

John Brown:
The Moral Obligation to Defend Freedom

Anda Liu

Senior Division

Historical Paper

Word Count: 2069

Process Paper Word Count: 471

Process Paper

For this year's project, when I heard about Rights and Responsibilities in history, I wanted to explore a topic that can show the conflict between personal moral duty and the laws of society. John Brown stood out as a controversial historical figure who took extreme measures to defend the inalienable rights of enslaved people: many people saw him as a criminal. His story raised profound ethical questions about whether individuals can defend their rights at the expense of breaking the law. Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, trial, and execution forced the nation to confront the institution of slavery, making him a pivotal figure in the fight for civil rights. By examining his life, I sought to understand how his belief in moral responsibility drove him to radical action and how his legacy helped shape American history.

I conducted research from his primary sources, including his final speech, his letter to his family, and trial testimonies. It provides insights into his motivations and beliefs. Additionally, I analyzed newspaper coverage from Northern and Southern states' perspectives to understand how different audiences perceive John Brown's actions. I also looked for his secondary sources, including biographies and historical analyses, which analyzed his story in a bigger context that better helped me understand his motivation. I used academic databases such as JSTOR and historical archives to collect reliable sources. Studying primary and secondary sources gave me a nuanced understanding of John Brown's life and history.

After conducting my research, I listed key themes: Historical Context: Slavery, Sectionalism, and Moral Crisis; Brown's Early Life and Formative Influences; The Kansas Struggle: Defining Rights Through Conflict; Harpers Ferry: The Raid That Shocked the Nation; Trial and Final Speech: Rights, Responsibilities, and "Higher Law"; John Brown's Vision of

Rights; John Brown's Sense of Responsibility: Moral Law Over Legal Restraint; Public Perception, and Sectional Reaction. I structured my paper to show John Brown's idea and how his concept led him to take radical actions, ultimately accelerating the nation's path to civil war.

My argument is that John Brown's unwavering belief in the inalienable rights of enslaved individuals led him to view the abolition of slavery as his moral responsibility. He thought legal and political compromise was inadequate and slow and instead took direct, sometimes violent action to combat slavery. Even though his raid in Harpers Ferry was unsuccessful, it had a significant impact. It raised national tensions and forced Americans to consider the moral contradictions of a nation built on freedom but dependent on slavery.

John Brown's action exacerbated Northern and Southern divisions, hastening the outbreak of the Civil War. His radical stance influenced future civil rights movements, demonstrating the extent to which individuals could challenge institutional injustices. His story remains relevant today as people debate the effectiveness and morality of activism in the face of oppression.

John Brown: The Moral Obligation to Defend Freedom

Before the American Civil War, debates over slavery raised many questions about rights—who should possess them, whether they were universal, and the extent to which one is obliged to defend them. John Brown (1800-1859) was a vivid answer to these questions. Convinced that slavery deprived African Americans of their inalienable birthright, he considered it his moral responsibility to destroy the institution by any means necessary. Some contemporaries labeled him a madman or criminal, but his story still echoes across American history. It is an example of how the tension between rights and responsibilities can drive individuals to confront deep-seated injustice—even at the cost of their own lives. What prompted him to claim that enslaved people should have the same fundamental rights as all Americans? And how did he justify taking up arms under what he saw as a higher moral duty? Through examining his final court speeches, private letters, newspaper accounts, trial transcripts, reflections on Frederick Douglass, and insights from secondary writings, this paper argues that Brown's unwavering belief in universal human rights led him to accept a profound moral burden. By acting on that belief, he forces a divided nation to confront whether everyone truly has the same rights and when moral convictions trump the law.

Historical Context: Slavery, Sectionalism, and Moral Crisis

From the nation's earliest days, the contradiction between slavery and liberty weighed heavily on American life. By the mid-nineteenth century, antislavery pirates were divided into two broad camps. Some believed political compromise might gradually lead to freedom from slavery, while others demanded immediate emancipation. The Compromise of 1850 and the

Fugitive Slave Act sharpened these divisions because even those who escaped to free states could be seized and dragged back into bondage.¹ Meanwhile, the expansion of America led to other acts like the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854², which opened new territories to the spread of legalized slavery, driving the nation closer to violence.

In this intense atmosphere, some abolitionists convinced themselves and concluded that it was no longer enough through speeches, pamphlets, and legislative petitions.³ David S. Reynolds in *John Brown Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, the era's fervent religious spirit and absolute moral convictions came together in figures like John Brown who believed slavery was so evil that dramatic actions were required to end it.⁴ Similarly, Stephen B. Oates, in *To Purge This Land with Blood*, highlights how strict Calvinist ideas brought John Brown to obey God's law above any earthly authority.⁵

Brown's Early Life and Formative Influences

Born in Torrington, Connecticut, in 1800, John Brown grew up in a deeply religious household that opposed slavery. From an early age, he saw the contradiction of a nation built on the promise of freedom yet propped up by forced labor. *Letters to His Family* (1850s) reveal not an impulsive zealot but a man who steadily develops a radical sense of purpose.⁶ In these letters,

¹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 57

² Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of Their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 98.

³ Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 167.

⁴ David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 120.

⁵ Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 89.

⁶ John Brown, *Letters to His Family, 1850s*, in "Witnesses and Testimony at the Trial of John Brown," *Battlefields.org*, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/witnesses-and-testimony-trial-john-brown>.

John Brown laments the country's willingness to accept systemic bondage and describes a sacred duty to stand up for those in chains.

Frederick Douglass, the prominent Black abolitionist, corroborates Brown's unwavering moral sense.⁷ In personal correspondence and later reflections, Douglass praises Brown's sincerity yet questions his reliance on force.⁸ Douglass also describes tense conversations with John Brown in 1859, just before the raid on Harpers Ferry—discussions that show how Brown's moral conviction led him to embrace armed rebellion.⁹

The Kansas Struggle: Defining Rights Through Conflict

Brown believed that enslaved people held the same rights as all Americans. It happened first during the large-scale expression in "Bleeding Kansas," where pro- and anti-slavery settlers clashed violently starting in 1854.¹⁰ Want to see Kansas enter the Union as a free state, Brown and his sons fought pro-slavery forces, leading to events like the Pottawatomie Massacre (1856).¹¹ Though his violence was widely condemned, Brown saw it as a necessary answer to respond to the brutal tactics of pro-slavery militias.

Newspaper reports of these clashes shaped Brown's national reputation. Northern papers sometimes portrayed him as a crusader for justice, while Southern outlets portrayed him as a murderous fanatic.¹² These sensational stories reveal the stark divide in how people understood

⁷ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: International Publishers, 1955), 378.

⁸ Hannah N. Geffert, "John Brown and His Black Allies: An Ignored Alliance," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 1 (1998): 12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20093575>.

⁹ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: De Wolfe & Fiske, 1892), 334.

¹⁰ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 45.

¹¹ "Bleeding Kansas and the Pottawatomie Massacre, 1856," Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/bleeding-kansas-and-pottawatomie-massacre-1856>.

¹² "Newspaper Coverage of the Harpers Ferry Raid," *Battlefields.org*, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/witnesses-and-testimony-trial-john-brown>.

“responsibility.” For Brown, the moral duty to protect the rights of enslaved people overruled any legal or social criticism. Yet many others believe violence—even in pursuit of emancipation—was indefensible.

Historian Louis A. DeCaro Jr., in *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown*, emphasizes that Brown’s actions in Kansas were not mere impulsive anger but part of a larger plan guided by his faith.¹³ Brown interpreted biblical injunctions— “Remember them that are in bonds”¹⁴— as evidence that Christians were obligated to take up arms against egregious wrongdoing. In doing so, he tested the limits of lawful protest.

Harpers Ferry: The Raid That Shocked the Nation

Brown’s belief in the inalienable rights of the enslaved found its most dramatic—and tragic—moment in the raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia (October 16–18, 1859).¹⁵ Accompanied by a small group of Black and white followers, Brown stormed the federal arsenal, hoping to cause a large-scale slave rebellion.¹⁶ Though the event failed, it represented a defining conflict in the growing conflict over slavery—a confrontation with federal authority in the name of liberation.

Brown intended to arm freed enslaved people with arms from the arsenal and established a liberated zone in the Appalachian Mountains.¹⁷ However, the plan unraveled quickly, as local militia and US Marines under Robert E. Lee suppressed the insurrection. Brown was captured

¹³ Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 211.

¹⁴ Hebrews 13:3 (King James Version).

¹⁵ "Testimony before the Senate Committee Investigating the Attack at Harpers Ferry," Battlefields.org, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/testimony-senate-committee-investigating-attack-harpers-ferry>.

¹⁶ Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 234.

¹⁷ Hannah N. Geffert, "John Brown and His Black Allies: An Ignored Alliance," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 1 (1998): 28, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20093575>.

and injured.¹⁸ As Tony Horwitz details in *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid That Sparked the Civil War*, the raid sent shockwaves through the nation—terrified Southern slaveholders and galvanizing Northern abolitionists, driving a deeper wedge between North and South (Horwitz).¹⁹

Trial and Final Speech: Rights, Responsibilities, and “Higher Law”

After his capture, Brown was put on trial for treason against Virginia, conspiracy, and murder. The *Trial Transcripts and Court Documents (1859)*²⁰ revealed how the prosecutor cast him as a dangerous criminal, while John Brown insisted any laws protecting slavery were morally void (Trial Transcripts).²¹ The main idea of the proceedings was the moral law vs state authority Brown invoked.

Despite his wounds, Brown delivered an impassioned defense.²² He acknowledged that his goal was to free enslaved people, not to kill or steal. His *Last Speech*²³ (1859) remains one of the most powerful declarations of moral conviction in American and human history (John Brown’s Last Speech). Brown argued that he followed biblical principles to defend “the despised poor,”²⁴ condemning a society that honored “the rich” while criticizing him for attempting to liberate the enslaved.

¹⁸ "Witnesses and Testimony at the Trial of John Brown," Battlefields.org, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/witnesses-and-testimony-trial-john-brown>.

¹⁹ Tony Horwitz, *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid That Sparked the Civil War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2011), 289.

²⁰ "Witnesses and Testimony at the Trial of John Brown," Battlefields.org, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/witnesses-and-testimony-trial-john-brown>.

²¹ "Testimony before the Senate Committee Investigating the Attack at Harpers Ferry," Battlefields.org, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/testimony-senate-committee-investigating-attack-harpers-ferry>.

²² Paul Finkelman, *His Soul Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 189.

²³ "John Brown’s Final Speech, 1859," Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/john-browns-final-speech-1859>.

²⁴ Hebrews 13:3 (King James Version).

Brown's final words speak directly to the Rights and Responsibilities in History. He defied conventional legal boundaries by asserting that the right to liberty—an inalienable right—stood above any law that sought to suppress it.²⁵ He claimed a responsibility to obey God's law over human law, especially when human law upheld slavery. His argument exposed the problematic intersection of personal conscience, moral law, and government statutes—a tension that only deepened as the nation moved closer to civil war.

John Brown's Vision of Rights

Brown's activism was grounded in the conviction that Black Americans possessed the same fundamental rights declared in the Declaration of Independence—that “all men are created equal.”²⁶ But how could he hold this view in a nation with the mainstream acceptance of slavery? Brown saw the American system itself was corrupted by legal injustice. Faced with what he saw as a “broken covenant,” he believed that only radical, direct action could restore the moral order.

Historian Robert E. McGlone, in *John Brown's War against Slavery*, notes that Brown's *War against Slavery*, explains that Brown's unwavering stance derived from a lifetime of encounters with enslaved people seeking freedom and from a theology that left no room for compromise with evil (McGlone).²⁷ His letters to his family highlight this idea again, arguing that if rights are truly inalienable, then waiting passively for legislation to free the enslaved betrays one's responsibility as a believer in universal liberty (*John Brown's Letters*).²⁸

²⁵ Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 234.

²⁶ Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

²⁷ Robert E. McGlone, *John Brown's War Against Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 157.

²⁸ John Brown, Letters to His Family, in "Witnesses and Testimony at the Trial of John Brown," *Battlefields.org*, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/witnesses-and-testimony-trial-john-brown>.

Who decides who has rights? Brown's answer was clear: freedom is a gift from God, not a government or legal structure that could grant or take away.²⁹ Does everyone have the same rights? Brown believed yes; therefore, allowing slavery was a monstrous betrayal. Who decides on the limits of these rights? For Brown, any law that upheld slavery was illegitimate. He believed the moral obligation to end such injustice justified using force.³⁰

John Brown's Sense of Responsibility: Moral Law Over Legal Restraint

Brown's reasoning introduces another key theme: responsibility. By what authority did Brown claim the right, but the duty, to break laws, seize arsenals, and risk the country's stability? To Brown, he thinks such lawbreaking was the lesser evil compared to the moral horror of slavery.³¹ His defiance embodied a radical view of "higher law" (the authority god gave) in which individuals must weigh the responsibility to overthrow institutionalized injustice against the potential for violence.³²

Critics have long debated whether Brown's use of force—especially the Pottawatomie killings in Kansas—undermined his belief in inalienable human rights.³³ If he valued the sanctity of human life, how could he justify taking it? Brown may likely think that Kansas was already a battlefield, with pro-slavery militias terrorizing free-state settlers. To stand by while slavery endured was, was itself complicity.³⁴

²⁹ James A. Hamilton, *John Brown* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), 45.

³⁰ Hannah N. Geffert, "John Brown and His Black Allies: An Ignored Alliance," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 1 (1998): 31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20093575>.

³¹ David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 312.

³² Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 193.

³³ "Bleeding Kansas and the Pottawatomie Massacre, 1856," Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/bleeding-kansas-and-pottawatomie-massacre-1856>.

³⁴ Hannah N. Geffert, "John Brown and His Black Allies: An Ignored Alliance," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 1 (1998): 33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20093575>.

Stephen B. Oates reminds readers that Brown did not seek to kill for its own sake. His ultimate goal was to free the enslaved “with as little bloodshed as possible,” believing enslaved people had a right to rise against their oppressors (Oates).³⁵ His moral logic thus reveals how a deep sense of responsibility can lead to radical action—if one believes the fundamental rights of millions are at stake, anything less than direct intervention is insufficient.³⁶

Public Perception and Sectional Reaction

John Brown’s raid and subsequent trial ignited debates across the nation. Northern abolitionists were split: some, like Frederick Douglass, admired his passion yet balked at the extremes.³⁷ Others, such as Henry David Thoreau, praised him as a martyr who exposed the deep moral corruption of slavery.³⁸ In the South, newspapers painted Brown as a dangerous terrorist, fueling fears that stirred fears that Northern agitators might foment slave rebellions.³⁹

After Brown’s execution on December 2, 1859, the outpouring of editorial support, sermons, and public forums deepened the nation’s divide.⁴⁰ By mid-1860, Abraham Lincoln won the election on an anti-slavery expansion platform, followed by the secession of multiple Southern states.⁴¹ It confirmed Brown’s warning: the nation would soon confront whether

³⁵ Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 289.

³⁶ James A. Hamilton, *John Brown* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), 57.

³⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske & Co., 1893), 373.

³⁸ Michael Meyer, "Thoreau's Rescue of John Brown from History," *The New England Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (1986): 531, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30228175>.

³⁹ "Newspaper Coverage of the Harpers Ferry Raid," *Battlefields.org*, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/newspaper-coverage-harpers-ferry-raid>.

⁴⁰ Paul Theerman, "John Brown's Body," *New York History* 82, no. 3 (2001): 331, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43267745>.

⁴¹ David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 407.

enslaved had the same rights as whites—and how far individuals, communities, and governments were willing to protect these rights.⁴²

Conclusion

John Brown's actions and ultimate sacrifice reveal the immense power of rights and responsibilities when they clash with deeply rooted injustice. By insisting that enslaved people held inalienable rights, he put himself in direct opposition to the legal and political order of his time.⁴³ He assumed a moral responsibility to end slavery by force, defying both national law and social norms.⁴⁴ Though his raids on Harpers Ferry remain controversial, they undeniably accelerated the nation toward crisis and pushed the reckoning that would come with the Civil War.⁴⁵

In many ways, Brown's life intertwined with these ideas: Who decides who has rights? If some are denied those rights, how far must others go to defend them?⁴⁶ Brown exposed the tension between personal conscience, civil governance, and collective responsibility by breaking the state's law in favor of God's higher law.⁴⁷ Though condemned as a criminal, he has been reexamined by historians like David S. Reynolds, Tony Horwitz, Louis A. DeCaro, Stephen B. Oates, and Robert E. McGlone—who explore the profound moral and theological convictions that shaped his quest for universal liberty.⁴⁸

⁴² Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 346.

⁴³ David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 423.

⁴⁴ Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 367.

⁴⁵ Tony Horwitz, *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid That Sparked the Civil War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2011), 291.

⁴⁶ Charles J. G. Griffin, "John Brown's 'Madness,'" *The Journal of American History* 72, no. 1 (1985): 44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41940446>.

⁴⁷ Louis A. DeCaro Jr., *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 211.

⁴⁸ Robert E. McGlone, *John Brown's War against Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 312.

In the end, Brown's most significant legacy may be the questions he left behind: Does everyone have the same rights? If so, who is responsible for defending them?⁴⁹ The unwavering moral clarity that led him to rebellion forced the nation to confront the true meaning of "all men are created equal."⁵⁰ The conversation lasted through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and subsequent civil rights battles.⁵¹ Indeed, though Brown's methods were extreme, his cause endures a powerful reminder that rights cannot exist without responsibility.⁵² The fight for freedom is not just about those who seek it but also those willing to stand for it—a lesson as enduring as the principle of liberty itself.⁵³

⁴⁹ Michael Meyer, "Thoreau's Rescue of John Brown from History," *The New England Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (1986): 531, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30228175>.

⁵⁰ John Brown, John Brown's Final Speech, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/john-browns-final-speech-1859>.

⁵¹ Paul Theerman, "John Brown's Body," *New York History* 82, no. 3 (2001): 331, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43267745>.

⁵² Hannah N. Geffert, "John Brown and His Black Allies: An Ignored Alliance," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 1 (1998): 33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20093575>.

⁵³ James A. Hamilton, *John Brown* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), 62.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Battlefields.org. John D. Starry Testimony. Testimony before the Senate Committee Investigating the Attack at Harper's Ferry.

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/john-d-starry-testimony?ms=tworg>

Annotation: This source provides an eyewitness account of the Harpers Ferry raid, documenting key events that contributed to John Brown's capture and trial.

Battlefields.org. Witnesses and Testimony at the Trial of John Brown. October 16–18, 1859.

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/witnesses-and-testimony-trial-john-brown?ms=tworg>

Annotation: Contains firsthand testimonies from John Brown's trial, illustrating the charges against him and his defense.

Battlefields.org. Testimony before the Senate Committee Investigating the Attack at Harpers Ferry.

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/testimony-senate-committee-investigating-attack-harpers-ferry>

Annotation: Senate investigations into the raid, reflecting political tensions between North and South.

Gilder Lehrman Institute. John Brown's Final Speech, 1859.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/john-browns-final-speech-1859>

Annotation: Brown's speech articulates his moral justification for his actions, referencing biblical teachings.

Gilder Lehrman Institute. "Bleeding Kansas" and the Pottawatomie Massacre, 1856.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/bleeding-kansas-and-pottawatomie-massacre-1856>

Annotation: A letter from Mahala Doyle expressing personal grief and condemnation of Brown's violent methods.

Secondary Sources

Griffin, Charles J. G. "John Brown's 'Madness.'" *Journal of American History* 72, no. 2 (1985): 293-310. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41940446>.

Annotation: Analyzes how perceptions of Brown's mental state reflected broader debates over slavery.

Meyer, Michael. "Thoreau's Rescue of John Brown from History." *American Literature* 65, no. 2 (1993): 273-295. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30228175>.

Annotation: Examines Thoreau's defense of Brown's actions as morally justified and rational.

Geffert, Hannah N. "John Brown and His Black Allies: An Ignored Alliance." *Journal of African American History* 89, no. 4 (2004): 325-346. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20093575>.

Annotation: Explores Brown's collaborations with Black abolitionists and the risks they faced.

Theerman, Paul. "John Brown's Body." *American Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1998): 767-785. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43267745>.

Annotation: Discusses the symbolic significance of Brown's burial site.

Hamilton, James A. *John Brown*. New York: Macmillan, 1923. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43565710>.

Annotation: Depicts Brown as a moral crusader for abolition.

Reynolds, David S. *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41887582>.

Annotation: A comprehensive biography highlighting Brown's role in abolition and civil rights.

Oates, Stephen B. *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24443167>.

Annotation: Details Brown's radical abolitionism rooted in Calvinist faith.

DeCaro, Louis A., Jr. *Fire from the Midst of You: A Religious Life of John Brown*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Annotation: Focuses on Brown's religious motivations and their influence on his anti-slavery mission.

Horwitz, Tony. *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid That Sparked the Civil War*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2011.

Annotation: Provides a narrative of the Harpers Ferry raid and its national impact.

McGlone, Robert E. *John Brown's War against Slavery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Annotation: Analyzes Brown's anti-slavery campaign and ideological development.