Reforming Antebellum Society

Thesis: “Reform in 1830s America varied greatly. Some Americans pursued utopian perfectionism, while others focused on practical reform. The most successful reform efforts combined both.”

I. Perfectionist Reform and Utopianism
   A. Reformist America as redeemer nation

   B. The Dilemmas of Reform
      1. What to change first? behavior or institutions

      2. Partial or total change?

   C. Utopian Communities: Oneida & the Shakers
      1. Model alternatives

      2. Oneida

      3. The Shakers

   D. Other Utopias
      1. Sinful environments or sinful people?

      2. Robert Owen and New Harmony

   E. Millerites and Mormons
      1. Millerites (aka Seventh-Day Adventists)

      2. Mormons
II. Reforming Society
A. Reforming specific social evils

B. Temperance
   1. temperance societies preach "moderation"
   2. ATS preaches total abstinence
   3. disagreement over goals and methods

C. Health and Sexuality

D. Humanizing the Asylum
   1. idealism & improvement of social institutions
   2. mixed results

E. Working-Class Reform
   1. forming unions & workingmen's parties
   2. emphasizing the practical
III. Abolitionism and Women’s Rights
A. Uniting practical reform & utopian perfectionism

B. Tensions Within the Antislavery Movement
   1. gradual emancipation
   2. Garrison and immediate abolitionism
   3. Black abolitionists

C. Abolitionism gains strength in 1840s

D. Women’s Rights
   1. challenging the cult of domesticity
   2. men divide over women's rights