

## Perspective is Everything!

### Lesson Overview:

In Pre-Civil War America, print media was the main vehicle for distributing current events to citizens. How did regional or sectional perspectives impact the message given to the reader?

Use this activity prior to reading about John Brown and his activities at Harper's Ferry. Students will be using prints and newspaper articles to build their understanding of how perspective impacts understanding of events.

### Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- View primary and secondary sources such as prints, illustrations, and newspaper accounts to understand the role of John Brown and the raid on Harper's Ferry and its effect on regions of the country.
- Make decisions based on what they read, view, and discuss.
- Understand the impact of newspaper coverage of John Brown and Harper's Ferry and how regions of the country were influenced.
- Discuss the influence of the media on the world today.

### Standards:

U5.1.5 Describe the resistance of enslaved people (e.g. Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, and the Underground Railroad, John Brown, Michigan's role in the Underground Railroad) and effects of their actions before and during the Civil War.

### Time Required:

1-3 lessons depending on length of essay assignment and optional connection to current issues.

### Recommended Grade Level(s): 6-8

### Topic(s):

The media influenced the perceptions of the North and the South during John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry, his trial, and execution.

### Era:

The Coming of the Civil War




### Preparation:

#### Materials:

Individual copies of prints and newspapers for groups to use (hyperlinked in procedure section and resource table)  
Copies of LOC analysis worksheets (hyperlinked in procedure section)  
Editorial writing prompt, checklist, and rubric

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**Resources:**

<b>Image</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Citation</b>	<b>URL</b>
	<p>Harper's Ferry insurrection - Interior of the Engine-House,</p> <p>Wood engraving published in Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper .</p>	<p>Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA</p>	<p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002735881">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002735881</a></p>
	<p>John Brown-The Martyr</p> <p>John Brown meeting the slave mother and her child on the steps of Charleston jail on his way to execution</p>	<p>Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA</p>	<p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002707674">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002707674</a></p>
	<p>Address of John Brown to the Virginia Court</p> <p>Boston. Printed by C. C. Mead, 91 Washington Street [1859].</p>	<p>Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division</p>	<p><a href="http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+06500500))">http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+06500500))</a></p>

Non LOC Print Source	Newspaper articles from Virginia newspaper	<i>Staunton Spectator</i> , October 18-December 22, 1859, Staunton, VA	<a href="http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/jbrown/spectator.html#10/18">http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/jbrown/spectator.html#10/18</a>
Non LOC Print Source	Newspaper articles from Pennsylvania newspaper	<i>Valley Spirit</i> , October 26-December 21, 1859, Chambersberg PA	<a href="http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/jbrown/spirit.html">http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/jbrown/spirit.html</a>

## Procedure: Activities

1. Create an even number of groups of students representing either the North or the South.
2. As a quick review of prior lessons, groups should discuss and share how their regions or sections of the United States would feel about and/or participate in the following issues:
  - a. Slavery and increased pressure from the abolitionists
  - b. States' rights
  - c. Economic differences and internal improvements
  - d. Social reform movements
3. Begin by having all students view the first print of John Brown and read the caption.
  - a. [John Brown Harper's Ferry hostages](#) print from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper
  - b. Ask students to take the perspective of their regions of the country. Discuss impressions of what happened at Harper's Ferry based on what the print shows. Teacher should lead analysis discussion using questions from the [Teacher Photo and Print Analysis Worksheet](#)
  - c. Teacher may model any responses not given by students.
  - d. Discuss any ways a regional or sectionalist perspective might influence how they viewed sources and how the sources were presented.
4. Discuss with students the general timeline of events at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, or assign a portion of the textbook.
5. Dig deeper into the primary sources:
  - a. Project and read [John Brown's Letter to Court](#) aloud to the class. Discuss. Explain that this was published in Boston. Discuss possible causes and effects of its publication in the north.

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- b. Project the following print and pass out copies to each group. [John Brown Going to Execution](#). In state groups, students will analyze the print using the [Student Photo and Print Analysis Template](#) above. Each group should think about how their region would understand what was being presented and try to decide which region produced the image.
6. Discuss responses. Highlight any responses that are “beyond the print”, meaning they take into account bias from their region or section of the country.
7. Each group should view their region’s primary source collection below. The students will work in their North/South groups to complete the [Student Analysis Worksheet](#). Compare and Contrast the views and influence to the audiences of the North and the South..

These are copies of original newspapers articles and may take time for students to decipher.

[Primary Source- South](#) Group

- Links to articles and editorials from Staunton, VA newspaper
- Browse through the articles or print out the following articles for students to read and analyze:
  - October 18, 1859
  - Page 2 Rumored Insurrection
  - November 1, 1859
  - Page 2 A Piece of Assurance
  - Page 2 Brown’s Antecedents
  - Page 2 Correspondence of the Conspirators
  - Page 2 (second article titled) Untitled

[Primary Source- North](#) Group (These articles will enlarge by clicking on the text.)

- Links to articles and editorials from Chambersburg, PA newspaper.
- Browse through the articles or choose the following articles for students to read and analyze:
  - October 26, 1859
  - Page 1 Insurrection at Harper’s Ferry
  - Page 4 The Harper's Ferry Rioters Canonized
  - Page 4 Insurrection at Harper’s Ferry (reporter’s interview with John Brown just after Harper’s Ferry)

Discuss the effects of regional or sectional perspective and bias on the print media.

Writing assignment: (See Student Writing Assignment Copy below complete with writing checklist)

Was John Brown a hero or a villain?

You are a newspaper editor from your assigned section of the United States. Write an editorial from your perspective for the newspaper edition dated December 2, 1859, the day after John Brown was executed.

Convince your readership to view John Brown as either a hero or a villain using examples from the primary and secondary sources your group read and discussed. You may look back at these sources as often as necessary to complete the editorial.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Student Writing Prompt

### **Was John Brown a hero or a villain?**

You are a newspaper editor from your assigned section of the United States. Write an editorial from your perspective for the newspaper edition dated December 2, 1859, the day after John Brown was executed. Convince your readership to view John Brown as either a hero or a villain using examples from the primary and secondary sources your group read and discussed. You may use these sources and your analysis worksheets as often as necessary during the writing process.

Use the following list to review your work.

1. Do I take a definite stand on the issue?
2. Do I provide examples from the sources to back up my stand?
3. Do I choose words to say exactly what I want to say?
4. Do all of my paragraphs support my topic?
5. Do I conclude by summing up my stand on the issue?

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**Evaluation:**

Teacher evaluation of students' written and spoken responses.

Assessment opportunities:

- a. teacher observation of student discussions
- b. Group responses on worksheets
- c. Brainstorming for writing prompt
- d. drafting
- e. revising and peer response
- f. final draft of paper—see sample rubric below

**Optional Extension Activities:**

1. Students could use primary sources to create *Found Poetry*. See [Teacher instructions](#) from Library of Congress for methods and examples.
2. Instead of writing the editorial, students could hold a three-sided debate to determine if John Brown was a hero or a villain using only the materials given to their section of the country.
3. Using one current event, look at three different published (electronic or print) articles on the topic. Evaluate the articles for regional or sectional bias. For a younger audience, you might look at local newspapers covering a sporting event.
4. Students could try analyzing other media like websites, television broadcasts, and podcasts for sectional or regional bias and present their findings to their classmates.

**Credits**

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### RAFTS Rubric (Role, Audience, Form, Topic, Strong Verb)

	1	2	3	4
<b>Accuracy (Ideas, Content, organization)</b>	The information provided in RAFTS is very incomplete and/or has major anachronisms.	The information provided in RAFTS has some small inaccuracies, omissions or anachronisms.	The information provided in RAFTS is accurate but could use more support or specific details related to subject or time period.	Information & details in RAFTS are always accurate and properly reflect information, ideas and themes related to the subject and time period.
<b>Perspective (Ideas, content, voice)</b>	Viewpoint or ideas are sketchy and not drawn from time period. RAFTS does not show insight into how characters feel or act during the event(s).	Viewpoint or ideas reflect current concerns rather than time period. RAFTS does not show insight into how characters feel during the event(s).	RAFTS maintains a reasonably consistent point of view and includes ideas relevant to role and time period played. Character's feelings about the event(s) are evident.	RAFTS maintains clear, consistent point of view, tone and ideas relevant to role and time period played. Ideas and information always tied to role and audience of time. Characters are insightfully shown.
<b>Focus (organization, content)</b>	RAFTS wanders from topic; focus cannot be seen or has many side comments.	Central topic and purpose of RAFTS can be seen, but focus is inconsistent.	RAFTS stays largely on topic; its ideas are mostly supported.	RAFTS stays on topic, consistently maintains form or type; details and information are included and directly support the purpose.
<b>Presentation (Conventions, sentence fluency)</b>	Writing is unclear and has gaps or confusions. Essay is marred by numerous errors, which disrupt reader's understanding.	Writing wanders or is somewhat repetitious. Essay contains several sentence errors and mechanical mistakes that may interfere with clarity of ideas. Audience is irritated by errors.	Writing is clear and direct. Essay contains some fragments, run-ons or other errors; occasional mechanical mistakes. Audience is informed.	Writing is fluent and interesting. Essay contains few or no fragments or run-on sentences; rare errors or mechanical mistakes result from risk-taking. It engages and informs audience.

( from <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/pd/instr/strats/raft/> )

#### *Comments:*

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