



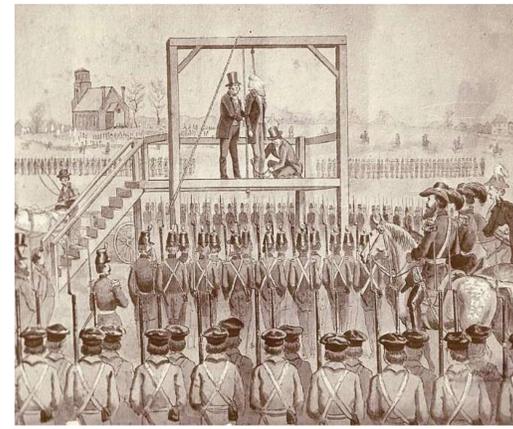
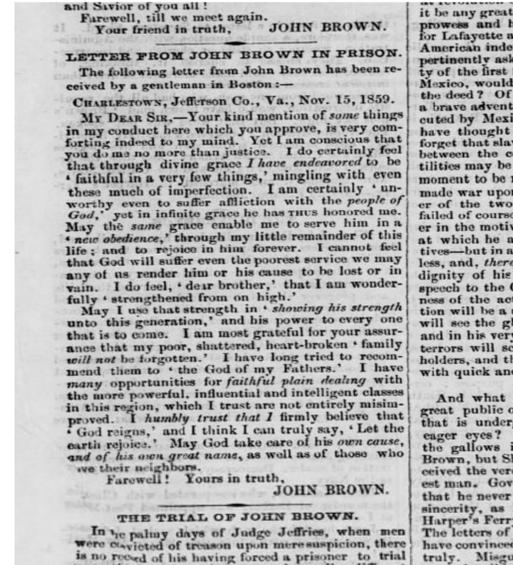
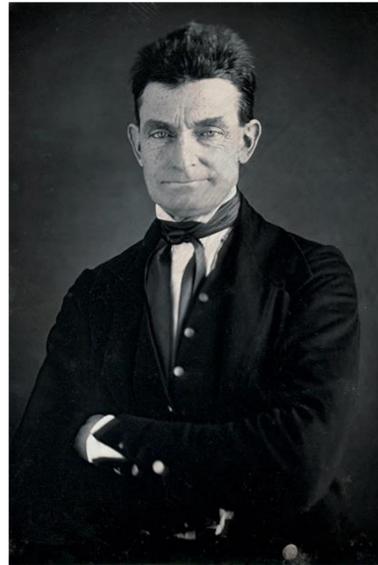
Writing His Life: The Life and Death of John Brown in Letters

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BACKGROUND

At the age of 59, on October 16, 1859, John Brown led the raid on Harpers Ferry, now famously referred to as John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry. The raid was intended to supply weapons to enslaved people so that they might fight for their freedom. However, the militia and Marines were able to stop the raid before it went any further, but not without killing 16 people, including two of Brown's sons. Brown was found guilty of the raid and was sentenced to be hanged on December 2, 1859. Within his short time in jail, Brown wrote a plethora of letters to family, friends, military leaders, and even the judge presiding over his hearing. These letters contributed to the United States Civil War and had profound impact throughout the 19th century and even today. This extended literature review aims to bring awareness to his aid in the abolition of slavery and study the influence of his presence in the 1800s.



ABSTRACT

This review analyzes the life and death of John Brown through letters – letters which were written while Brown was on death row in 1859. John Brown received the death penalty in October of 1859 and was sentenced to be hanged on December 2, 1859, for his role in the Raid on Harper's Ferry. During his short time in jail, he wrote many letters to friends and family members detailing his jail experience and instilling a sense of hope into his recipients. Since then, most of the letters have been lost to history; however, after countless hours of researching and reading, this review has compiled a collection transcribing the only letters that have survived history. Additionally, after collecting these letters, we have turned to rhetorically analyzing them. The analysis includes detailing how these letters contributed to the United States Civil War, the role of religion in the 1800s, and the importance of preserving history. These letters are incredibly important to history, and yet, there is seemingly little to no research on them. That is why this project was created: to accumulate and analyze these letters that are such an integral part of the history of the U.S.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the country, John Brown was perceived as an Americanized prophet. He was viewed as a rhetorical mastermind, using but pen and paper to carefully craft his legacy. He viewed himself as both a hero and a martyr, and he remained cheerful in the face of death. He encourages his readers – and thus, indirectly, the country as a whole – to believe in God and allow oneself to be used as an instrument according to His divine purpose. The analysis for this project is currently ongoing and not yet completed. Further research could be conducted to take a differing analytical approach to Brown's work; however, the research conducted in this project provides a successful starting point for future analyses.

METHODS

Finding the Letters

- 1) Obtaining a newspapers.com subscription

In the *Keyword* section of the website, we entered “John Brown letters;” “John Brown;” “Letters from John Brown;” “Letters written by John Brown;” John Brown “letters.” In the *Date* section of the website, we entered “1859;” “Oct. 1859;” “Nov. 1859;” “Dec. 1859;” and then one-by-one we entered “Oct. 1, 1859;” “Oct. 2, 1859;” etc.

- 2) Searching Google and FSU Libraries

One of the helpful resources: *John Brown Speaks: Letters and Statements from Charlestown* by Louis DeCaro Jr.

Transcribing the Letters

- 1) Transcribing from newspapers.com

There is no “copy-and-paste” feature, so the transcription came directly by hand. Additionally, some newspapers only included snippets of the letters, so different clippings were combined to create one letter.

- 2) Transcribing from *John Brown Speaks: Letters and Statements from Charlestown*

The author corrected Brown's misspellings, so they were re-corrected by adding “[sic]” next to words that Brown had originally misspelled to maintain his same voice and writing style.

REFERENCES/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

