



John Brown in Memory and Myth

Michael Daigh

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John Brown's father on the day of his birth, May 9, 1800, wrote "John was born one hundred years after his great grandfather. Nothing else very uncommon." Many years later came the 1856 Pottawatomie Massacre, where his uncommon convictions led him and his band of abolitionists to kill five pro-slavery settlers in Franklin County, Kansas. Three years later, Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry and his subsequent trial and execution helped push an already divided nation inexorably toward civil war.

This is the story of John Brown, the age he embodied and the myth he became, and how the tragic gravity of his actions transformed America's past and future. Through biographical narrative, his life and legacy are discussed as a study in metaphor and power and the nature of historical memory.



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