

**DBQ****JOHN BROWN**

## CHAPTER 14

**Directions:** The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents A-H *and* your knowledge of the period referred to in the position. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period. Some of the documents have been edited, and wording and punctuation have been modernized. Be sure to:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

**Question:** John Brown's raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859, involved only a handful of abolitionists, freed no slaves, and was over in two days. Although many Northerners condemned the raid, by 1863 John Brown had become a hero and martyr in the North. To what extent and in what ways do the views about John Brown expressed in the documents illustrate changing North-South relations between 1859 and 1863?

**Document A**

Source: Horace Greeley, editorial, *New York Tribune* (December 3, 1859)

"We are not those who say, 'If slavery is wrong; then John Brown was wholly right.' There are fit and unfit modes of combating a great evil; we think Brown at Harper's Ferry pursued the latter. . . . And, while we heartily wish every slave in the world would run away from his master tomorrow and never be retaken, we should not feel justified in entering a slave state to incite them to do so, even if we were sure to succeed in the enterprise. Of course, we regard Brown's raid as utterly mistaken and, in its direct consequences, pernicious.

"But his are the errors of a fanatic, not the crimes of a felon,"

**Document B**

Source: Frederick Douglass, letter to a group of abolitionists (July 4, 1860)

"To have been acquainted with John Brown, shared his counsels, enjoyed his confidence, and sympathized with the great objects of his life and death, I esteem as among the highest privileges of my life. We do but honor to ourselves in doing honor to him, for it implies the possession of qualities akin to his."

## Document C

Source: "The Last Days of John Brown." Henry David Thoreau (1859)

"Men have been hung in the South before for attempting to rescue slaves, and the North was not much stirred by it. Whence, then, this wonderful difference? We were not so sure of [the] devotion [of these men] to principle. We [Northerners] made a subtle distinction [in regard to John Brown], forgot human laws, and did homage to an idea. The North, I mean the living North, was suddenly all transcendental. It went behind the human law, it went behind the apparent failure, and recognized eternal justice and glory. Commonly, men live according to a formula, and are satisfied if the order of law is observed, but in this instance they, to some extent, returned to original perceptions, and there was a slight revival of old religion."

## Document D

Source: Editorial, *Topeka Tribune* (November 19, 1859)

"There are two classes of men who apologize for 'Old Brown.' The one does so openly, boldly and without fear. These men, belonging to the Wendell Phillips school, call him patriot and christian. They class him with ... a Washington and a Bolivar, bestowing upon him all the praise due to a hero and a philanthropist. The other class, beneath a veil so thin that a fool can see the device, calling themselves law and order men, lovers of peace—Republicans, forsooth—apologize for Brown by publishing in their papers every word they can catch in his praise. . . .

"These two classes are alike the friends and comforters of Brown, one by open praise, and the other in a tacit endorsement by telling what somebody else has said, making themselves more than Phillips, the instruments in building up a reputation of martyr for Brown and his confederates."

## Document E

Source: Review of James Redpath's *The Public Life of Captain John Brown*, as printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1860)

". . . a [biography] of Brown was . . . greatly needed for . . . the mass of the Northern community, whose timidity had been startled at Brown's rash attempt, whose sympathy had been more or less awakened by his bearing and his death, but who were and are in a painful state of perplexity, in the endeavor to reconcile their abhorrence, or at least their disapproval of his attack on Virginia, with their sense of the admirable nature of the qualities he displayed. . . . [But the tone of this biography] is . . . so violent, so extravagant, that it will offend all right-thinking men. . . .

". . . This book is written in the spirit and style of an Abolition tract. In representing John Brown as little more than a mere hero of the Abolitionists, the author has done essential disservice . . . to the memory of a man who was as free from party-ties as he was from personal ambitions. . . .

"He was a man of a rare type. . . . He belonged to the same class with the Scottish Covenanters and the English Regicides . . . to the great company of those who have followed the footsteps of Gideon, and forgot that the armory of the Lord contained other weapons than the sword. He belonged to those who from time to time have adopted some cause . . . and have shrunk from no sacrifice which it required at their hands. . . .

"The lesson of manliness, uprightness, and courage, which his life teaches, is to be learned by us, not merely as lovers of liberty, not as opponents of slavery, but as men who need more manliness, more uprightness, more courage and simplicity in our common lives."

**Document F**

Source: Campaign speech by Abraham Lincoln, Hartford, Connecticut, as reported in the *Hartford Press* (March 4, 1860)

“The [Democrats] are given to ‘bushwhacking.’ After having their errors and mis-statements continually thrust in their faces, they pay no heed, but go on howling about Seward and the ‘irrepressible conflict.’ That is ‘bushwhacking.’ So with John Brown and Harpers Ferry. They charge it upon the Republican party and ignominiously fail in all attempts to substantiate the charge. Yet they go on with their bushwhacking, the pack in full cry after John Brown.

“The Democrats had just been whipped in [some state elections], and seized upon the unfortunate Harpers Ferry affair to influence other elections then pending.”

**Document G**

Source: Civil War song

**The Old Song**

John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave;  
John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave;  
John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave;  
But his soul is marching on.

CHORUS:

Glory, glory Hallelujah!  
Glory, glory Hallelujah!  
Glory, glory Hallelujah!  
His soul is marching on.

He’s gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord;  
He’s gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord;  
He’s gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord;  
But his soul is marching on.

## Document H

Source: Imaginary rendering of John Brown meeting the slave mother on the way to the scaffold, Currier & Ives lithograph (1863)



### Referencing the Documents:

1. John Smith, in *History of Virginia*, said: “. . . .”
2. In Document A, John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony agreed with. . . .
3. In the Wage and Price Regulations in Connecticut, . . . (Document E).