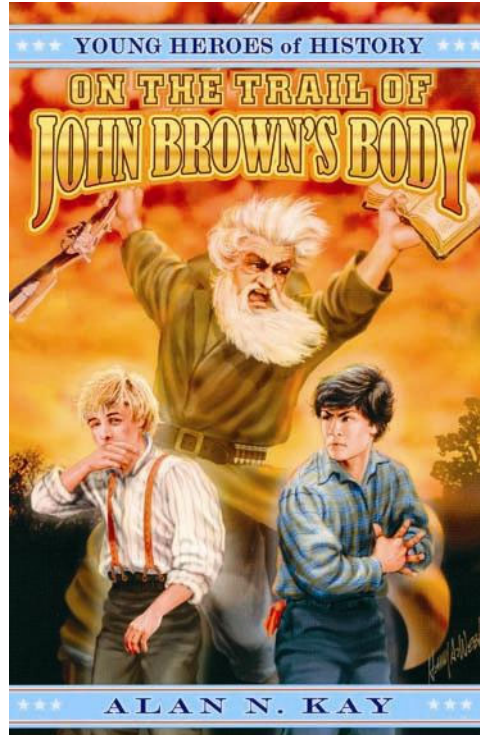


# Lesson Plans for



## *On the Trail of John Brown's Body* *Book Two:* *Young Heroes of History*

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# Lesson Plans: On the Trail of John Brown's Body

## Organization and purpose of these Lesson Plans

The purpose of these plans is to provide the teacher with background information to the book as well as ideas for pre-teaching and extension activities. Included is also a set of questions for each chapter and a resources page with web sites and books listed. We will begin with a brief education behind the ideas in the book, recommendations for teaching with it, specific questions and finally ideas for further research.

## How does *On the Trail of John Brown's Body* tie into Book One of the Young Heroes of History Series, *Send 'Em South*?

First of all, let us remember **that all of the Young Heroes of History books are designed to be used either as stand alone books or as part of a ten volume family saga.** It is not necessary to purchase other books if a teacher only wants to focus on the issues in *On the Trail of John Brown's Body*.

In *Send 'Em South*, we are introduced to David and George Adams, two young Irish boys who live in Boston at a time when the Irish were severely mistreated and abused by the people of Boston. Fortunately for David, his father married a relatively wealthy Abolitionist woman. This allowed the family to move out of the slums. The entire Irish family, including George and his father, were allowed to rent a house from David's grandfather even though he openly dislikes the Irish.

Years later, David's parents have left him in Boston to move to the dangerous Kansas territory. As avid abolitionists, they hope to help make the newly forming state slave free. While they are gone, David and George discover Lisa, a fugitive slave girl trying to escape the slave catchers who have come to find her. Although George does not really want to help, David brings him along in his attempt to help Lisa remain free. By the end of the book, David has apparently failed and Lisa is returned to the plantation in Georgia.

## What is *On the Trail of John Brown's Body* about?

*On the Trail of John Brown's Body* is a story about two cousins who desperately want to remain best friends despite the split that is going on in their family and in the country over the slavery issue. Unfortunately for them both, David's father and grandfather are deeply involved in a secret plot with the mysterious John Brown. When David unwittingly steals money from his grandfather and runs away to Kansas, he sets in motion a series of events that will imperil the entire family.

David's grandfather sends George after David. Then he hires a mysterious stranger to follow them. Throughout George's travels and even in Kansas, this stranger becomes a constant threat. Once in Kansas, the boys experience first hand the danger and violence of "Bleeding Kansas." To make matters worse David's mother is ill and his father keeps disappearing for days at a time. The only time things seem normal is when David, George, their new friend Charles and their fathers play a friendly game of baseball.

When the mystery finally begins to make itself known, things only get worse. David's father is involved with the mysterious John Brown and has gone off to Harper's Ferry to end slavery forever! Only George and David can stop him but they don't know whether they should! George ends up kidnapped by Brown's men and it looks like he might even die when Brown attacks the town and makes George and other citizens his hostages!

## **What are the Objectives of *On the Trail of John Brown's Body*?**

- To provide background information on the Civil War as part of the everyday descriptions.
- To portray life in the Kansas Territory during the days of "Bloody Kansas".
- To highlight the extremes of the Abolitionist movement and introduce the different perspectives on the anti-slavery movement.
- To introduce major characters and places such as John Brown; Lawrence, Kansas; Harper's Ferry, Virginia; Colonel Robert E. Lee and portray them as they appeared to the people of the times.
- To portray the time period through the eyes of the people who lived it.
- To portray the events in a non-biased way in order to allow the reader to evaluate and judge.
- To describe the issues of the times in contemporary terms.
- To include the everyday concerns of people of the time period in order to put the larger issues into perspective.
- To portray the individuals as people similar to ourselves that the reader can relate to.
- To instill an appreciation of history.
- To provide the reader with questions and issues for debate and discussion.

## **What are the Critical Issues presented in *On the Trail of John Brown's Body*?**

Ending slavery was a goal for all abolitionists in America yet few people could agree on how to end it. *On the Trail of John Brown's Body* portrays the many differences of opinion which divided not only the abolitionists but the country as well. In following the exploits of men and women who went to Kansas to end slavery, the book tries to show how some individuals actively took a role in establishing slave free states in new territories in America. With the passing of the Kansas Nebraska Act, the United States essentially set up an area where slave supporters and abolitionists could literally fight out the issue. "Bleeding Kansas" becomes the country's first battleground where blood is shed over the slavery issue and our characters are right in the middle of all of this.

Unfortunately for our two main characters David and George, this is not where the movement stops. Some men believed in overthrowing the U.S. Government and ending slavery through violence. When David and George discover John Brown's plot to takeover the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, the issue of using violence to overthrow an immoral law not only divides the two boys but it causes tragedy for them and for the country.

## **Who is the target audience for *On the Trail of John Brown's Body*?**

The quick answer to this question is middle level readers, usually around the age of 11-15. However, understanding the uniqueness of individuals, there are of course many ways to adapt the reading level for different needs. The book is appropriate for younger readers who read above level or have an interest in the civil war or history. Finally, it can also be used with younger learners in a group reading where an adult is present. The book may also be used by older students and indeed has been used in grades as high as 11.

## What are the important vocabulary and concepts that a reader should be aware of?

The answer to this question of course depends on what degree the teacher wants to cover material. A basic reading with discussion of slavery and racism can be extended all the way to an in depth examination of society during the 1850's as well as an investigation into the causes of the civil war. To begin with, the following vocabulary should be known:

Abolitionists: A person who was openly against slavery and tried to end it in a variety of ways.

Kansas-Nebraska Act: This act, passed in 1854, initiated a mass migration to the Kansas and Nebraska territories. Based upon the notion of popular sovereignty and sponsored by Senator Stephen Douglas, this allowed for the two territories to appeal to the United States government as either slave or free states once the population was sufficient enough to form a state. It resulted in the settlement of many abolitionists in Kansas in an attempt to make it a free state. Many slave supporters from nearby Missouri were against this and the conflicts between the two erupted violently earning the territory the name of "Bleeding Kansas."

KT: This is how the locals referred to the Kansas Territory.

FreeStaters: Slang term for people who wanted to make sure a territory became a slave-free state.

Emigrant Aid Society: A group of people who helped abolitionists settle in Kansas.

## Suggested pre-activities:

**\*\*Special Note: Much of the information needed to cover these topics can be found on the various web sites listed at the end of these plans.**

Discuss the history of slavery and its conditions.

Study the rights of slave owners in the South

Examine the expansion of Slavery by looking at the various compromises: 3/5; Missouri; 1850.

Review the Kansas Nebraska Act

Debate the rights of slave owners to bring slaves where they want.

Review and/or debate the Dred Scott case.

Discuss the activities of Abolitionists like Frederick Douglas, William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown.

Examine the Geography of the United States at the time. Identify Southern and Northern states as well as the territories.

Explore the early origins of Baseball

## Specific Questions for *On the Trail of John Brown's Body*:

These questions are designed to be used by many levels of students. They are broken down in to simple recall and understanding, in-depth and critical thinking questions, and extension/discussion questions. Feel free to use whatever questions meet the needs of the age group you are using.

### Introduction:

#### Understanding:

1. What kind of laws did David's parents break?
2. What kind of a man does John Brown appear to be?
3. What kind of an adventure did David and George have in Book One *Send 'Em South*?

### Chapter One

#### Recall:

1. Why did David and George break into their Grandfather's house?
2. Did they like their Grandfather? Why/why not?
3. What does the envelope with the money say on the front?
4. Where is David's mother Regina?

### Chapter Two:

#### Recall:

1. Why does George think David stole the money?
2. In addition to going after David, why else does Grandfather want George and his father to go to Kansas?

#### Critical Thinking:

3. How does Grandfather force George and his father to go after David?

### Chapter Three:

#### Recall:

1. Who is Thomas and what did he like to do with George and David?
2. What are the two ways that George and Sean could get to Kansas? Which way did they choose and why?
3. What does Grandfather tell the stranger to do?

#### Critical Thinking:

4. What do you think the "Greater Cause" is that the stranger refers to?

### Chapter Four:

#### Recall:

1. Describe the route that George and Sean take to get to Kansas.
2. What is the National Road, why was it built and what is it like to travel on it?
3. Why was George looking forward to the trip?
4. What did George find when he returned to his room in the Inn?

### Chapter Five:

#### Recall:

1. How is the Prairie different from Boston?
2. What happened to George's mother?
3. Who is fighting in the Kansas Territory?

**Critical Thinking:**

4. What kind of people does the boy think George and Sean are? Why does he think this?

**Discussion:**

5. Who should decide whether a state will be slave or free? Should it be the government of the United States who decides before anyone has moved there or should it wait and let the people who have moved there decide?

**Extension:**

6. Research the Irish Potato Famine. Why did the Irish come to America and how were they treated when they got here?

**Chapter Six:****Recall:**

1. What does the Emigrant Aid Society of Massachusetts do?
2. What is the main street in Lawrence?
3. What is George's reaction at seeing David?
4. What do George and David want to do with Charles?

**Critical Thinking:**

4. Why is the Emigrant Aid Society helping people move to Lawrence?
5. Why does George feel the way he does about seeing David?

**Extension:**

6. Research the early game of Baseball. How is it different from today's version?

**Chapter Seven:****Recall:**

1. What is wrong with Regina?
2. How do David's parents react to hearing that he stole the money?
3. What does the word Brown mean on the envelope?
4. What does David's father do with the money and the paper?

**Critical Thinking:**

5. How does Regina describe John Brown? How does David describe him? What can account for this difference?

**Chapter Eight:****Recall:**

1. Why is the stranger in Lawrence and why does he decide to stay?
2. How does Sean stop the stranger from hurting David? Be specific.
3. Who forces the stranger to leave?

**Chapter Nine:****Recall:**

1. What does David think about his Dad during the game?
2. What ends the Baseball game?
3. What makes David so upset that he cries?

**Critical Thinking:**

4. What is mysterious about David's father?

## Chapter Ten:

### Recall:

1. Why is David angry at Charles?
2. What happened to Regina?

### Critical Thinking:

3. Should David have said anything to Charles about his father or should he have kept quiet?
4. What does Regina think will happen if the violence in Kansas continues?

## Chapter Eleven:

### Recall:

1. What does David's father John decide to do with the boys and his brother Sean?
2. What does the group find when they approach Charles' house?
3. Who attacked Charles and Abe?
4. What can the government do about it?

### Critical Thinking:

5. Where did John get his gun? What is strange about this?
6. Why did the book "Uncle Tom's Cabin" anger the strangers?

### Extension:

7. Research the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. What was it about and why did it anger so many Southerners?

## Chapter Twelve:

### Recall:

1. What has happened to Regina during the summer?
2. Where has David's father gone?
3. Who has been chosen to go after him?
4. What does David give George for good luck?

## Chapter Thirteen:

### Recall:

1. What does John say Brown's plan is?
2. What did John ask his brother Sean to do?
3. What did Sean think of John's idea?
4. What did he tell John?
5. What did George do during the conversation? What did this result in?

### Discussion:

6. John claims that everyone who tolerates slavery is guilty and that there are no innocents. Do you agree with this? Why/ why not? What kinds of actions to end slavery are justified according to what you just wrote?

## Chapter Fourteen:

### Recall:

1. What did Sean talk about in trying to get his brother to stop what he was doing?
2. How does George try to stop the fight?
3. How does the fight end and what happens to John? Be as specific and detailed as you can.

### Critical Thinking:

4. John compares his raid to the American Revolution and George Washington's attempt to free us from the King of England. Is this a fair comparison? Why/ why not?

## Chapter Fifteen:

### Recall:

1. What did George's father say George had to do after the fight was over?
2. Who captured George and what are they doing?
3. What group of buildings had Brown's men captured?
4. What item did Brown want for himself?

### Cause and Effect:

5. Trace how John Brown has affected George's life. Begin with the letter that David found and discuss what involvement George's family has had so far. Be sure to discuss the Kansas connection.

## Chapter Sixteen:

### Recall:

1. Describe the place where George was held captive. Who was there with him?
2. How did the townspeople react when they found out what Brown was doing?
3. Why didn't the hostages eat the food?
4. How does Brown react to the wounding of his son?

### Critical Thinking:

5. Does Brown's plot go according to plan? How can you tell? What kinds of things seem to go wrong?

## Chapter Seventeen:

### Recall:

1. Who has President Buchanan sent to stop Brown?
2. What was Brown's reaction to the surrender orders?
3. How did the Marines stop Brown? What happened to him?

## Chapter Eighteen:

### Recall:

1. Who comes to watch the trial and what kind of a scene does it create? Describe it.
2. Who appears suddenly at George's door?
3. Why is he angry?
4. What effect did John Brown have on David?

### Critical Thinking:

5. George notices that the trial almost turned into a debate on slavery. Why is this so?
6. Should the ethics of slavery be considered in deciding John Brown's guilt?
7. Who does David blame for his father's death? How has it affected him?
8. What do you think David is planning?

## Epilogue:

### Recall:

1. How did Northerners react to Brown?
2. How did Southerners react?
3. Who suggested that George and his father move to Richmond?
4. How has George's entire family been split up?

## Summary:

1. Why would John Brown's actions have a lasting effect on the country?
2. What does the song *John Brown's Body* say about the effect he had on the North?

## Discussion and Debate:

3. Was John Brown right? When is taking up arms against the government justified?



## Suggested Post Activities:

\*Contact the National Park Service and order the National Park Service's [John Brown's Raid Video](#) made by the Harpers Ferry Historical Association, Harpers Ferry, Va. This is an excellent video for students.

\*Look at John Brown's Constitution. (Page 1 enclosed) Analyze his goals for the new country. What exactly did Brown want?

\*Research and discuss the election of Abraham Lincoln. What were the reasons Southerners gave for their secession? How did the John Brown trial fuel these feelings?

\*Discuss the ethics of laws. Who makes them and should they ever be broken? What are the implications of breaking laws?

\*Research the origins of the civil war. Debate whether it could have been avoided.

\*Research the violence in Kansas. Was it indeed a proving ground for the Civil War?

\*Discuss the government's right to establish rules and laws in territories.

\*\*For an extra extension, research and discuss the establishment of the state of Utah by the Mormons. Compare this with Kansas and discuss what rights people have (had) to establish new territories based on their beliefs.

## For more ideas or background information, consult the following web-sites:

United States Civil War Center  
<http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/civlink.htm>

**\*\*Great Resource on John Brown; Contains primary sources, summaries, etc...**  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1550.html>

Literature of the Civil War Lesson Plans  
<http://7-12educators.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.yale.edu%2Fynhti%2Fcurriculum%2Funits%2F1997%2F2%2F97.02.02.x.html>

Harper's Ferry Raid Summary  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown/peoplevents/pande09.html>

Summary of John Brown and Harper's Ferry History  
<http://www.wvculture.org/history/jnobrown.html>

Lesson Plans on the Civil War itself  
<http://7-12educators.miningco.com/cs/historycwlessons/index.htm>

Lessons plans and info on slavery and black history  
<http://7-12educators.miningco.com/cs/slavery/index.htm>

Remembering Slavery Voices and text of slaves  
<http://www.uncg.edu/~jpbrewer/remember/>

A slave recounts his life primary source  
<http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page.cfm?ID=13928&Current=002&View=Text>

Junior Detective: On the Trail of Some Famous Kansans.  
<http://www.kshs.org/activity/jrdetect/guesgame.htm>

A list of books on Bleeding Kansas  
<http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/galbks.htm>

MARAIS DU CYGNE Historic Site. Summarizes the Massacre  
<http://www.kshs.org/places/marahist.htm>

website for Lawrence, KS. History museum  
<http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/museums/watkins.html>

American Civil War Timeline  
<http://www.americancivilwar.com/tl/timeline.html>

The Making of the National Road.  
[www.connerprairie.org/cp/ntlroad.html](http://www.connerprairie.org/cp/ntlroad.html)

## **Or, consult these sources used in the research of *On the Trail of John Brown's Body***

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Lawrence Convention and Visitors Bureau Online, Visit Lawrence  
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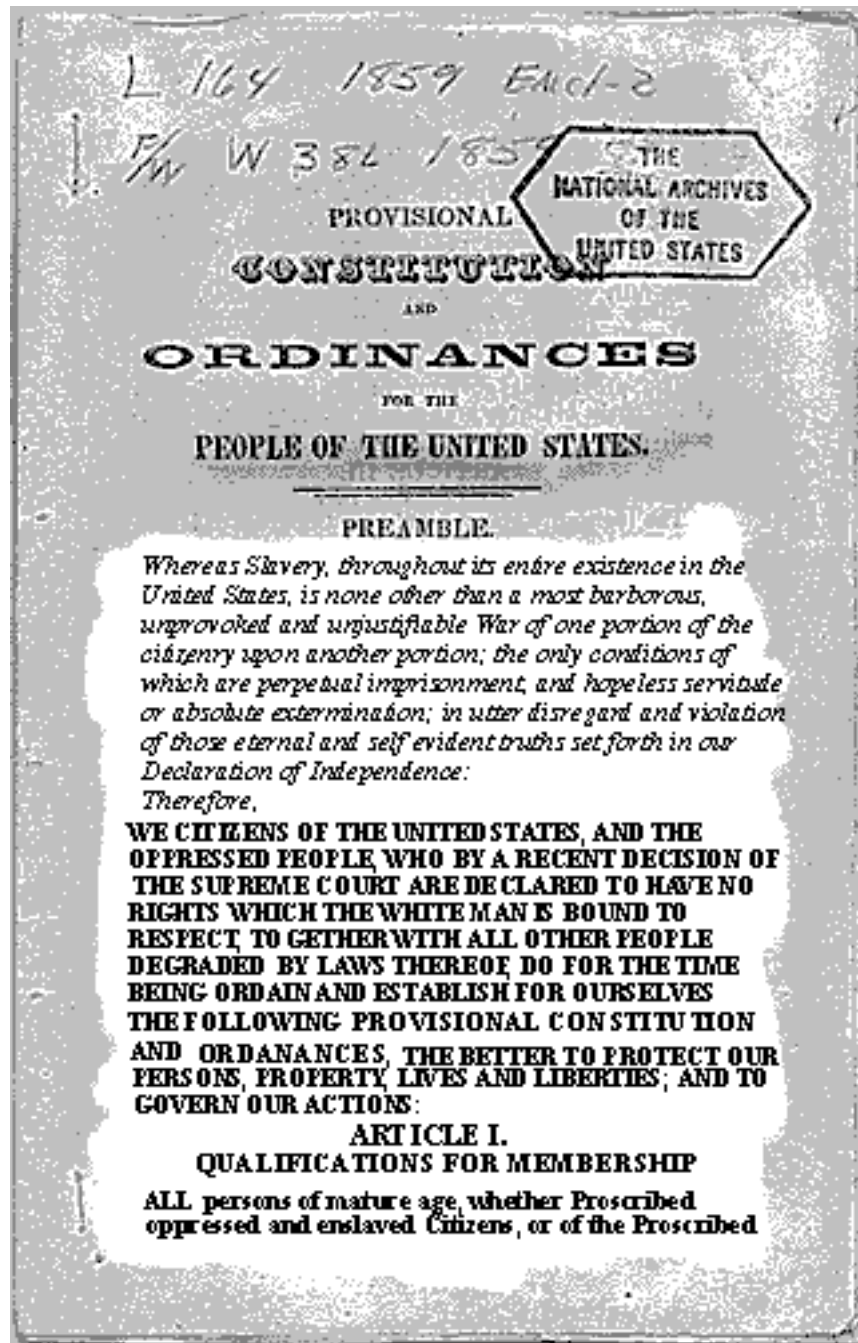
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Primary Source Document: John Brown's Constitution Page 1



Courtesy of the National Archives

\*\*The above document has been visually enhanced by the author. Text is the original.  
For full text see <http://www.nara.gov/cgi-bin/starfinder/5355/standard.txt>

# The United States in 1859

