JOHN BROWN Document Analysis

Historical Question: Was John Brown a hero or a villain?

Background Information

John Brown (May 9, 1800 – December 2, 1859) was a white American abolitionist who believed armed insurrection was the only way to overthrow the institution of slavery in the United States. During the 1856 conflict in Kansas, Brown commanded forces at the Battle of Black Jack and the Battle of Osawatomie. Brown's followers also killed five slavery supporters at Pottawatomie Creek. In 1859, Brown led an unsuccessful raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry that ended with his capture. Brown's trial resulted in his conviction and a sentence of death by hanging.
Document A

"John Brown's zeal [great energy or passion] in the cause of freedom was infinitely superior to mine. Mine was as the taper light; his was as the burning sun. I could live for the slave; John Brown could die for him. The American people and the Government at Washington may refuse to recognize it for a time but the inexorable [impossible to stop] logic of events will force it upon them in the end; that the war now being waged in this land is a war for and against slavery.

- Frederick Douglass (Ex-slave and abolitionist)

Document G

A letter from Mahala Doyle, the wife and mother of three of Brown’s victims from the pro-slavery attack at Pottawatomie Creek, expressed her bitterness and pain in this letter to John Brown. She sent it to him in November 1859 as he awaited execution after the Harpers Ferry raid.

John Brown

Sir, Altho' vengeance is not mine, I confess that I do feel gratified to hear that you were stopped in your fiendish career at Harper's Ferry, with the loss of your two sons, you can now appreciate my distress in Kansas, when you then and there entered my house at midnight and arrested my husband and two boys, and took them out of the yard and in cold blood shot them dead in my hearing. You can't say you done it to free slaves. We had none and never expected to own one...My son John Doyle whose life I begged of you is now grown up and is very desirous to be at Charlestown on the day of your execution.
Document D


HEADQUARTERS HARPER'S FERRY:
COLONEL: I have the honor to report, for the information of the Secretary of War, that on arriving here on the night of the 17th instant, in obedience to Special Orders No. 194 of that date from your office, I learned that a party of insurgents, about 11 p. m. on the 16th, had seized the watchmen stationed at the armory, arsenal, rifle factory, and bridge across the Potomac, and taken possession of those points. They then dispatched six men, under one of their party, called Captain Aaron C. Stevens, to arrest the principal citizens in the neighborhood and incite the Negroes to join in the insurrection...

Document F

"I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land can never be purged away but with blood."

-John Brown

John Brown's last words, written on a note handed to a guard just before his execution by hanging.
TREASON!

All TRUE CHRISTIANS who believe in "Immortality through Jesus Christ alone," are requested to pray for

CAPT. JOHN BROWN,

who now is under sentence of death, and is to be hung next month for righteousness sake, and doing justly with his fellow man, his country and his God.

By request of one who loves the Truth, and feels for the man that is to die a martyr to it. J.

Somersworth, Nov. 4, 1850.
Document I

Source: Address from John Brown to the Virginia Court prior to receiving the sentence of death on November 2, 1859.

“I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done in behalf of His despised poor, is no wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood farther with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I say let it be done.”

Document H

Affidavit of John Doyle from John Brown’s attack on a pro-slavery settlement at Pottawatomie Creek.

The undersigned, John Doyle, states, upon oath… “a party of men came to our house; we had all retired; they roused us up, and told us that if we would surrender they would not hurt us. They said they were from the army; they were armed with pistols and knives; they took off my father and two of my brothers, William and Drury…I found my father and one brother, William, lying dead in the road, about two hundred yards from the house; I saw my other brother lying dead on the ground, about one hundred and fifty yards from the house, in the grass, near a ravine; his fingers were cut off; and his arms were cut off; his head was cut open; there was a hole in his breast. William's head was cut open, and a hole was in his jaw, as though it was made by a knife, and a hole was also in his side…”

- John Doyle
"Old John Brown...agreed with us thinking slavery wrong. That cannot excuse violence, bloodshed, and treason. It could avail him nothing that he might think himself right."

- Abraham Lincoln

Kendallville, Indiana

Dear friend: Although the hands of Slavery throw a barrier between you and me, and it may not be my privilege to see you in the prison house, Virginia has no bolts or bars through which I dread to send you my sympathy. In the name of the young girl sold from the warm clasp of a mother’s arms to the clutches of a libertine or profligate (a completely immoral and shameless person), - in the name of the slave mother, her heart rocked to and fro by the agony of her mournful separations -- I thank you that you have been brave enough to reach out your hands to the crushed and blighted of my race. You have rocked the bloody Bastille (a famous prison stormed and liberated during the French Revolution in 1789); and I hope from your sad fate great good may arise to the cause of freedom. Already from your prison has come a shout of triumph against the giant sin of our country....

(Written to John Brown, A letter from Frances Watkins, a free black living in Kendallville, Indiana. From "Freedom's Unfinished Revolution," by William Friedheim and The American Social History Project.)
The Last Moments of John Brown, oil on canvas painting by Thomas Hovenden.
Historical Question: Was John Brown a hero or a villain?

Document A:
The person who wrote/said these words were: Pro-Slavery  Anti-Slavery  Undetermined

What is the main idea of this quote?

This document shows that John Brown was a: Villain  Hero

Document B:
The person who wrote/said these words were: Pro-Slavery  Anti-Slavery  Undetermined

What is the main idea of this quote?

This document shows that John Brown was a: Villain  Hero

Document C:
The person who wrote/said these words were: Pro-Slavery  Anti-Slavery  Undetermined

What is the main idea of this quote?

This document shows that John Brown was a: Villain  Hero

Document D:
The person who wrote/said these words were: Pro-Slavery  Anti-Slavery  Undetermined

What is the main idea of this quote?

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Document E:
The person who wrote/said these words were: Pro-Slavery  Anti-Slavery  Undetermined

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Document F:
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Document G:
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Document H:
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Document I:
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Document J:
The person who wrote/said these words were: Pro-Slavery  Anti-Slavery  Undetermined
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**Was John Brown a hero or a villain?**

Write an argument that clearly states your opinion about the historical person John Brown. Were his actions heroic or villainous? Use FACTS from the research and statements about his actions to support your opinion. Use explanations to clarify why those facts would depict him as a hero or villain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus/ Claim</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Do!</td>
<td>Beginning sentence vaguely states your opinion.</td>
<td>Beginning sentence clearly states your opinion.</td>
<td>Uses 2 accurate and appropriate facts to support the claim.</td>
<td>Uses 3+ accurate and appropriate facts to support the claim.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts/Support</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Do!</td>
<td>Does not use accurate nor appropriate facts to support the claim.</td>
<td>Uses 1 accurate and appropriate facts to support the claim.</td>
<td>Uses 2 accurate and appropriate facts to support the claim.</td>
<td>Uses 3+ accurate and appropriate facts to support the claim.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Do!</td>
<td>The attempt to support facts with explanations is not valid.</td>
<td>1 valid explanation of how a fact supports the opinion.</td>
<td>2 valid explanations of how a fact supports the opinion.</td>
<td>3+ valid explanations of how each fact supports the opinion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposing Statement</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Do!</td>
<td>Clearly identifies an opposing argument, however, has no attempt to refute the claim.</td>
<td>Clearly identifies an opposing argument AND attempts to refute the claim.</td>
<td>Clearly identifies an opposing argument AND refutes this claim.</td>
<td>Clearly identifies an opposing argument AND refutes this claim connecting evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Finish</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Do!</td>
<td>States the opinion.</td>
<td>Uses words to enhance/strengthen the opinion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4+ grammatical errors were present.</td>
<td>1-3 grammatical errors were present.</td>
<td>No grammatical errors were present.</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spelling</th>
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<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 spelling errors were present.</td>
<td>1-3 spelling errors were present.</td>
<td>No spelling errors were present.</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Presentation</th>
<th>Below Basics (1)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Advanced (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final product was sloppy and hard to read.</td>
<td>Final product was neat and easy to read.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20
BUILDING AN ARGUMENT

MAIN IDEA
Here’s what I think...

Evidence to back up my reasons

Here are my REASONS!
1. 

2. 

3. 

COUNTER ARGUMENTS
You COULD argue that...

...but here's the WEAKNESS...

PRO
When you weigh all the evidence, you conclude that...

CON

Strong Finish!
