

## Close Reading Practice: First Five Paragraphs

To help students practice close reading skills, divide the class into 5 groups. Assign each group one of the first five paragraphs of the Letter from Birmingham Jail. **Do not** provide the historical background of the letter beforehand.

Ask each group to discuss the following questions in their groups:

- Who is MLK addressing? How can you tell?
- What point(s) is he arguing? What evidence is he giving?
- What appeals is he using?\*
- Why are these appeals more effective than others given the point he is trying to make?

\*Note: this assumes you have previously introduced rhetorical analysis and rhetorical appeals (ethos/pathos/logos).

Ask each group to report out.

Follow up with student-centered questions, such as the ones below based on this quote in the first section of the letter:

“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.”

- What are the implications of this statement for all people concerning social injustices? Do you believe he is right? Why or why not?
- Are we connected? Do you feel part of a web of social connections? If not, what prevents that?