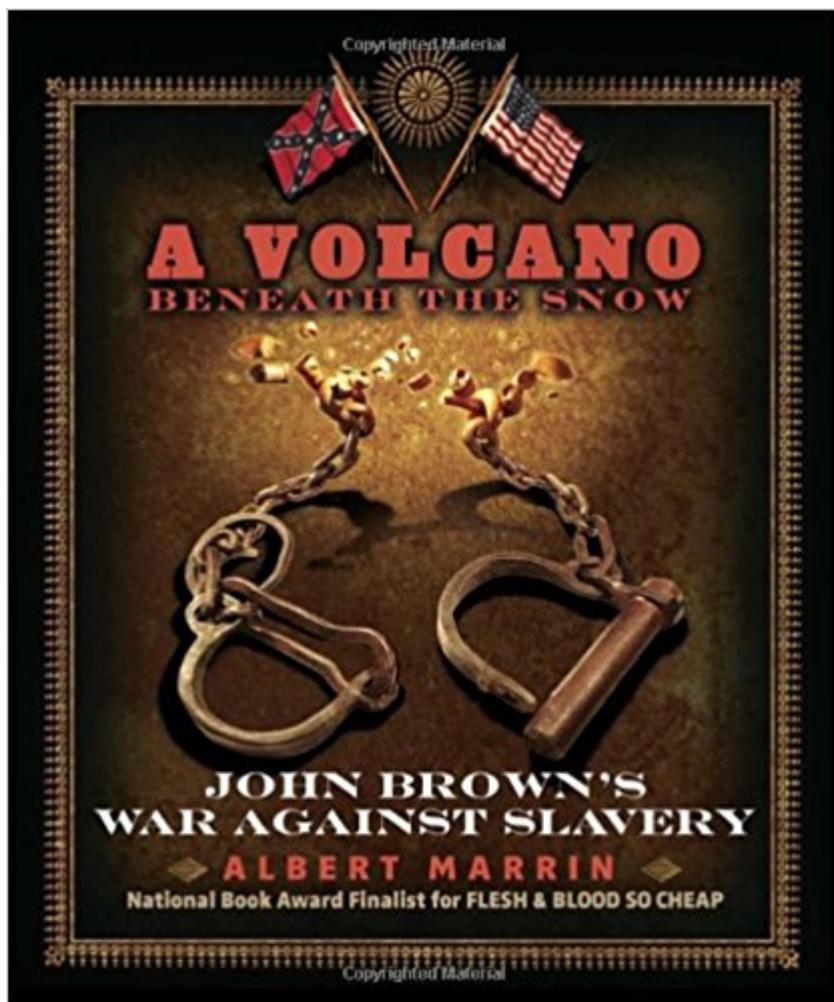


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A Volcano Beneath The Snow: John Brown's War Against Slavery



Synopsis

John Brown is a man of many legacies, from hero, freedom fighter, and martyr, to liar, fanatic, and "the father of American terrorism." Some have said that it was his seizure of the arsenal at Harper's Ferry that rendered the Civil War inevitable. Deeply religious, Brown believed that God had chosen him to right the wrong of slavery. He was willing to kill and die for something modern Americans unanimously agree was a just cause. And yet he was a religious fanatic and a staunch believer in "righteous violence," an unapologetic committer of domestic terrorism. Marrin brings 19th-century issues into the modern arena with ease and grace in a book that is sure to spark discussion.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up  Marrin offers a multisided look at the events and controversy surrounding John Brown's role in the banishment of slavery and his ongoing inspiration for current events. Chapters present the history of the "peculiar institution" (slavery) both here and abroad, details of Brown's life and family, his relationship with the abolitionists, his radicalization leading to the killings at Pottawatomie, Kansas, and, eventually, the uprising at Harper's Ferry and his trial and hanging. Brown's motivations, his religious fervor, charisma, and leadership skills are all examined. The

politics of the time and key players both for and against slavery, secession and disunion are introduced. Brown's role in the beginning of the Civil War and the introduction of the Emancipation Proclamation are explained. The role of slaves and free blacks before, during and after the war is also included. The Civil Rights Movement and more recent radical events, including the attack on the World Trade Center, are looked at through the lens of John Brown's actions. From beginning to end, readers are asked to consider the philosophical questions Brown raised regarding "breaking a 'bad' law in democracy." The double-column text is rich with relevant excerpts from writings, speeches, songs, and poetry of the era. Well-chosen captioned and dated black-and-white illustrations include period photos, portraits, artwork, maps, fliers, and posters. Extensive notes and further-reading suggestions are included. This will be an excellent resource for U.S. history collections. •Carol S. Surges, formerly at Longfellow Middle School, Wauwatosa, WI

Starred Review Historian Marrin regards the nineteenth-century zealot John Brown as being "the father of American terrorism," a man who would use any means to effect what he believed was his God-given mission: to eradicate slavery in the U.S. In pursuit of his mission, the volcanic Brown didn't draw the line at violence or even murder, being personally responsible for a clutch of deaths in "bloody Kansas." It is, however, his failed attempt to capture the federal armory at Harpers Ferry for which he is perhaps best remembered. It was his goal to seize the many guns stored there to arm an uprising of slaves that he hoped to foment. Though he didn't succeed, his failure was, in fact, a triumph, as his subsequent death by hanging turned him into a martyr, an inspiration for abolitionists, and a catalyst for the ensuing Civil War. Marrin has done a brilliant job of providing readers with a full-length biography of this extraordinary man who "raised questions that are as valid today as they were in his lifetime." In limning Brown's colorful life, Marrin creates ample context, highlighting the horrors of slavery and offering an overview of the Civil War. His gracefully written, well-documented text is supported by 20 pages of endnotes and is accompanied by a generous selection of black-and-white period photographs and drawings. The result invites independent reading and provides an invaluable resource for classroom use. Grades 8-12. --Michael Cart

I have been working with books for young people for years, and I read a few hundred every year. This one is not only a phenomenal read, it is thought-provoking, beautifully written and wonderfully insightful. I have read much about the raid on Harper's Ferry, but much here was new to me. My husband does not work with books for children, but I have given him Marrin books before and he

loves him. He read two chapters of the library copy I had and announced he needed to mark up and highlight the book-and bought a copy. He has decided to read every book Marrin ever wrote. I heartily recommend this book.

Albert Marrin Fans will see a new approach in this book. As Mr. Marrin does so well he combines the biography of a man with the events of the time. In this book, however, he calls on the reader to consider the actions of John Brown in acting out of "conscience". A good look back at past events and how we should respond in current situations that are sometimes nearly as troubling.

This is an excellent book on one of the more turbulent events in our history. John Brown is a polarizing figure and this book gives him some kind of "life" and makes you realize what kind of man he is. Very well written and very easy to understand. I really enjoyed this book.

How John Brown provided a spark to help finally end slavery after it had been a part of all of written history is an excellent reminder of how far we have come in a relatively short amount of time.

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