

Road to Secession Packet

John Brown Timeline

1800→ John Brown born in Connecticut

1833→ John Brown married his second wife, who took care of his five children and later bore him thirteen of her own. Finances got harder as he attempted to provide for his large family.

1837→ November 7: John Brown vowed to end slavery when he learned that an abolitionist newspaperman was killed.

1842→ John Brown went bankrupt. Lost almost everything

1854→ Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854: Voters will decide if Nebraska Territory will be slave or free

1855→ John Brown followed his sons to Kansas as Free-Soilers

1856→ May 24: Brown went to nearby Pottawatomie Creek and directed his men in the murder of five proslavery settlers.

1859→ October 16: John Brown attacked the armory at Harpers Ferry with 21 men (16 white, 5 black).

Within 36 hours, they were almost all captured or killed. Two of John Brown's sons were killed.

November 2: A Virginia jury found John Brown guilty of murder, treason, and inciting a slave insurrection. December 2: John Brown was hanged.

1860→ Abraham Lincoln elected President.

1861→ April 12→ The South seceded, and the Civil War began.

1865→ The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery.

Source: This was John Brown's last speech. November 2, 1859.

I have, may it please the court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted -- the design on my part to free the slaves. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection: had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends . . . it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

I believe that to have done what I have done--on behalf of God's despised poor was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life to further the end 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 acts-- I say: so let it be done!

1. John Brown delivered this speech on the last day of his trial, after hearing the jury pronounce him 'guilty.' He knew he would be sentenced to die. Given that context, what does this speech say about him as a person?
2. Based on this document, do you think John Brown was a "misguided fanatic"? Why or why not?

Source: In this passage, Frederick Douglass describes his last meeting with John Brown, about three weeks before the raid on Harper’s Ferry. Douglass published this account in 1881 in *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. About three weeks before the raid on Harper's Ferry, John Brown wrote to me, informing me that before going forward he wanted to see me . . .

We sat down and talked over his plan to take over Harper’s Ferry. I at once opposed the measure with all the arguments at my command. To me such a measure would be fatal to the work of the helping slaves escape [Underground Railroad]. It would be an attack upon the Federal government, and would turn the whole country against us. Captain John Brown did not at all object to upsetting the nation; it seemed to him that something shocking was just what the nation needed. He thought that the capture of Harper's Ferry would serve as notice to the slaves that their friends had come, and as a trumpet to rally them.

Of course I was no match for him, but I told him, and these were my words, that all his arguments, and all his descriptions of the place, convinced me that he was going into a perfect steel-trap, and that once in he would never get out alive.

1. What are two reasons why Douglass opposed John Brown’s plan to raid Harper’s Ferry?
2. Douglass’s account is written in 1881, twenty-two years after the raid. Do you trust his account? Why or why not?
3. Based on this document, do you think John Brown was a “misguided fanatic”? Why or why not?

The Election of 1860

Candidate	Party	View on Slavery, Kansas, & Dred Scott Case	% of Popular Vote	Electoral Vote
Abraham Lincoln				
Stephen Douglas				
John Breckinridge				
John Bell				

Excerpt from a speech by Albert Gallatin Brown, a Mississippi politician, September 26, 1860

(The Northerners) hate us now, and they teach their children in their schools and churches to hate our children...the John Brown raid...the abolitionists among us, tell the tale...The North is accumulating power, and it means to use that power to emancipate (free) your slaves...Disunion is a fearful thing, but emancipation is worse. Better leave the union in the open face of day, than be lighted from it at midnight by the arsonist's torch."

Historical Context	
Intended Audience	
Purpose	
Point of View	

Source: Stephen Douglas, "Lincoln-Douglas Debates (1858): Second Debate at Freeport, Illinois," Excerpt (August 27, 1858): <http://www.nps.gov/liho/debate2.htm>

The next question propounded to me by Mr. Lincoln is, can the people of a Territory in any lawful way, against the wishes of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution? I answer emphatically, as Mr. Lincoln has heard me answer a hundred times from every stump in Illinois, that in my opinion the people of a Territory can, by lawful means, exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution. Mr. Lincoln knew that I had answered that question over and over again. He heard me argue the Nebraska bill on that principle all over the State in 1854, in 1855, and in 1856, and he has no excuse for pretending to be in doubt as to my position on that question. It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a Territory under the Constitution, the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulations.... Those police regulations can only be established by the local legislature, and if the people are opposed to slavery they will elect representatives to that body who will by unfriendly legislation effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favor its extension. Hence, no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a slave Territory or a free Territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska bill. I hope Mr. Lincoln deems my answer satisfactory on that point.

1. Does Douglas believe the people of a federal territory can exclude slavery prior to becoming a state of the union?
2. Why does he think that a Supreme Court decision regarding slavery in the territories does not matter when it comes to the local wishes of the territorial population?

Although I have ever been opposed to slavery, so far I rested in the hope and belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction. For that reason, it had been a minor question with me. I might have been mistaken; but the whole public mind, that is the mind of the great majority, had rested in that belief up to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise [in 1854, as part of the Kansas-Nebraska Act]. But upon that event, I became convinced that either I had been resting in a delusion, or the institution was being placed on a new basis--a basis for making it perpetual, national and universal. Subsequent events have greatly confirmed me in that belief. I believe that [Kansas-Nebraska] bill to be the beginning of a conspiracy for that purpose.... So believing, I thought the public mind will never rest till the power of Congress to restrict the spread of it [slavery] shall again be acknowledged and exercised on the one hand, or on the other, all resistance be entirely crushed out....

Mr. [Preston] Brooks, in one of his speeches, when they were presenting him canes, silver plate, gold pitchers and the like, for assaulting Senator [Charles] Sumner [of Massachusetts], distinctly affirmed his opinion that when this Constitution was formed, it was the belief of no man that slavery would last to the present day.

He said, what I think, that the framers of our Constitution placed the institution of slavery where the public mind rested in the hope that it was in course of ultimate extinction. But he went on to say that the men of the present age, by their experience, have become wiser than the framers of the Constitution; and the invention of the cotton gin had made the perpetuity of slavery a necessity in this country....

My declarations upon this subject of Negro slavery may be misrepresented, but can not be misunderstood, I have said that I do not understand the Declaration to mean that all men are created equal in all respects. They are not our equal in color; but I suppose that it does mean that all men are equal in some respects; they are equal in their right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Certainly the Negro is not our equal in color--perhaps not in many other respects; still, in the right to put into his mouth the bread that his own hands have earned, he is the equal of every other man, white or black. In pointing out that more has been given you, you can not be justified in taking away the little which has been given him. All I ask for the Negro is that if you do not like him, let him alone. If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy.

When our Government was established we had the institution of slavery among us. We were in a certain sense compelled to tolerate its existence. It was a sort of necessity. We had gone through our struggle and secured our own independence. The framers of the Constitution found the institution of slavery amongst their other institutions at the time. They found that by an effort to eradicate it, they might lose much of what they had already gained. They were obliged to bow to the necessity. They gave power to Congress to abolish the slave trade at the end of twenty years. They also prohibited it in the Territories where it did not exist. They did what they could and yielded to the necessity for the rest....

One more point.... I expressed my belief in the existence of a conspiracy to perpetuate and nationalize slavery.... I showed the part Judge Douglas had played in the string of facts, constituting to my mind the proof of that conspiracy. I showed the parts played by others.

I charged that the people had been deceived into carrying the last Presidential election, by the impression that the people of the Territories might exclude slavery if they chose, when it was known in advance by the conspirators, that the Court was to decide that neither Congress nor the people could so exclude slavery.... I charge him with having been a party to that conspiracy and to the deception for the sole purpose of nationalizing slavery.

Mr. Lincoln sat down amidst loud and continued cheering.

1. How long has Lincoln opposed slavery?
2. Why did he not oppose it publicly in his early political career?
3. What event caused him to reenter the political arena to work against the extension of slavery?
4. How does he think the American Founders viewed the future of slavery in the U.S.?
5. What event made the use of slaves more profitable in the U.S., thus confounding the Founders' prediction?
6. Does Lincoln believe the Declaration of Independence applies to black Americans, even slaves?
7. What is the conspiracy that Lincoln claims Stephen Douglas is participating in?

Assignments:

1. Read the Democrat & Republican Platforms (1856) and answer the questions.
2. Read the Causes of the Civil War articles and answer the following prompt:
 - a. Write a response as to the cause(s) of the Civil War. In your response defend your position based on the other positions in the article.
 - i. Typed → 1 Page Double Spaced
 - ii. Written → 1 Page