

John brown: abolitionist essay



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John Brown was a radical abolitionist whose fervent hatred of slavery led him to turn to violence for his cause. He wanted to see the end of slavery, was completely willing to fight for its removal, and proved so when he said, “ I, John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood”. In the years before the Civil War, Brown and his followers took the first step against slavery and fought the Missouri Border Ruffians (proPELLERS citizens). Soon, he led his followers to the South where he invaded the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

John Brown was an abolitionist who only wanted freedom for slaves, but through his violent actions, he helped stoke the tensions that pushed the United States into the Civil War. John Brown was born into a deeply religious and anti-slavery family that owned a successful tannery on May 9, 1800 in Darlington, Connecticut. When Brown was only five, his family moved to Ohio where his mother died from poor health. Due to his family background and his mother’s death, Brown became hardworking and deeply religious so that he could help take care of his siblings.

In some ways, he could be described as a “ self-made man” like Andrew Jackson. Over the course of his life, Brown had many financial failures, two wives, and twenty children. Only eleven of his children lived to adulthood. Brown’s background helped him to become the abolitionist he is recognized as today. John Brown was the eldest son of Owen and Ruth Brown. He had seven siblings: Salmon, an unnamed son, Anna, another Salmon, Oliver, Frederick, and Sally Brown. The first Salmon died two years after birth. Sally and the unnamed infant died at birth. The others lived to at least their thirties.

At fifteen, Brown “[swore] eternal war with slavery’ when he saw a slave beaten like a moon dog. Brown married two times. He first married Diamanté Lush and bore seven children with her. She died of childbirth at age thirty-one. His second wife was Mary Ann Day. They bore thirteen children; she died of illness at age sixty-seven. Brown recruited many of his sons in his fight against slavery. Brown had many financial failures. In the beginning, his tannery was very successful, but he took too many rash risks in order to upgrade his businesses. One time, in a foolish move, he used some of a partner’s money for a private deal.

The partner sued Brown; therefore, he had to declare bankruptcy in 1842. No matter how much he tried afterwards, Brown could never find his earlier success. It was good thing because with his mind off financial success, Brown could concentrate on abolition. In order to free the slaves of the South, Brown came up with a plan. It had three parts. In the first stage, a few armed men would seek out safe places for slaves to hide in the hills of the Appalachian Mountains. Then, the men would sneak out slaves from a few plantations into the hiding places. Once one hundred slaves were gathered, stage two would begin.

The bravest slaves would join to make an army. Those who wanted to leave were free to leave. Stage three was to expand the area from which the slaves escaped. After telling his plan to Frederick Douglass, a black abolitionist, Douglass remarked, uniform walking into a perfect steel-trap, and you will never get out alive”. Brown abandoned his plan, but continued to strategies for abolition. The Kansas- Anoraks Act was an 1854 law Tanat

standalone ten territories AT Anoraks Ana Kansas giving the settlers the right of popular sovereignty to decide on the issue of slavery.

After the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed, the Brown family moved to rather Kansas to try to make it a free state (it was not yet decided at that time). Almost immediately, violence erupted. Border Ruffians, the propellers Kansas populace, tried to frighten the antislavery group. Some Kansas did not join in the Ruffian's activities, but still supported slavery. The Doyle family was one of these families. They welcomed Ruffians into their household, but did not take part in their activities. One night, the Ruffians captured a settlement, Lawrence, in 1856. They destroyed homes and smashed the press of a Free-soil newspaper.

This angered Brown and many of his followers. Brown, four of his sons, and two of Brown's followers set out into the night and murdered most of the Doyle family and many of their neighbors. In total, five citizens' blood was shed. This was known as the Pottawatomie Massacre. The bloodshed for antislavery had begun. The Pottawatomie Massacre led to even more violence. The two sides fighting over slavery fought furiously and engaged in the guerrilla warfare. Basically, it was the use of hit-and-run tactics. Soon, Brown and his followers became hunted criminals and were known as guerrilla or the Pottawatomie Rifles.

At the same time, Brown became an antislavery symbol for the Kansas free-starter. In 1857, with the " Secret Six", he raised money for the antislavery cause. The " Secret Six", or the " Secret Committee of Six", were six wealthy and influential men who secretly funded Brown. They were Thomas

Wentworth Higgins, Samuel Grilled Howe, Theodore Parker, Franklin Benjamin Sandbar, Gerri Smith, and George Luther Stearns. All Six had been involved in the abolitionist cause prior to their meeting Brown, and had gradually become convinced that slavery would not die out peacefully.

They had agreed with Brown that they could attack the Kansas propellers citizens first, but Brown changed his mind. His eyes were set for Virginia. The raid on Harpers Ferry was soon to begin. Brown made his crucial decision to invade Harpers Ferry in 1859. Even his most devoted volunteers said that the odds against them were enormous. They feared the Southern states would bring their own troops and the government's troops against Brown. For this reason, many of Brown's followers left him right before the raid started. The armory at Harpers Ferry belonging to the U. S. Government was where Brown was attacking.

He thought that his forces could take it and enslaved African Americans would flock to him for freedom at the arsenal. After that, the mob, consisting of Brown, his followers, and a huge group of slaves, would use the weapons there against the propellers populace. On October 16, 1859, the raid started. Brown took two of his sons (Oliver and Watson) and fifteen followers into Harpers Ferry. News of the fight spread and one person reported that a group of one hundred fifty was attacking the town. Government forces arrived and surprised Brown. The local militia soon joined the government forces.

This prevented Owen, Brown's other son, from leading in a group of reinforcements for the raid. Brown waited all morning of October 17 for

backups. Shortly after seven o'clock in the morning, a Harpers Ferry townspeople, Thomas Overly, was shot and killed near the corner of High and Shenandoah streets. It was the first death in the raid. By two o'clock, Brown realized that there was no chance for escape. One volunteer walked out of the armory with a white flag requesting a truce. As a result, he was taken prisoner and locked up. Watson was sent out next. Immediately, he was shot down with an enemy bullet.

Watson crawled back to the armory as the shooting started. Lives were lost on both sides and at the end, Oliver Brown and Watson Brown laid together side-by-side, dead. Only four men remained alive with Brown when night fell. On the morning of October 18, the troops knocked down the armory door and in three minutes, Brown and his men were defeated. When the soldiers asked why he had gone and raided the armory, Brown replied, " We came to free the slaves, and only that". Brown and his remaining followers were to be sent to jail for his violent proceedings for abolition. The government officials knew that Brown was a threat even in jail.

His words against slavery would go all around the country. Even as Brown was being led into jail, people were discussing him and Harpers Ferry. Therefore, the officials hurriedly planned his trial for October 25, 1859. Brown had little time to heal, much less prepare a defense. His only hope lay in people's sympathy for him. On October 26, Brown and his men were charged with murder and plotting a slave rebellion. On October 31, the jury found Brown guilty and sentenced him to execution. In Brown's last speech at the trial, he agrees that he did turn to violence for his cause, but said, " I feel no unconsciousness of guilt".

On December 2, 1859, John Brown was executed for fighting slavery. John Brown was a symbol of freedom for the African American slaves of the South, but was also the fuel for the flames of the Civil War. Brown was a father, a criminal, but a hero, and above all, he was a devoted abolitionist. All of his 59 years on the face of the earth was used to fight against slavery. It is true that his raid on Harpers Ferry was unsuccessful and had not abolished slavery as Brown had set out to do, but he influenced future generations to eliminate slavery.

Northerners saw him as a martyr, while Southerners became convinced that the North wanted to destroy slavery and the South. The nation was poised for a violent war over the matter of slavery. On the morning that Brown was executed, church bells of the North rang. In the years that followed Brown's death, New Englanders sang, " John Brown's body lies a moldering in the grave, but his soul is marching on". After the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln freed all slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation. Whatever individuals thought of him, John Brown played a crucial leadership role in abolition.