**Objective: Read closely to analyze word choice, tone, and author’s purpose in a literary nonfiction text.**

**Task: Demonstrate understanding of a writer’s use of rhetorical devices to advance his purpose.**

**Texts: “Statement by Alabama clergymen” “Letter from Birmingham Jail”**

**Skill focus: close reading argumentation, especially addressing a counterclaim**

1. **Begin with “Statement by Alabama Clergymen” that prompted King’s letter.**
2. **Have students read the Alabama clergymen’s statement to identify the four accusations the clergymen make: (1) King is an outsider; (2) he and his followers should negotiate for change rather than demonstrate; (3) their actions are “untimely”; and (4) there is no justification for breaking the law.**
3. **Have students begin completing SOAPSTone for the first of these two selections.**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Clergymen from Alabama** | **King** |
| **Subject** |  |  |
| **Occasion** |  |  |
| **Audience** |  |  |
| **Purpose** |  |  |
| **Speaker** |  |  |
| **Tone** |  |  |

1. **Review the information on the graphic organizer.**

**Day two:**

1. **Show the Common Core video series on King’s letter: mpt.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/engny.pd.ccvs.ela10/close-reading-of-text-mlk-letter-from-birminghamjail. Discuss.**

**6.**

**7. Introduce King’s letter with a focus on argumentation and counterclaims. Refer students back to 5 Steps to a 5 , pages 153-54. Argumentation is the presentation and defense of a specific thesis, assertion, or claim—a strongly held belief, a critical review of an issue, a presentation of an insight, search for the truth. To convince a reader to accept the position, the writer provides support using objective facts or logical evidence, and sometimes emotional appeals.**

**Review the formula on page154: 1. Present the issue/situation/problem.**

**2. State your assertion/claim/thesis. 3. Support your claim. 4. Acknowledge and respond to real and possible opposing views. 5. Make your final comment or summary of the evidence.**

1. **Pass out the first three pages of the letter. Have students** utilize the following color key:

Purple: the opposition's arguments

Red: use of an emotional appeal or pathos

Green: use of appeal to authority or reputation or ethos Blue: use of an appeal to logic or logos

**Consider pairing students to do this assignment.**

1. **Review student choices.**
2. **Then have students complete the following exit ticket.**
3. **Discussion questions on Rhetoric and Style** 
   * **What is King’s tone in the opening paragraph? How might you make an argument for its being ironic?**
   * **Why does he arrange paragraphs 2-4 in the order that he does? How would replacing the order have changed the impact?**
   * **How do King’s allusions to biblical figures and events appeal to both ethos and pathos?**
   * **Why does King go into such detail to explain the basic principles and process of the nonviolent protest movement?**
   * **In the long sentence in paragraph 14(beginning with “But when you have seen . . .”), why does King arrange the “when” clauses in the order that he does? Try repositioning them and discuss the difference in effect.**
   * **What are the rhetorical strategies in paragraph 25? Try to identify at least five.**
   * **Trace one of the following patterns of figurative language throughout King’s “Letter”: darkness and light, high and low, sickness and health.**
   * **Kings uses various forms of repetition—repetition of single words or phrases, of sentence structures, and of sounds. Focusing on a passage of one or more paragraphs’ length, discuss the effect of King’s use of repetition.**
   * **Why does King wait until the end of his “Letter” (pars. 45 and 46) to address the clergymen’s claim that the Birmingham police behaved admirably?**
   * **Considering the final three paragraphs as King’s conclusion, discuss whether you believe it is rhetorically effective.**

1. **Summative assessment:**

OBJECTIVE: Write an effective response to the following prompt.

*Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Writing Prompt:**

Dr. Martin Luther King’s writings and speeches are very effective for several reasons. He uses allusions, logos, pathos, and ethos. These strategies reveal his rhetorical mastery and breadth of knowledge. In what ways do these things help him achieve his purposes? You must discuss his use of at least three of these strategies. Make sure you cite (identify) specific examples of his use of these strategies, such as appealing to his reader’s sense of right and wrong, establishing his credibility, making his ideas accessible to a wider audience, and referring to and/or quoting from other documents (allusions).

Briefly plan your response here:

Strategy # 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ + specific support

Strategy # 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ + specific support

Strategy # 3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ + specific support

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**Eight Alabama Clergymen**

**Public Statement to Martin Luther King, Jr.**

# Birmingham, Alabama, April 1963

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "an appeal for law and order and common sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiations of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however, technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled.

We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

**Bishop C.C.J. Carpenter** **Bishop Joseph A. Durick** **Rabbi Milton L. Grafman** **Bishop Paul Hardin** [**Bishop Nolan B, Harmon**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nolan_Bailey_Harmon)  **Rev. George M. Murray** **Rev. Edward V. Ramage**  **Rev. Earl Stallings**

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Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail--a rhetorical analysis

In the following text, here is the color key: Purple: the opposition's arguments

Red: use of an emotional appeal or pathos

Green: use of appeal to authority or reputation or ethos

Blue: use of an appeal to logic or logos

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This response to a published statement by eight fellow clergymen from Alabama (Bishop C. C. J.

Carpenter, Bishop Joseph A. Durick, Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman, Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Holan B. Harmon, the Reverend George M. Murray. the Reverend Edward V. Ramage and the Reverend Earl Stallings) was composed under somewhat constricting circumstance. Begun on the margins of the newspaper in which the statement appeared while I was in jail, the letter was continued on scraps of writing paper supplied by a friendly Negro trusty, and concluded on a pad my attorneys were eventually permitted to leave me. Although the text remains in substance unaltered, I have indulged in the author's prerogative of polishing it for publication.

April 16, 1963

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants --- for example, to remove the stores’ humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that, except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoralty election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run-off we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run-off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct-action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolentresister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we stiff creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dart of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and

**Exit Slip**

The following three quotes best represent one of each of the three modes of persuasion- ethos, logos and pathos (though not necessarily in that order). Fill out the chart explaining which rhetorical mode the quote best represents, how you know it represents that rhetorical mode, and what effect that paragraph would have on King’s audience and his purpose.

King’s main purpose: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Quote | Rhetorical Mode | How is it that Mode? | Effect on King’s Audience/Purpose |
| “Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.” |  |  |  |
| “I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." |  |  |  |
| “The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded |  |  |  |
| him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them.” |  |  |  |

**Exit Slip**

The following three quotes best represent one of each of the three modes of persuasion- ethos, logos and pathos (though not necessarily in that order). Fill out the chart explaining which rhetorical mode the quote best represents, how you know it represents that rhetorical mode, and what effect that paragraph would have on King’s audience and his purpose.

King’s main purpose: MLK is writing to the clergymen of Birmingham to explain the reason behind his protest and even enlist their support in fighting for civil rights.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Quote | Rhetorical Mode | How is it that Mode? | Effect on King’s Audience/Purpose |
| “Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.” | Logos | King’s definition of the terms; reference to St.  Thomas | This would help King’s audience understand why he felt like he could break the law;  It would help him assert that the segregation laws are bad, not the act of protesting them. |
| “I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." | Ethos | “My Christian and Jewish brothers…”; Characterizing the ‘moderate  White’ | This would help King’s audience see the harm in their practice of not standing up for civil rights; this shows how he went from saying to his audience, “I know you’re men of good will” to criticizing them. |
| “The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them.” | Pathos | “yearning for freedom” “caught up by the Zeitgeist” “moving [...] toward the promised land”  “pent up resentments and latent frustrations” | King’s audience sees the frustrations that African Americans were facing and sympathized with them. Also, this is meant to show that if King’s audience doesn’t help, they can expect a less collected response. |