



# John Brown: His Fight for Freedom

*John Hendrix*

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## **John Brown: His Fight for Freedom** John Hendrix

Published on the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, this biography explores the life of one of American history's most controversial figures. A great deal of academic study has been published recently about John Brown. This is the first book for young readers to include these new attitudes and research.

In the late 1850s, at a time when many men and women spoke out against slavery, few had the same impact as John Brown, the infamous white abolitionist who backed his beliefs with unstoppable action. His dedication to freeing the American slaves made him one of the most recognizable leaders in the liberation movement to end slavery.

Told through engaging, thoughtful narration and bold, dynamic illustrations, *John Brown: His Fight for Freedom* is a fitting reminder that all men and women are created equal, and that some things are worth fighting for. The book includes an author's note, a bibliography, and an index.

F&P level: U

## **John Brown: His Fight for Freedom Details**

Date : Published October 1st 2009 by Harry N. Abrams

ISBN : 9780810937987

Author : John Hendrix

Format : Hardcover 40 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Biography, History, Nonfiction

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# **From Reader Review John Brown: His Fight for Freedom for online ebook**

## **Keri Rohr says**

John Brown was a great man and this biography does him justice. This book is appropriate for grades 4-5. I think this is a great story to read in a classroom. It shows students that if you are passionate and want to make a difference, you can succeed if you try your best.

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## **Amy says**

Topeka, Kansas; Lawrence, KS, Abolition, Slavery, Terrorism, Bleeding Kansas

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## **Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says**

Ok, I'm going to say right up front that I have a problem with John Brown. I was always taught in school that he was a hero, but when I got older and read more about what he did, I changed my mind. I think he was a fanatic who felt that the means justified the end. He murdered people in Kansas! And half the time left the women in his family to fend for themselves while he was off on one of his crusades. That kind of person doesn't deserve the title of hero in my book. So I read this book with trepidation. I was, overall, happy with the text, which pointed out his weaknesses as well as his strengths, and did not gloss over the killings in Kansas. I'd have given this 4 stars if the illustrations hadn't made him look like a patriotic good guy. I'm not saying that he shouldn't have been against slavery; I just think he should have listened to Frederick Douglass and found another means of fighting against it. I think this is a good book to use in class to generate a discussion about John Brown's ethics, so I recommend it.

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## **Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says**

John Brown led an attack on Harper's Ferry in an attempt to obtain weaponry for his army, an army he hoped to use to defeat slavery. The attack did not go off as planned and Brown was hung for his efforts.

I've always seen Brown as a terrorist, but he is not presented this way in the book; he comes across as a man who deplored slavery, loved God, and desperately wanted to stop slavery in America.

The pictures are fun and bright and add a lot to the book. The text is a bit long winded for younger readers, but it would be perfect for an older group of readers, such as junior high or high school students.

An author's note explains why Hendrix came to write the book and shows where Hendrix obtained his information. The book also includes a list of sources.

A bite of the book:

"Like a great fuming tornado, John swept across the plains to fight for Kansas. He fought many battles on those windy plains, but it was a dark night along Pottawatomie Creek that made him notorious. John and his

sons stormed the houses of five pro-slavery settlers who had been threatening his family and other abolitionists, took the men to the creek, and killed them with broadswords. John's ruthless tactics spread fear into the hearts of the Border Ruffians and others, but also branded John a crazed madman...."

Children's comments:

The children, eight first grade students, who previewed this book didn't really know what to make of it. The story was unfamiliar to them and they really didn't even know enough about the Civil War or slavery yet to be able to really understand what was going on. The ratings with this group were a mix of 3's and 1's, but I imagine that upper elementary students would enjoy it a lot more.

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### **Miss.Amanda.Reading says**

This is an interesting take. I don't really know much about John Brown, though I recognize his name from learning about the raid on Harper's Ferry. I feel after reading this book, I really need to know more on the subject before I would read this book to children.

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### **Erik D says**

Nonfiction Children's Biography

**Hendrix, John** *John Brown: His Fight for Freedom (2009)* .

Published on the 150th anniversary of his daring raid on Harper's Ferry, this colorful biography highlights the battle one man fought to end slavery. Not only do the details of his life capture the reader's attention, but some of the minutia included on the raid, such as the fact that the Marine lieutenant leading the charge into Harper's Ferry with Colonel Robert E. Lee hastily grabbed a ceremonial sword before heading to Harper's Ferry! This act was one small detail that ultimately prevented John Brown's death at the hand of the assaulting military forces because when the lieutenant thrust his sword into Brown's belly, it bent and folded like a flimsy piece of foil. This book would make a great tie-in for US History when covering the events leading to the American Civil War or on the topic of the abolitionist movement for primary grades. The amazing stylized illustrations reminiscent of a colorized version of the political cartoons of that era are lovingly colored and detailed. They accentuate the story with their portrayal of the man, the cause, and the proceedings of the day. This book, detailing the life of the famous abolitionist, would make a great addition to any primary school library.

Target audience: ages 8-12.

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### **Erin says**

Gorgeously illustrated tale of John Brown and his own version of guerrilla abolitionism. Inspiring and tragic.

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### **Edward Sullivan says**

I am awed by Hendrix's sheer audacity in taking on such a complex topic for a picture book biography and

even more impressed with what a stunning success it is!

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### **Lisa Vegan says**

Wow! It's hard to know how to rate or review this book. It's a very "heavy" book for kids, and definitely for older children, I'd say 9-13.

In the author's note, and implied in the book proper, the author makes a point of expressing how John Brown's actions were for the greater good, for his principles. The author didn't quite convince me, though his arguments are admittedly compelling.

The story tells about John Brown's fight for equal rights for black people and his fight to end slavery in the United States. The account is very interesting, although at times the book read as something a reader would read for a book report. It's not that it's boring; it's not, but it does read as a straight history book. I liked how Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass make appearances, and I did learn quite a bit about the specific events, though at the end the author does say some specifics were fictional, so I do wonder which were factual and which were artistic license.

Some of the events and images are shocking, not the least of which is the noose around Brown's neck, and some dead people.

The illustrations for the most part are wonderful. Both some pictures and some quotes/text have a three dimensional appearance, which is particularly effective in the more intricate, busy pictures.

The best thing about this book, I think, is that it is effective fodder for discussion of the issues addressed, the most crucial of which is to what lengths does one go for what one believes in.

Though I admire his dedication, I don't personally agree with John Brown's actions. The author does do a good job though of explaining the times and circumstances and why Brown's behaviors might have been as they were. Very thought provoking!

Perhaps this book was meant to be inspiring, and it was educational, but I found it rather depressing and quite disturbing.

3 ½ stars

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### **Alida says**

The more I read about John Brown, the more I admire him. History has not been kind to him which is a shame. If there had been more men like him during the creation of the US, perhaps the history of slavery would have been quite different. The author, Mr. Hendrix, has done justice to the source material and his illustrations are just marvelous. A perfect book to introduce a kid to such a pivotal figure.

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## **Shelley larson says**

I have mixed feelings about this book. I found the story to be quite boring, but I absolutely loved the illustrations. John Brown is the true story of an abolitionist who was tried as a traitor by the United States. The story recounts his fight against slavery, his death by hanging (the picture was a bit disturbing), and his legacy.

Genre: historical nonfiction picture book

Copyright: 2009

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## **Mary says**

### Kirkus Reviews

John Brown, with a makeshift flag in one hand and a tiny African-American tot cradled in the other, stands heroically on the jacket of this handsome picture-book biography. His face may be wizened and worn, but his eyes are fixed solely on the future, where he believed one day blacks would become not only free but equal. Often considered a madman or, at best, a tyrannical abolitionist, Brown had another side—one that was so overwhelmed by injustice that he simply had to act. Blood was shed as a result, especially in his attack on pro-slavery settlers in Kansas and the failed raid on Harper's Ferry, but compassion fueled his fight. In sweeping acrylic washes and with speech bubbles that unfurl across entire spreads, Hendrix makes Brown loom larger than life, and rightly so. His magazine-illustration background is evident in spreads that combine the iconic and the realistic to compress the visual storytelling into one heightened image. Not a story for the younger set, but an important view of one of the most controversial men in American history. (author's note, sources, index) (Informational picture book. 8-12)

This amazingly illustrated book is one that I am still thinking about a week after I read it. The illustrations are so incredible, sometimes dark and deep, but so telling. John Hendrix did a wonderful job of telling this very complex story of John Brown. In the Authors Note, Hendrix writes, "John Brown has been a source of controversy for more than 150 years." While reading this story, you felt empathy for John Brown and his cause, while also thinking, "What are you doing?" John Brown was willing to die for his cause, a cause that we can't even begin to imagine in 2009. I would HIGHLY recommend this book to children aged 9-13.

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## **Sam Bloom says**

I didn't really realize what a polarizing figure John Brown was until I read this book. I had heard of his raid on Harper's Ferry, but (like a lot of other "stuff" in history) I didn't know much about it. The back story really floored me - here was a white man in America in the 1840s and 1850s who wanted blacks to not just be free, but \*equal\* to whites! Unbelievable! I really enjoyed the illustrations... for the most part. Hendrix's style is very folksy, contributing to the tall-tale larger than life posturing of Brown on the front cover (which, frankly, is a bit disturbing). Anyway, a cool book that definitely has its faults, but would be good for upper elementary readers.

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## **Adam Shields says**

Short Review: This is a complex portrayal of a difficult character in history. It doesn't hold back. It includes the Kansas massacre where five slave supporters were killed in cold blood. The fact that the first death by Brown's forces at Harper's Ferry was of a free black man.

It also includes positives about Brown like his Christian motivation and his understanding that violence on behalf of freeing the slaves was in his mind justified because of the greater injustice of slavery.

Brown is no less a complicated figure after I read this. I have only read about Brown in context of biographies of Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, and not a longer look at him. So I am sure I am missing some context. But I was impressed that a children's book attempted to deal with Brown and kept him a complex character and did not gloss over the negatives.

My full review is on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/john-brown/>

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## **Jaime says**

I'm so happy that John's story is being told. What an amazing man. It is encouraging that there were people standing up against slavery.

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