

2  **SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY:
ECONOMIC CHANGE &
THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS**

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3  **I. THE RISE OF SENTIMENTAL CULTURE**

Legacy of the Enlightenment & the Revolution

- **Positive revaluation of women's moral nature, social role**
- **Self-determination: Liberal individualism encouraged idea that every person had a self, an inner life with its own integrity that should be valued and respected.**
 - Important basis of democracy & egalitarianism
- **Out of Lockean sensationalism & Scottish moral sense philosophy grew the idea of "sensibility," a physical emotional response to beauty & sadness encountered in life**
 - Formerly associated with ignorance, irrationality, & femininity, a certain emotionalism (including tears) became fashionable, even for men
 - Melancholy OK, not anger or other extreme emotions
 - Most important aspect was "sympathy," faculty of feeling for others, basis of many Rev-era reforms
 - Whole "sentimental" culture grew up around the search for beautiful, uplifting emotional experiences
 - Literature, art, letters, & conversations (about feelings)
- **Novels were important cultural force popularizing sentimentalism & related ideas**
 - Allowed readers to experience new emotions by living someone else's life: *Power of Sympathy & Charlotte Temple*
 - Dramatized dangers of self-determination, especially for the socially & economically powerless (young women), but also fed readers' admiration of it, sought to empower girls
- **Sentimentalism & politics**
 - "The Pursuit of Happiness": Jefferson's phrase reflected growing American sentimental belief that freely finding personal emotional fulfillment was highest goal
 - Sentimentalism fueled new political feelings like loyalty to nations, parties (*Jefferson and Liberty*), causes (abolitionism).

4  **II. THE "MARKET REVOLUTION" & NORTHERN SOCIAL**

CHANGE

- ◆ **“Market Revolution” = a general term for the integration, modernization, & rapid development of the U.S. national economy in the 19th century**
 - Made possible by the Transportation Revolution that began with the building of the National Road & the Erie Canal & the invention of the steamboat in the early 19th century, followed by building of the railroads
 - M.R. was precursor to Industrial Revolution, went along with westward expansion, urbanization, democratization, & other vast social-cultural changes.
 - Represented triumph of capitalism over cultural tradition & rural isolation.
 - Changes especially strong along new transportation routes like the Erie Canal, where market forces were felt most strongly & new cities sprung up overnight.
- ◆ **Economic & social life became more competitive, entrepreneurial, individualistic, but also more highly organized & institutionalized.**
 - Rise of the private corporations (including limited liability for shareholders), national charitable & business organizations.
 - Rise of key modern institutions like public schools, banks, insurance companies.
 - Artisanal shops replaced by factories & mass production in many industries.
- ◆ **More people became wage laborers & consumers rather than independent producers, such as farmers or artisans (craftsmen).**
 - Formation of social classes, growing gap between rich & poor.
 - Un- or less skilled factory work for many, middle-class “white collar” occupations (businessmen, clerks, professionals) for others, serious wealth for a few.
 - Ideology that anyone could succeed/rise in a “free labor” society.
- ◆ **In general: greater opportunities but more pressure on individuals to succeed & find own place in world.**



III. THE NEW MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY

- ◆ **Impact of Market Revolution (class formation, rise of wage labor, decline of household economy)**
 - Physical sites of home & work separated, by building and/or neighborhood. “Only” family & personal servants in homes.
 - Change completed in role of family & home from economic production to emotional nurture (love) and moral/religious teaching.
 - Home life became “private” life for 1st time, a “haven in a heartless world,” sentimentalized as place where competition, money-making,

politics, immoral behavior did not belong.

- ◆ **The “Cult of Domesticity” – sentimental ideology of the new middle-class family**
 - Popularized by ministers, reformers, novels, advice-book writers like Catherine Beecher (1870.)
 - Also known as “cult of true womanhood” or the doctrine of “separate spheres”
 - Middle-class women lost some economic & political roles but gained allegedly equal role in society as chief nurturers & teachers in the new private households that were now upheld as society’s most important unit.
 - **Ambivalent place of men:**
 - Public & economic spheres ceded to men, but . . .
 - Men were also dangerous & in need of control: women charged with restraining male immorality.
 - Domesticity enshrined new idealized wife/mother as linchpin & tone-setter for society.