

Can Words Lead to War?

Supporting Question 3: **How did people in the North and the South react to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?**

Directions: Read Source A and Source B, both reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to complete the T-chart and answer the question about motivation below. This writing is from the 1850s. You may need to read it multiple times and look up unfamiliar words for fuller understanding.

T-Chart for Analyzing Reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

	<i>Boston Morning Post</i>	<i>Southern Press Review</i>
What are the main ideas and arguments in each review?		
How does each reviewer portray the book?		
Are there any similarities between the reviews?		
How might the authors' locations have influenced their reviews?		

Featured Sources

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source
A

Source A: W.B.S., review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published in the *Boston Morning Post* (excerpt), May 3, 1852

*Uncle Tom's Cabin as much as any novel we know of, is stamped on every page with genius. The author cannot touch a single incident without showing that she bears the sacred fire. How strong and wide may be the blaze we know not, but taking the present novel as the first effort in this line of writing, it is a wonderful composition, **emanating** from true genius, and produced with a nice tact, and **ingenuity**, and a thorough knowledge of human nature, etc. The scene at Senator Bird's, the flight across the Ohio, the interview of George with the manufacturer, at the road-side inn, the night scene in the steamer—nay, many other passages—are not prominent portions of the work, but they are given in a masterly manner. Not one word in the book suggests **mediocrity**, whether the pictures of slavery please or displease. And the death of Eva!*

*We have said that some chapters are beyond criticism—the reader will find them so. And with all the **pathos** and intensity of most of the story, there is no jot of dulness—no harping on one string. A vein of humor and **drollery meanders** through it, and one is often laughing with wet eyes. But brilliant as is “Uncle Tom's Cabin” as a literary work, it is yet more creditable to the author in another point of view. It proves that unlike most women, and very many men, Mrs. Stowe has the high ability of looking on both sides of one question. With feelings and principles equally opposed to slavery, for its unavoidable evils as well as its accidental abuses, she is yet able to paint the slaveholder as he lives and moves, with no touch of bigotry or fanaticism. No southerner need be ashamed of the noble, kind and generous St. Clare, or the angel-child, his daughter.*

“W. B. S.,” Boston Morning Post, May 3, 1852. Public Domain. Reproduced from Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture: A Multi-media Archive, directed by Stephen Railton, the University of Virginia, <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rere50at.html>.

Supporting Question 3

Source B: Unknown author, review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (excerpt), published in the *Southern Press Review*, Washington, DC, 1852

Uncle Tom's Cabin is an anti-slavery novel. It is a **caricature** of slavery. It selects for description the most **odious** features of slavery—the escape and pursuit of fugitive slaves, the sale and separation of domestic slaves, the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters. It portrays the slaves of the story as more moral, intelligent, courageous, elegant and beautiful than their masters and mistresses; and where it concedes any of these qualities to the whites, it is to such only as are, even though slaveholders, opposed to slavery. Those in favor of slavery are slave-traders, slave-catchers, and the most weak, **depraved**, cruel and **malignant** of beings and demons.

It deserves to be considered that the defense of the South was a documentary argument, consisting chiefly of a collection of all the evidence on the subject which existed in an **authentic** shape. The attack on the South is a novel—a romance. The system of the South relies on fact—the sentiment of the North flies to fiction. This is significant. For some time before, the North, the practical, calculating, unimaginative North, claimed the facts. But since the appearance of 'the North and the South,' that **pretension** has almost been abandoned.

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<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rere27at.html>.