

John brown the legend revealed book review examples

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



John Brown was one of the most influential figures in American Civil War history; a famed abolitionist, he led the Pottawatomie Massacre and raided Harper's Ferry, without success. Being an important white figure in the abolition movement, he has proven an important person to study when contemplating the Civil War and the fight to free the slaves. In his trial and execution, Brown turned out to be an incredibly important martyr to the cause of abolition. Merrill Peterson's biography *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* " is an extended meditation on the life of John Brown and his place in American thought and imagination from the time of his death in 1859 to the near-present" (xi). More than looking at the man himself, Peterson attempts to figure out just how his story fits into the American canon. While doing that, the book also establishes the mercurial figure that he was, attempting to understand who he was and how he worked.

In the first chapter, Peterson establishes the primary gist of John Brown's story - his myriad jobs, his financial difficulties, the death of his wife and children. These misfortunes are then linked by him to the plight of the slaves in the South, giving him a spiritual connection to them that made him sympathize with them directly. This was the inspiration for his " divine mission: to free the country of slavery" (5). He then moved up to the Adirondacks and helped African Americans make their way to Canada.

Moving to Kansas after the doctrine of popular sovereignty was passed in 1854, Brown and his sons proceeded to take action against slavery. Killing five settlers at Pottawatomie Creek, he continued his campaign of terror

against slave owners, hoping to discourage slavery altogether through his borderline terrorist attacks. Brown was committed to this task: " There will be no peace in this land until slavery is done for. I will give them something else to do than extend slave territory. I will carry the war to Africa" (p. 6).

Petersons' book demonstrates Brown's importance, which came during the last month of his life. Finally captured and on trial to be executed, Brown made many speeches, most or all of which are now thought of to be extremely interesting and provocative anti-slavery messages. According to Peterson, this display made Brown the man he is remembered as in the annals of history. With his own revolutionary ideas, and the lengths to which he decided he would go in favor of freeing the slaves, his actions may have been the first shot of the Civil War.

Peterson reviews the ways in which Americans remember Brown. Songs were written about him, including the 1861 gem " John Brown's Body." During the war, people related to his message; however, after the war, he began to be more controversial. Brown was often painted as a murderer who wanted to incite pro-slavery riots in the South by any means necessary (p. 63). Even in the North, he remained a mysterious, confusing figure - this made him one of the more interesting figures in Civil War history, despite not having a real consensus as to the effect of his effort (p. 73).

Works Cited

Peterson, Merril D. John Brown: The Legend Revisited. University of Virginia Press, 2004. Print.