

Section B: American Option

The Origins of the Civil War, 1846–1861

John Brown, 1859

- 2 Read the sources and then answer **both** parts of the question.

Source A

Of Old John Brown we might say with truth, his wrongs have made him mad. There was a time when John Brown, the Pennsylvania farmer, and his sons were as peace-loving citizens as could be found in our country. He came to Kansas early and, loving the cause of freedom, was an earnest Free State man. For this he suffered. He saw his home invaded and destroyed. He mourned the death of a beloved son. And these great wrongs crazed the old man and made him a fanatic, a monomaniac with but one thought, one idea, one impulse – vengeance on the slave power which had destroyed his peace; revenge on the men who had murdered his family and friends. It is said that he took an awful oath that while life remained his hand should be raised against this power and he would wage war against it to the death.

From the 'Herald of Freedom', Lawrence, Kansas, 29 October 1859.

Source B

The most transparent humbug ever attempted to be played on any community is the ridiculous pretence that BROWN is a *madman*. His late conversations, however, seem to indicate a good deal less insanity than some of his questioners exhibited in their questioning. A more sensible, self-possessed rascal never fell into the arms of the law. It is vain for his supporters in the non-slaveholding states to talk of Harpers Ferry as the work of a 'madman', 'a crazy fellow'. Everyone knows that BROWN has been their chief agent in Kansas for years, chosen on account of his cleverness and nerve, that he had the confidence of their moneyed men so that fifteen thousand dollars were placed in his hands for the prosecution of his infamous schemes. New England abolitionists are not very fond of parting with their money for any purpose and we should never suspect them of putting it into the hands of a lunatic.

From the Richmond 'Daily Dispatch', Virginia, 25 October 1859.

Source C

It seems that by the law of Virginia, even after a prisoner has been convicted, he may have the issue of his sanity tried by a jury. The whole history of John Brown for the last two years, so far as it has come to light, and all the incidents of his famous raid upon Harpers Ferry, have never appeared to us to be consistent with soundness of mind. We have no doubt that, if the issue could be tried, a very strong case could be made out for Brown's insanity. It would, however, be too damaging to the pride of Virginians to admit that they had been so frightened by a crazy man. Governor Wise will no doubt dispose of this application for another hearing as summarily as the Court of Appeal did for a new trial.

From the 'New York Tribune', 25 November 1859.

Source D

We give today full accounts of the scenes attending the execution of the traitor, murderer and thief, John Brown. He died, as he lived, a hardened criminal. When his wretched accomplices shall have paid the penalty of their crimes, we hope that their allies and sympathisers in the North will realise the fact that the South has the power to protect her soil and her property and will exercise it in spite of all the measures which can be levelled at her by the abolitionists and their supporters. Much very silly ridicule has been aimed at Governor Wise for assembling a large military force at Charlestown. Had he not assembled that force, an attempt to rescue Brown would have been made, blood would have been spilled and the Union would have been burst asunder.

From the 'Raleigh Register', North Carolina, 9 December 1859.

Answer **both** parts of the question with reference to the sources.

(a) To what extent do Sources C and D agree about Southern attitudes to John Brown's raid? [15]

(b) How far do these sources support the assertion that John Brown was insane? [25]