

★ **The Tribunal: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid.** Belknap:

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No one is likely to have the last word on John Brown, the abolitionist and leader of the 1859 Harpers Ferry raid that cut to the marrow of the slavery question and convinced many Southerners that the North had gone mad and wanted to incite slave rebellion. However, this superb collection of documents comes very close to doing so. In the wide sweep of texts collected here—150 speeches, editorials, letters to editors, pamphlets, poems, songs, and more, each neatly set in historical context by the editors—Northerners, Southerners, and foreign commentators are shown to be, in Frederick Douglass's phrase,

both “curious and contradictory” in weighing the meaning of John Brown and his act. The documents display a mixture of awe and anger, hope and horror, at the man, especially after he went bravely to the gallows proclaiming the justice of his cause. And, as the documents further attest, Brown and his raid remained contentious in history and myth thereafter. **VERDICT** To understand the power of conviction and the crisis of fear that brought on civil war, reading this brilliant collection is essential. From it, one will see that John Brown is not a-moldering in his grave. He haunts us yet today.—**Randall M. Miller, St. Joseph's Univ., Philadelphia**