

Structured Reading/Feedback for Letter from Birmingham Jail

This assignment assumes that students have read the first section of Letter from Birmingham Jail in class and will read the remainder of the essay for homework; however, you can adapt this assignment to as much of the document as you like.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Letter from Birmingham Jail* uses the word Negro instead of Black or African American. Although Negro was considered culturally acceptable in the 1960s, this term is now considered offensive and outdated. The essay also includes two mentions of the N-word, which was and remains a derogatory term. Because this is a historically significant document, we are reading it in its entirety as Dr. King wrote it in 1963. He chose his language with the intention to reflect his times. However, in writing about and discussing this essay, we will use vocabulary that reflects our time. So, in commenting on the essay for this assignment, **only use the terms Black people or African Americans and do not use the N-word.**

Now that we have done a close reading in class of the first 5 paragraphs of Letter from Birmingham Jail," I want you to finish reading the essay.

Instructions

1. Read paragraphs 6-34 of "Letter from Birmingham Jail."
2. Choose 5 quotes from the reading that seem significant, powerful, thought-provoking, or puzzling. Make sure to choose your quotes from a variety of locations within the text; for example, don't take all of your quotes from the opening pages.
3. Write a 3-5 sentence response **for each** of the 5 passages (that's total of 15-25 sentences). You can respond in a variety of ways (see the next step for specifics). The most important thing to remember is that your observations should be specific and detailed.
4. Label each of your responses with one of the category abbreviations below. **Do not use any of the categories more than once.**
(TN) **Then and Now:** Make a connection between the historical context of the passage and our current historical moment.
(PW) **Part to Whole:** Analyze a passage's relationship to the text as a whole; what role does the passage play in contributing to the text's overall message and/or theme?

(LF) Language Feature: Make an observation or insight about the passage's use of language; how does the language contribute to the text's message and/or theme?

(GR) General Reflection: Consider what the passage means in a broad sense, not just to the specific context of the text and its creator. What conclusions can you draw about the world and human nature?

(PR) Personal Reaction: Give your reaction to the passage; write about what it makes you think or feel, or connect it to your life and experiences.

(AD) Agree or disagree: Find a quote that you either strongly agree or disagree with. Explain why you feel this way.

5. Comment on two remarks that classmates have made on the quotes they highlighted. What do you think about what they had to say? Be specific. Be kind in how you phrase your feedback.