

The South Was My Country

Questions prepared by Jack Bareilles

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Introduction Questions

1. Who was John Mosby? What does it mean he was a “partisan leader”?
2. How did Mosby feel about slavery? Based-upon your knowledge of the antebellum (pre-Civil War) South, how did most people feel about slavery?
3. Why did Mosby fight for the South during the Civil War?
4. What political party did Mosby join after the war? What effect do you think joining this party had on how other Virginians felt about Mosby?
5. In the wake of Reconstruction, a growing number of Southerners began to make what argument about the cause of the Civil War?
6. Some Southern apologists (people who defend an idea or cause) even went so far as to say what about slavery?
7. Eventually the viewpoint held by Southern apologists became known as the “Lost Cause.” In one short sentence, define the “Lost Cause.”
8. What did Mosby say was the cause of the Civil War? What was his opinion of the “Lost Cause” and of those who said slavery was not the cause of the war?

Document Questions

9. When does Mosby write this letter? How many years after the end of the Civil War is the letter written?
10. What word does Mosby use to describe his opinion of the “Reunion speeches”? Hint: These speeches would have been given at a reunion of veterans from the Civil War.
11. According to Christian, the person who wrote Mosby about what was said at the reunion, what were the “Virginia people” claiming?
12. Which Virginians spoke against slavery? Which Virginians supported slavery? Ask you teacher what the difference might be.
13. What did the Virginia Code of 1860 make it a crime to do?
14. Why do you think a supporter of the idea that Virginians weren’t pro-slavery wouldn’t mention the Virginia Code of 1860?
15. Even though Mosby says, “I think as badly of slavery as Horace Greeley did” (Greeley was a leading Northern newspaper man and opponent of slavery) how does Mosby feel about the fact that his family owned slaves?
16. What does Mosby mean when he says, “People must be judged by the standard of their own age. If it was right to own slaves as property it was right to fight for it.”?
17. According to Mosby, why did the South secede and go to war?
18. Mosby goes back to the idea that “modern” Virginians went against what “old” Virginians believed when he says John Calhoun (the greatest Virginia politician and political leader in the years after Jefferson and Madison retired—1815-1850), attacked Thomas Jefferson’s idea that the Northwest Territories (the future states of Ohio, Indiana,

Illinois and Michigan) should not allow slavery. Why do you think Mosby keeps mentioning this idea?

19. What was the position taken by “new” Virginians in the US Senate on the 1850 admission of California into the Union as a free state?

Short writing question: Now, after reading Mosby’s letter, try to answer the questions posed by Dan Wolf, the Gilder Lehrman Collection Manuscript Cataloger:

“Was Mosby correct in faulting these men for their views, when they believed they were only trying to protect the Confederacy he defended so bravely?” and,

“Was [Mosby] a hypocrite to condemn slavery while taking pride in fighting in its defense?”

For further information about the importance of slavery in the secession of Southern states, please look at the Mississippi Declaration of Secession, which can be found online through Yale University’s Avalon Project at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/csa/missec.htm>

You can also find the South Carolina Declaration of Secession through the Avalon Project at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/csa/scarsec.htm>