulfillment	461
• Theodore Parker (1855)	
• Abraham Lincoln (1858)	
E. "Submission or Secession"	463
• William Henry Holcombe (1860)	
F. "A New Birth of Freedom"	467
• Abraham Lincoln (1863)	
<i>Chronology, 1820–1860</i>	469