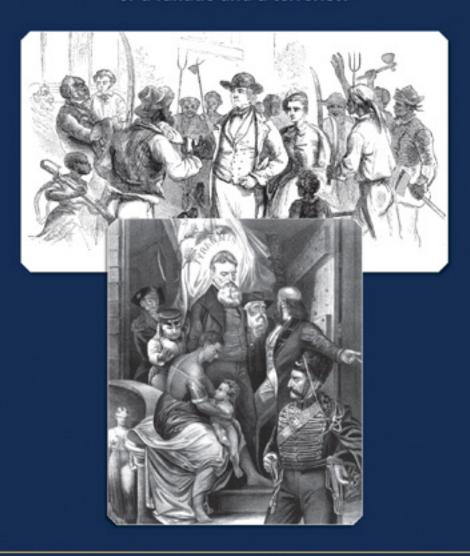


# Was John Brown a Hero?

Was he a principled fighter for justice or a fanatic and a terrorist?





# Was John Brown a Hero?

Was he a principled fighter for justice or a fanatic and a terrorist?





© 2004, 2017 MindSparks, a division of Social Studies School Service All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

MindSparks 10200 Jefferson Boulevard, P.O. Box 802 Culver City, CA 90232-0802 United States of America

(310) 839-2436 (800) 421-4246

http://mindsparks.com access@mindsparks.com

Only those pages intended for student use as handouts may be reproduced by the teacher who has purchased this volume. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording—without prior written permission from the publisher.

ISBN: 978-1-57596-221-4 Product Code: HS475 v2.0

# **Contents**

| Teacher Introduction             |
|----------------------------------|
| Suggestions to the Student       |
| Introductory Essay               |
| Was John Brown a Hero? Time Line |
| First Group of Documents         |
| Study the Documents              |
| Comparing the Documents          |
| Comparison Essay13               |
| Second Group of Documents        |
| Study the Documents              |
| Comparing the Documents          |
| Comparison Essay19               |
| Document-Based Question          |
| Visual Primary Sources           |

# **Teacher Introduction**



### Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called "primary" because they are firsthand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their "secondary" accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. Debating the Documents helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



"Multiple, conflicting perspectives are among the truths of history. No single objective or universal account could ever put an end to this endless creative dialogue within and between the past and the present."

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

### INTRODUCTION



### The Debating the Documents Series

Each Debating the Documents booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

### Each Debating the Documents Booklet Includes

- Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay. The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents. In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way. (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- Three Worksheets for Each Document Group. Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- One DBQ. On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.



### How to Use This Booklet

### 1. Have students read "Suggestions for the Student" and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5-7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

### 2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

### 3. "Debate the documents" as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source's point of view.

### 4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

### The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

Was John Brown a hero who helped to free the slaves? Or was he a terrorist who merely ended all hope of doing so in a peaceful way?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay's thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

### INTRODUCTION



### Complete DBQ Scoring Guide

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

### **Excellent Essay**

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

### **Good Essay**

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

### Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

### **Poor Essay**

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

# Suggestions to the Student



### Using Primary Sources

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called "primary" because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This Debating the Documents lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.



### How to Use This Booklet

### Read the one-page introductory essay.

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



### 2. Study the primary source documents for this lesson.

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image's "content" (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image's meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source's author, that author's reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source's historical value.

### 3. Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the "Study the Document" worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the "Comparing the Documents" worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

### 4. As a class, debate the documents.

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

### 5. Do the final DBQ.

"DBQ" means "document-based question." A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

## Was John Brown a Hero?

On the night of October 16, 1859, John Brown and 21 armed followers took control of the U.S. arsenal and rifle works at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. They killed several people and took some others hostage. Their goal seems to have been to spark an uprising of slaves in the area and, possibly, a more general rebellion to end slavery throughout the South.

The uprising collapsed in less than two days. No slave revolt took place. Instead, citizens, local militia, and U.S. forces led by Colonel Robert E. Lee quickly subdued the rebels, killing 10 of them and capturing Brown and six others. The rest escaped. A few slaves and free blacks in the area also may have taken part in the uprising. John Brown was quickly tried and convicted of treason, murder, and inciting slave rebellion. He was executed by hanging on December 2, 1859.

If not for the loss of life, the raid would be laughable as a botched attempt to start a civil war. It might have been quickly forgotten, except that the actual U.S. Civil War did break out just over a year later. And, in the view of most Americans at the time, John Brown's raid helped make that war all but unavoidable.

John Brown was born in 1800 into a deeply religious family where he was taught from an early age to hate slavery. He was active in the fight against slavery long before the Harpers Ferry raid. For example, in 1855 he went to the Kansas Territory to aid "free-state" settlers who were fighting proslavery forces there. In one of his raids, five proslavery men were executed in revenge after proslavery forces sacked and burned Lawrence, the Kansas free-staters' capital.

No one can question John Brown's idealism or his willingness to sacrifice for his cause. He had lost one son in the fighting in Kansas, and he lost two more at Harpers Ferry. As he told the court in December 1859, when he was about to be sentenced to death: Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life, for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further 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.

By 1859, the workings of the Fugitive Slave Law, the bloody conflicts in Kansas, the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision, and violence on the floor of the U.S. Senate had already raised levels of anger and fear to the boiling point. Reactions to the Harpers Ferry raid varied greatly. Yet overall, they only added to the deep and bitter divide over slavery.

The South united in outrage at what it saw as a threat not just to its property in slaves but to the lives of many citizens. After all, Brown had stored more than a thousand weapons near Harpers Ferry, and he encouraged the slaves among his hostages to join him. His group had earlier written their own constitution and formed a preliminary government. Their plan seems to have been to escape to the mountains to launch a long guerrilla war.

Reaction in the North was more varied. Some considered Brown an insane fanatic. Others admired his ideals and aims but rejected his use of violence. Finally, some abolitionists saw him as an inspired martyr who brought the day of liberation for the slaves closer. Once the vastly greater violence of the Civil War began, this last view came to be held much more widely in the North.

Was Brown a hero or just a 19th-century terrorist? Did he help to free the slaves, or did he end all hope of doing so peacefully? Perhaps these documents will help you decide.

# Was John Brown a Hero? Time Line

| 1800    | John Brown is born in Torrington, Connecticut, but spends much of his youth in Ohio. His Calvinist father believes slavery is a profound sin.  |
|---------|--|
| 1812    | During the War of 1812, John Brown briefly stays with a man who owns a young male slave. Brown is horrified when that man beats the slave with a shovel. He never forgets this incident.   |
| 1820    | Brown marries Dianthe Lusk, who will bear his seven children.  |
| 1826    | Brown moves to Pennsylvania, where he builds and operates a tannery.   |
| 1831-32 | Brown's wife dies shortly after the death of a newborn child. Within a year, Brown marries 16-year-old Mary Day, who bears 13 more of his children.  |
| 1836-37 | Brown moves to Ohio. He borrows money to buy land, but the economic hard times of 1837 bankrupt him. That year, at a memorial service for the murdered antislavery publisher Elijah Lovejoy, Brown publicly vows to end slavery.   |
| 1842    | In a bankruptcy case in 1842, a federal court grants creditors much of the wealth Brown still has. During the 1840s and 1850s, all his tanneries, land purchases, and other business ventures fail. In the meantime, his hatred of slavery intensifies and increasingly preoccupies him. He spends time living with blacks and becomes a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, aiding escaped slaves to make their way to Canada. |
| 1854    | The Kansas-Nebraska Act sets aside the Missouri Compromise, which had limited slavery in the Louisiana Purchase territories. Now, the people of each of these territories will decide whether or not to allow slavery. Kansas territory soon becomes a bloody battle ground between free-staters and slave-staters.  |
| 1855    | John Brown joins five of his sons in the Kansas territory.   |
| 1856    | Slave-staters attack and burn the free-state community of Lawrence. Enraged, Brown leads six of his men, including four sons, in the murder of five proslavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek.   |
| 1857-58 | Brown gets help from abolitionist leaders in New England who wish to aid the antislavery fight in Kansas. Back in Missouri, he attacks two proslavery homesteads and frees 11 slaves whom he then helps to escape to Canada.   |
| 1859    | Near Harpers Ferry, Brown rents a farmhouse. He later meets with Frederick Douglass secretly at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. On October 16, Brown and his force of 21 men, including five blacks, attack the armory at Harpers Ferry. The raid is quickly contained. On November 2, a Virginia jury finds him guilty of murder, treason, and inciting a slave insurrection. On December 2, John Brown is hanged.                      |
| *       |  |

# Visual Primary Source Document 1



Currier & Ives, 1863. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Information on Document 1

John Brown was convicted of murder, treason, and inciting slave rebellion. Yet during his trial and execution, he came to be seen by many Northerners as an abolitionist martyr. This imaginary scene (Currier & Ives, 1863) shows him calmly leaving the jail in Charlestown, Virginia, hands tied behind his back. The caption reads, in part: "Regarding with a look of compassion a Slave-mother and Child who obstructed the passage on his way to the Scaffold—Capt. Brown stooped and kissed the Child—then met his fate."

The slave woman is seated on a railing with her infant, in the manner of many religious paintings of Madonna and Child. One of Brown's guards reaches to push her away. In the foreground a soldier waits, hand on his sword hilt. Behind Brown a figure from the American Revolution, wearing a tricornered hat labeled "76," watches with concern. The Virginia state flag with the motto "Sic semper tyrannis" flies above Brown's head. A statue of Justice, with its arms and scales broken, stands forgotten behind the railing at left.

# Visual Primary Source Document 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

# Information on Document 2

This drawing is from Harper's Weekly, November 19, 1859. The drawing ridicules John Brown's hope of sparking a huge slave uprising in the South. It shows a planter actually arming his own slaves to defend him and themselves against any trouble resulting from the Harpers Ferry raid.

Whether or not a specific episode like the one shown here ever actually took place, the fact is that slaves in and around Harpers Ferry did not rally to Brown's aid.

Harper's Weekly was not proslavery.
However, it was opposed to anything that might upset peaceful relations between Northerners and Southerners. Therefore, it was harshly critical of Brown. Above all, it feared that his raid might anger both Northern abolitionists and Southern disunionists and "plunge a peaceful and contented people into the horrors of civil war."

### FIRST GROUP OF DOCUMENTS

# Study the Document: Visual Source 1

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### Main Idea or Topic

It is clear that this illustration is about John Brown. But what overall idea or impression is it meant to give us about Brown?

### Context

Can you truly understand this illustration without some knowledge of slavery and the arguments about it in the nation at the time? Why or why not?

### **Visual Features**

Notice the man with a tricornered hat with "76" on it, the statue of Justice in the corner, the black mother and child, and the expressions on the faces of all the figures. How do these add to the meaning of the illustration?

### Bias

What overall view or opinion does this illustration express about slavery, about Brown, about his actions, and about his execution?

### **Usefulness**

This illustration does express a clear bias. Could a historian still use this document as evidence of some sort? If so, does its bias add to its usefulness as a primary source or make it less useful? Explain your answers.

# Study the Document: Visual Source 2

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1** Main Idea or Topic

This drawing is of some slaves and their master. Yet it is also about John Brown and his raid on Harpers Ferry. What key idea about both slavery and John Brown does the drawing express?

### 2 Context

To understand this drawing you need to know more about relations between slaves and masters in the South. What would you need to know about this to better evaluate or assess the drawing?

### **3** Visual Features

Notice especially the expressions on the faces of the figures in this drawing. How do these add to the drawing's meaning or viewpoint?

### 4 Bias

The editors of *Harper's Weekly* believed the issue of slavery could be settled peacefully and in a way that would satisfy all sides. How does the drawing help to give expression to this hope? Was this hope an unrealistic bias or an accurate view of the situation in 1859? Explain your answer.

# Comparing the Documents



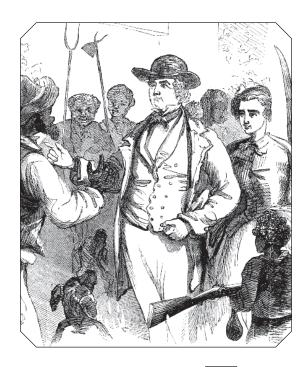
### The Visual Sources

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

Which of these two primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand John Brown and his raid at Harpers Ferry?



Document 1



Document 2

# **Comparison Essay**

| I chose Document   | because:                                  |
|--|---|
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
| I did <b>not</b> choose Doct<br>However, a historian<br>following way: | ument still might use the document in the |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |

Keep this in mind: Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

# Written Primary Source Document 1

### **Information on Document 1**

Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier was born in 1807 near Haverhill, Massachusetts. By the early 1830s, he was already a dedicated abolitionist. This poem is about John Brown's cause and his execution. The "Ossawatomie" in the title is for Osawatomie, Kansas, where Brown and his followers settled and where Brown lost one of his sons in a famous battle against proslavery forces. After that, John Brown was often called "Old Brown of Ossawatomie."

### **Brown of Ossawatomie**

John Brown of Ossawatomie spake on his dying day: "I will not have to shrive" my soul a priest in Slavery's pay. But let some poor slave-mother whom I have striven to free, With her children, from the gallows-stair put up a prayer for me!"

John Brown of Ossawatomie, they led him out to die; And lo! a poor slave-mother with her little child pressed nigh. Then the bold, blue eye grew tender, and the old harsh face grew mild, As he stooped between the jeering ranks and kissed the negro's child!

The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell apart; And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave the loving heart. That kiss from all its guilty means redeemed the good intent, And round the grisly fighter's hair the martyr's aureole bent!

Perish with him the folly that seeks through evil good! Long live the generous purpose unstained with human blood! Not the raid of midnight terror, but the thought which underlies; Not the borderer's pride of daring, but the Christian's sacrifice.

Nevermore may yon Blue Ridges the Northern rifle hear, Nor see the light of blazing homes flash on the negro's spear. But let the free-winged angel Truth their guarded passes scale, To teach that right is more than might, and justice more than mail!

So vainly shall Virginia set her battle in array; In vain her trampling squadrons knead the winter snow with clay. She may strike the pouncing eagle, but she dares not harm the dove; And every gate she bars to Hate shall open wide to Love!

-John Greenleaf Whittier, Dec. 22, 1859

\*to shrive = to make a confession to

# Written Primary Source Document 2

### Information on Document 2

This is part of an October 26, 1859, editorial in the *Valley Spirit*, a newspaper in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Chambersburg was about 50 miles north of Harpers Ferry. Brown spent some time there during the months leading up to the Harpers Ferry raid. He also met there in August 1859 with the famous black abolitionist Frederick Douglass. He asked Douglass for help in the Harpers Ferry raid, but Douglass later wrote that he refused and warned Brown that the raid would be suicidal.

### Document 2

Our own peaceful town, it appears, was made the rendezvous of the rascals employed to lead off in what the Abolitionists doubtless hoped would grow into a formidable insurrection. We have but little doubt that the visit of Fred. Douglass to this place two months ago had reference to this very matter. His violent speech against the South was probably intended to create among our people a sympathy with the cause of Abolitionism, that would lead them to extend shelter and protection to the gang of cut-throats selected to begin the work of blood at Harper's Ferry, and to such slaves as might be induced to join them, in the event of their but being able to sustain themselves south of the Potomac.

The Harper's Ferry outbreak is the legitimate consequence of the crusade against slavery preached by the Republican leaders of the North. The rank and file of the Republican party can now see the dangerous tendency

of the doctrines they have been honestly supporting. The people of this valley can now appreciate the risk they ran in giving countenance to declaimers against the South. Suppose Brown and his associates had succeeded in inciting to insurrection several thousand slaves. The insurgents would have been driven North through this valley. They would have entered our houses, plundered us of our property, and perhaps murdered our wives and children. They would have been pursued; and driven to desperation. they would have turned and fought when overtaken, and all the calamities of war would have been brought to our very doors. What has taken place at Harper's Ferry is but a trifle in comparison with what will some day occur, if conservative men of all political creeds do not unite with the Democracy to put down the sectional party that has disturbed the peace of the country.

### SECOND GROUP OF DOCUMENTS

# Study the Document: Written Source 1

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1** Main Idea or Topic

What overall view of John Brown and his actions at Harpers Ferry does this poem express?

### 2 Author, Audience, Purpose

How does the information provided on Whittier help you to better appreciate the poem and its historical importance? What purpose do you think Whittier had in writing this poem? How does the date of the poem help to explain its emotional tone?

### 3 Bias

What two or three lines in the poem best express Whittier's views or feelings about Brown, about slavery, and about the use of violence on behalf of the abolitionist cause? What is your own view of the thoughts expressed in these lines?

### 4 What Else Can You Infer?

What is suggested or implied about the times by this document? For example, what does it suggest about the nature of abolitionist thinking by 1859? What does it suggest about the way abolitionists were starting to use John Brown's story to promote their cause?

# Study the Document: Written Source 2

*Instructions:* Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1** Main Idea or Topic

What view of the Harpers Ferry raid and its overall importance or meaning does this editorial express?

### 2 Author, Audience, Purpose

Does knowing the location of the newspaper that published this editorial help to better understand it? Why or why not?

### 3 Context

What do you know about Frederick
Douglass? How does some knowledge
about him help to understand the editorial?
The editorial mentions the Republican
Party. What do you need to know about
that party to better understand the
editorial's point about it?

### 4 Bias

What one or two sentences best express this editorial's bias or opinion about Brown and abolitionism in general? Share your choices in a class discussion.

### 5 What Else Can You Infer?

What is suggested or implied by the speech? For example, what can you infer about attitudes in Chambersburg and in the North in general about slavery and the slavery question?

# Comparing the Documents



### The Written Sources

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the Comparison Essay worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

Which of these two primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand John Brown and his raid at Harpers Ferry?

Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier's 1859 poem about John Brown's cause and his execution.

Part of an October 26, 1859, editorial on the Harpers Ferry raid in the Valley Spirit, a newspaper in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

Document 1

Document 2

# **Comparison Essay**

| I chose Document   | because:                                  |
|--|---|
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
| I did <b>not</b> choose Doct<br>However, a historian<br>following way: | ument still might use the document in the |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |

Keep this in mind: Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

# **Document-Based Question**

Your task is to answer a document-based question (DBQ) on John Brown and his raid on Harpers Ferry. In a DBQ, you use your analysis of primary source documents and your knowledge of history to write a brief essay answering the question. Using all four sets of documents, answer this question.

### Document-Based Question

Was John Brown a hero who helped to free the slaves? Or was he a terrorist who merely ended all hope of doing so in a peaceful way?

Below is a checklist of key suggestions for writing a DBQ essay. Next to each item, jot down a few notes to guide you in writing the DBQ. Use extra sheets to write a four- or five-paragraph essay.

### Introductory Paragraph

Does the paragraph clarify the DBQ itself? Does it present a clear thesis, or overall answer, to that DBQ?

### The Internal Paragraphs—1

Are these paragraphs organized around main points with details supporting those main ideas? Do all these main ideas support the thesis in the introductory paragraph?

### The Internal Paragraphs—2

Are all of your main ideas and key points linked in a logical way? That is, does each idea follow clearly from those that went before? Does it add something new and helpful in clarifying your thesis?

### Use of Primary Source Documents

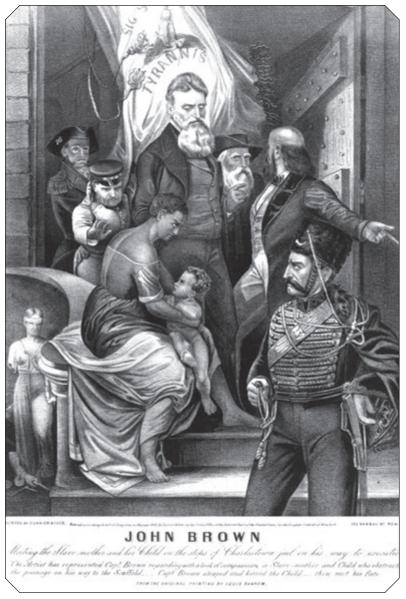
Are they simply mentioned in a "laundry list" fashion? Or are they used thoughtfully to support main ideas and the thesis?

### Concluding Paragraph

Does it restate the DBQ and thesis in a way that sums up the main ideas without repeating old information or going into new details?

# Visual Primary Sources

# First Group—Document 1



Currier & Ives, 1863. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

# First Group—Document 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress