Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain the impact rapid urbanization had on the nation.
2. Address the rise of immigration from the 1820s to 1850s and identify the causes, characteristics, and effects of these instances of mass immigration.
3. Define the idea of “Utopia” and how it contributed to the philosophy of cultural groups during this time period.
4. Explain the origins, objectives, and consequences of reform movements during the era and note not only the social consequences but the political consequences as well.
5. Identify the frontier lands of the period, the advances Americans made into them and the impact their settlement had on America – especially slavery and the resulting sectionalism.
6. Identify the political parties of the time period and compare and contrast their positions on the issues of the day.
7. State the causes, key elements, and results of the Mexican-American War.

Unit Summary

Unit VII is composed of Chapters 13 and 14. This unit addresses some of the major issues that began to rock America to its core. Expansion composed an ever increasing element of American ideology and many Americans began to note the inconsistencies of liberty and prosperity within the nation and sought to establish various reforms.

Chapter 13 addresses a growing realization for reform. From these ideas a new push for the rights of women, slavery, prisoners, the mentally ill, and immigrants all emerged. Though many of the issues that were considered necessary for reform were in the South, many of the major issues found their first chance of reform in the North.

Chapter 14 discusses the expansion into the Western territories and how it highlighted many key reasons for the Civil War. The roles of foreign relations affected America as conflict over territory led to violence and bloodshed with Mexico and Britain. New major territories like Oregon, California, and Texas took center stage with the American population, and the constant debates over “free state” or “slave state” continued to incite debate and argument. The gold rush assured the fate of California, but the constant controversies caused a lack of understanding between the growing hostilities in the North and South.

This unit evaluates the evolving American character. Americans began to change society to create a more perfect union. However, the old theme of expansion continued to drive the American spirit. Expansion would involve the nation in international conflicts and bring the issue of slavery to the forefront of American politics once again. Increasingly, it became clear that compromise could not continue to settle the volatile issue.