



2009

# John Brown: His Fight For Freedom

Alison Canar

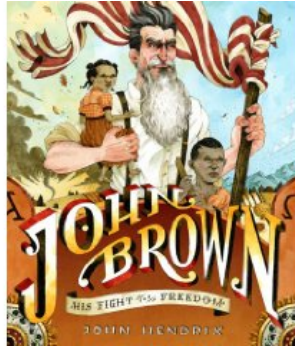
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Hendrix, John. *John Brown: His Fight For Freedom*. Illustrated by Hendrix, John. Abrams, 2009. ISBN 9780810937987. \$18.95. 39 p.

Reviewer: Alison Canar

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Biographies;

Subject: Brown, John, 1800-1859--Juvenile literature; Abolitionists--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Antislavery movements--United States--History--19th century--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews

John Brown may have been a heroic champion for freedom, or he may have been a homicidal lunatic. Hendrix takes the former stance, portraying Brown as a virtuous leader who had to make tough decisions. He introduces Brown as a polite, genteel fellow who goes out of his way to show respect to his black neighbors. In fact, Brown—a white man—is even more passionate about racial equality than many former slaves at the time, including the legendary Frederick Douglass. Inspired by scripture, Brown designs a plan to take the south by storm, freeing slaves along the way to join his renegade army. In the end, Brown's plan goes horribly wrong and the first man killed in his raid is a free black man. Brown is put to death, but never backs down from his cause.

Hendrix's illustrations, pen and ink with acrylic washes, add character to the story. The drawings create a tall-tale ambience, helping cast Brown as a larger-than-life figure. Hendrix emphasizes biblical passages and memorable quotes from Brown by incorporating them into the pictures. The drawback of this work as an informational book is the contradiction created by Hendrix's continual assertions that Brown "did not believe bloodshed was the answer." This is troubling because the book then relates several incidents which clearly show that violence was indeed Brown's method of choice for bringing about change in the country. This can be a good introduction to a lesser-known historical figure, as long as young readers understand that it may contain some biased interpretations.

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