

John Brown: Martyr or Saint

by Mishelle Hall

Course/Grade Level: 8th Grade Social Studies

Overview of the Lesson: In this Internet based lesson, students will research and analyze John Brown's role in the Abolitionist Movement.

TEKS/TAKS

(8.1)(C); **(8.7)**(B),(C); **(8.8)**; **(8.11)**(A); **(8.30)**(A), (B), (C) (D); **8.32**(A), (B)

Objectives: The learner will

- Research and discuss John Brown's role in the Abolitionist Movement.

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

Materials Needed:

Copies of John Brown Photos

Computers with Internet Access

Introduction

Create a transparency of the following quote:

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle.”

Frederick Douglas - From his address on West India Emancipation, August 4, 1857.

Have your students brainstorm/discuss the meaning(s) behind Douglas' quote? What is a struggle? What is the difference between moral and physical struggles? Why must there be a struggle? Who is involved in the struggle? What struggle is Douglas speaking about?

Let you students know they are going to learn about one man's struggle to eliminate slavery. Tell your students to keep in mind Douglas' quote about moral and physical struggles as they investigate John Brown.

Procedure:

1. Place your students into groups. Give each group a copy of the following images.



http://www.cs.cornell.edu/nystrom/images/Antietam/pages/page_17.html



PROPERTY OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, ASTOR LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS, 400 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

JOHN BROWN

Writing the Slave mother and her Child on the steps of Charlestown jail on his way to execution. The Street has represented Capt. Brown regarding withdrawal of compassion, a Slave mother and Child who obstructed the passage on his way to the Scaffold. Capt. Brown stopped and hated the Child — then met his fate.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PRINTING BY LOUVE BARRON.

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/146/>

2. Have your students complete the following photo analysis worksheet from the National Archives.

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>

Click on the word “photographs” in the blue box for the PDF file.

At first, expect your students to struggle with the questions, but encourage them to use their visual skills to make their best guesses about the documents. Once everyone has had time to complete their analysis, have your students share their ideas, feelings, beliefs and interpretations of the photographs.

3. Pose the following questions:

1. What do the students see in the painting/drawing?
2. What is happening in each visual?
3. How are the images the same/different?
4. Why were these images created?
5. What do these images tell us about John Brown?
6. What are John Brown’s struggles.
7. Did John Brown and Frederick Douglas have anything in common?
8. Have your students share any other comments/feelings.

Teacher Information:

Painting #1 In the Kansas capitol - *John Steuart Curry's “John Brown”*

Centered on the north wall of the east wing is the gigantic figure of John Brown. In his outstretched left hand is the word of God, and in his right hand a "Beecher Bible" (better know as a rifle). Flanking him, facing each other, are contending free soil and proslavery forces, and at their feet, two figures symbolic of the 1.5 million Civil War dead and wounded. In the background are the pioneers with their wagons on the endless trek to the west and the tornado and the raging prairie fire, fitting symbols of the destruction of the Civil War. This mural (31 feet by 11.5 feet) expresses the fratricidal fury that first flamed on the plains of Kansas, and served as the prelude to the Civil War.

One of the more famous reproductions of this mural is located at Harper's Ferry in Virginia.

Painting #2 “John Brown Meeting the Slave Mother and Her Child on the Steps of Charlestown Jail on His Way to Execution”

This print, published by the New York lithography firm of Currier and Ives in 1863, was based on a painting by Louis Ransom depicting John Brown pausing on the steps of the Charlestown, Virginia, jail, surrounded by armed soldiers, and leaning down to kiss the small child proffered to him by an African-American woman. The legend of Brown kissing a slave child on the way to his execution originated with an account of the execution in the New York Tribune on December 6, 1859. This account was reprinted in other newspapers and in early Brown biographies. In fact, Brown encountered only soldiers and jail personnel on the way to his execution.

4. Last, have your students create a list of questions they have about John Brown now that they have viewed the images. As they conduct their research, encourage them to search for the answers during the computer activity.

Activity #1 – Computer Lab Assignment – John Brown

Student will research the effects the Fugitive Slave Act in regards to John Brown. They will place their research in to a graphic organizer or foldable (organizer/foldable - your choice or their choice).

A comprehensive site for graphic organizers:

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/graphic-organizers/printable/6293.html>

The following are websites your students should visit:

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown/timeline/index.html>
- http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/brown.htm
- http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/module9/intro_pop15.html

After your students have completed their research John Brown, have a class discussion about their research. Who was John Brown? What were his beliefs? What actions did John Brown take against slave holders? Were actions legal? Illegal? What was John Brown's attitude toward violence? Was John Brown a martyr or extremist? Did their research answers the questions they developed from the images? Discuss Douglas' quote at the beginning of the lesson about moral and

physical struggles – what type of struggle(s) did John Brown have? Were John Brown’s actions justified?

You can extend the computer research by having your students compare John Brown’s beliefs and actions to other abolitionists.

Activity #2 – "I Am" Poem - John Brown

In pairs, have your students create an “I am – John Brown” poem.

Student Directions: Fill in each of the spaces below by following the prompts. When you have finished, you will read your poem to the class.

I am a (name two special things about your character):

I wonder (something your character would really wonder about):

I hear (something your character would hear):

I see (something that your character would see):

I am (repeat the first line of your poem):

I pretend (something your character would want to pretend):

I feel (something going on in your character’s life):

I touch (what might your character touch):

I worry (what would really bother your character):

I cry (what makes your character really sad):

I am (repeat the first line of your poem):

I understand (something your character knows very well):

I say (something your character believes in):

I dream (something your character dreams about):

I try (something your character really makes an effort about):

I hope (something your character actually hopes for):

I am (repeat the first line):

Give your students the opportunity to share their poems.

Assessment – Letter Writing

Ask students to think about this Frederick Douglass' quote:

"John Brown began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic."

Based on the information gained from their research about John Brown, each student will then write a letter to Frederick Douglas and respond to his statement. Do they agree or disagree with Douglas? Why? Why not?

TAKS Test Question:

Quakers, Frederick Douglas, Harriet Beecher Stowe and John Brown shared a belief in:

- (a) The Kansas-Nebraska Act.
- (b) continuing slavery.
- (c) voting rights for women.
- (d) eliminating slavery from the South.