

UNIT 20  
1831—*The Liberator*

Anti-slavery societies were active in the North by the 1780's, but during the years that followed, the solutions they offered to slavery varied widely. At first, public sentiment was generally that slavery would die out by itself. Then, as cotton planting grew in the South, so did the demand for slaves. By the 1830's a new group of radical abolitionists became active. In 1831 one of them, William Lloyd Garrison, founded *The Liberator* in Boston. In his first edition of *The Liberator*, Garrison made this famous pledge:

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I am aware, that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife

from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; —but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. [*The Liberator*, Vol. I, No. 1, January 1, 1831]

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—Questions—

1. Do you think Garrison and *The Liberator* were representative of the abolition movement as a whole?
2. How do you think the southern states reacted to Garrison?
3. Do you think Garrison kept his promise to be heard?

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**GLOSSARY** **equivocate**—speak uncertainly  
**extricate**—set free, get out  
**moderation**—avoiding extremes

**ravisher**—rapist  
**uncompromising**—inflexible, rigid

