



JOHN BROWN

and Radical Abolition

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PRIMARY SOURCE

Americans had a wide variety of opinions on John Brown, ranging from admiration to disgust. Here is a sample of this variety.

Reverend Charles Jones:

"There is a covert, cowardly, assassin-like heart in these men. Why do they not arm and come to the field in open day? From the tone of the abolition press in the free states, both secular and religious, there is great sympathy for the prisoners at Harpers Ferry. Some go so far as to justify the act, and only condemn the time and manner of it! The whole abolition crusade which has been preached for thirty years ends in the sword. The volunteering of council for the prisoners from the free states is another proof of sympathy in their crime, and an insult to the justice of the South."



Author Henry David Thoreau:

"I plead not for his life, but for his character -- his immortal life; and so it becomes your cause wholly, and is not his in the least. Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified; this morning, perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are the two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not Old Brown any longer; he is an angel of light..."



Abraham Lincoln:

"Old John Brown has been executed for treason against a State. We cannot object, even though he agreed with us in thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed and treason..."

Thoreau photo National Archives. Last photo of Lincoln by Alexander Gardner April 10, 1865, Library of Congress

Research Corner

Using your newspaper, magazines or the Internet, research people or groups who use violence to promote their causes. Prepare a report on the group and what they hope to achieve by the use of violence. Is this the most effective method? Why or why not? What common terms do we typically use to describe these people?

FAST FACTS

John Brown

- Silas Soule, an abolitionist friend of John Brown, managed to get into the prison where Brown was held and plan for his escape. Brown refused the plan, preferring to die as a martyr.
- After the Harpers Ferry raid, John Brown's name became a substitute for curse words for some Southerners. This practice continued for decades.
- John Brown's Bible is currently displayed at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. It was purchased from a private collector in Springfield, Mo., where the proceeds helped in the construction of a new Civil War museum.

WRITE ON

Write an essay addressing the questions below. Read your essay aloud and discuss as a class.

1. Why did John Brown consider slavery to be such a horrible evil? What were the worst parts of slavery? Why would slavery be worth fighting against?
2. What do you believe were John Brown's greatest positives? What were his negatives? Which are more important?
3. Was John Brown a success or a failure? Why or why not?

VOCABULARY

Place the letter of the vocabulary word on the line next to its definition. Write a sentence using each word.

Massacre	___ 1.	A machine used for removing the seeds from raw cotton
Insurrection	___ 2.	A war between the U.S. and Mexico in which the territory that became the American Southwest was gained
Emancipation	___ 3.	Those who favored the end of slavery in the United States
Abomination	___ 4.	The release of slaves from bondage; freedom
Cotton gin	___ 5.	Having or deserving a bad reputation
Militias	___ 6.	An outrage or disgrace
Mexican War	___ 7.	A slaughter or mass execution
Infamous	___ 8.	An uprising or rebellion
Abolitionists	___ 9.	Military units that are usually made up of local volunteers
Condemned	___ 10.	Actions of betrayal against one's country
Treason	___ 11.	Spoke out against. Disapproved of

VOCABULARY WORD SEARCH

Find each of the vocabulary words listed above.

M	Z	E	I	S	Z	J	C	O	C	V	N	R	X	W
E	N	S	A	Q	A	P	B	O	D	O	N	S	V	S
X	Z	X	Y	B	N	I	T	C	I	B	E	U	F	T
I	Y	Q	O	Q	O	T	T	T	A	R	J	O	P	S
C	C	M	L	G	O	M	C	I	C	Y	K	M	M	I
A	B	T	A	N	O	E	I	A	L	P	M	A	L	N
N	N	R	G	R	R	M	S	N	Z	I	W	F	F	O
W	O	I	E	R	T	S	H	B	A	S	M	N	O	I
A	N	P	U	B	A	Y	M	H	R	T	K	I	B	T
R	G	S	C	M	M	W	R	Q	P	D	I	L	O	I
C	N	E	M	A	N	C	I	P	A	T	I	O	N	L
I	U	F	E	D	E	N	M	E	D	N	O	C	N	O
S	D	B	O	F	W	M	N	Q	W	T	B	G	N	B
P	L	P	F	Q	J	Z	E	X	J	Y	Q	N	P	A
T	R	E	A	S	O	N	J	E	T	T	M	C	I	H

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GLEs: R1E, R1H, R1I, W1A, W2A, W3A, SS 3a I