



# Social Studies Virtual Learning

## AP Government

### Required Document:

*Letter from Birmingham Jail*

(Part 2: Document Analysis)

April 16, 2020



## **AP Government: *Letter from Birmingham Jail (Part 2)***

April 16, 2020

### **Objective: PRD 1.A**

Explain how constitutional provisions have supported and motivated social movements.

## Let's Get Started!

Make sure you've accessed the required document ([LINKED HERE](#)). If you want to print it out, you can, but otherwise you can just read it from your device. You'll be able to answer the analysis questions in your notes.

As you work through the document, follow along with the page numbers on the **BOTTOM** of the page in the PDF

# Lesson Activity

Reading & Analysis of  
*Letter from Birmingham Jail*

## ***Letter from Birmingham Jail (p. 5)***

Read **p. 5** (the first paragraph of the excerpted letter). In your notes, answer the following:

- **Describe** Dr. King's purpose in writing this paragraph. What is he attempting to explain to his audience?

## **Answers (p. 5)**

**Describe** Dr. King's purpose in writing this paragraph. What is he attempting to explain to his audience?

**Dr. King's audience is the group of white Southern religious leaders who describe the non-violent demonstrations of King and his followers as "unwise and untimely." In general, Dr. King is explaining to his audience what the conditions were like in Birmingham in an effort to lay the foundation for why nonviolent DIRECT ACTION needed to take place.**

## ***Letter from Birmingham Jail (p. 6)***

Read **p. 6** (the first paragraph on this page). In your notes, answer the following:

- **Paraphrase the promise** King explains the merchants broke which may have prevented the direct action he's describing.
- What was the direct action seeking to get the merchants to do?
- **Paraphrase the claim** King supports using the evidence of the broken promise by the merchants.

## Answers (p. 6)

- **Paraphrase the promise** King explains the merchants broke which may have prevented the direct action he's describing.
- **Paraphrase the claim** King supports using the evidence of the broken promise by the merchants.

PROMISE

Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of the leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions certain promises were made by the merchants, such as the promise to remove the humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises, Reverend Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to call a moratorium on any type of demonstration. As the weeks and months unfolded, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. As in so many experiences of the past, we were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community.

CLAIM



## Answers (p. 6)

- What was the direct action seeking to get the merchants to do?

**The direct action was seeking to get merchants to remove the racial signs from their stores and end segregation in their businesses.**

## ***Letter from Birmingham Jail (p. 6)***

Read **p. 6** (the second paragraph on this page). In your notes, answer the following:

- Thinking back to Dr. King's intended audience and purpose, why is he describing these delays in the direct action? What is he trying to communicate to his audience?

## Answers (p. 6)

- Thinking back to Dr. King's intended audience and purpose, why is he describing these delays in the direct action? What is he trying to communicate to his audience?

**Dr. King is seeking to convey to the white Southern religious leaders that the direct action that civil rights protestors used in Birmingham was thoughtfully timed and the product of meticulous planning and strategy. Thus, the direct action was not “unwise and untimely.”**

## ***Letter from Birmingham Jail (p. 7)***

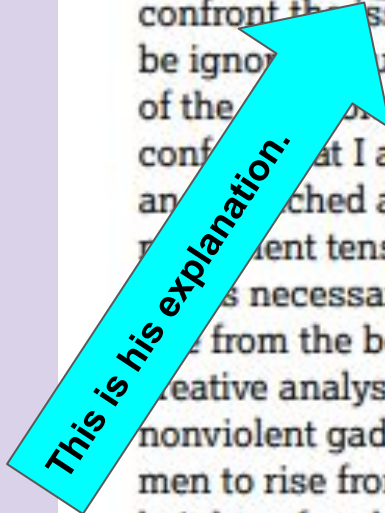
Read p. 7 (all of it). In your notes, answer the following:

- **Paraphrase** King's explanation of the purpose of direct action.
- In his paragraph, King outlines his argument for using direct action to seek policy change that advances civil rights. How do the following ideas fit into his argument?
  - Nonviolent direct action
  - Tension
  - Negotiation
  - Policy change that advances civil rights
- Now, explain the relationship between these concepts in the context of Dr. King's argument.

# Answers (p. 7)

## Paraphrase

King's  
explanation of  
the purpose of  
direct action.



You may well ask, "Why direct action, why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. Just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly worked and struggled against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that 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 of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So, the purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

# Answers (p. 7)

- In his paragraph, King outlines his argument for using direct action to seek policy change that advances civil rights. How do the following ideas fit into his argument?
  - Nonviolent direct action: **nonviolent direct action serves as the catalyst for creating nonviolent tension within a community**
  - Tension: **nonviolent tension within a community leads to negotiation, in this case with white Southern business and political leaders**
  - Negotiation: **civil rights leaders and white Southern business and political leaders engage in negotiation, in this case, in an effort to seek policy change that will roll back and end segregation**
  - Policy change that advances civil rights: **this policy change is the byproduct of negotiation**

## Answers (p. 7)

- Now, explain the relationship between these concepts in the context of Dr. King's argument.

**Dr. King argues that nonviolent direct action is the first step in the process that leads to policy change that advances civil rights. His reasoning is that this nonviolent direct action will create a tension in the community that will force civil rights leaders and white Southern business and political leaders to negotiate policy changes.**

## ***Letter from Birmingham Jail (p. 8)***

Read p. 8 (all of it). In your notes, answer the following:

- What is one specific example of the use of “legal pressure” by the civil rights movement of the 1960s?
- **Paraphrase** the claim King makes in this paragraph about achieving gains in civil rights.
- How does this claim relate to King’s argument from the previous paragraph?



## Answers (p. 8)

- What is one specific example of the use of “legal pressure” by the civil rights movement of the 1960s?

**The term “legal pressure” is a reference to litigation. A key example is *Brown v. Board*, which was a catalyst for the civil rights movements in the 1960s. This case used the Equal Protection Clause to advance civil rights.**

## Answers (p. 8)

Paraphrase the claim King makes in this paragraph about achieving gains in civil rights.

One of the basic points in your statement is that our acts are untimely. Some have asked, "Why didn't you give the new administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this inquiry is that the new administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one before it acts. We will be sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Mr. Boutwell will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is much more articulate and gentle than Mr. Conner, they are both segregationists, dedicated to the task of maintaining the status quo. The hope I see in Mr. Boutwell is that he will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from the devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. ...



CLAIM

## Answers (p. 8)

- How does this claim relate to King's argument from the previous paragraph?

**In the previous paragraph (on p. 7), King explains the process by which nonviolent, direct action leads to policy change that advances civil rights. In this paragraph, King claims that no positive changes in civil rights policy are possible in this environment without these nonviolent direct actions first.**

## **Wrap Up Question**

What is one implication of the process outlined in Dr. King's argument? How might this process affect policy-making, other social movements, or another political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior discussed in AP Government so far?

# Wrap Up Question: To Think About

What is one implication of the process outlined in Dr. King's argument? How might this process affect policy-making, other social movements, or another political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior discussed in AP Government so far?

## Some things to think about:

- 1) Other social movements use litigation based on the Equal Protection Clause as a catalyst for their social movement**
- 2) Other social movements begin engaging in nonviolent demonstrations to seek policy change**
- 3) Congress and the President begin prioritizing social movement and civil rights issues on their policy agendas because of the pressures of social movements using non-violent tactics.**



# Social Studies Virtual Learning

## AP Government

### Required Document:

*Letter from Birmingham Jail*

**(Part 3: Document Practice)**

April 16, 2020



# **AP Government: Letter from Birmingham Jail (Part 3)**

April 16, 2020

## **Objective: PRD 1.A**

Explain how constitutional provisions have supported and motivated social movements.

# Let's Get Started!

For this lesson, you will need to open this required document ([LINKED HERE](#)). Feel free to print it off if you would like, or you can save it to your device. It does need to be accessible!



# Practice

Working through the *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

# Process for Achieving Gains in Civil Rights:

According to  
Dr. Martin  
Luther King,  
Jr., the  
process was:

A determined, strategic, non-violent direct  
action

→ creates a tension within a community

→ forces negotiation between civil right  
rights leaders and community  
business and political leaders

→ can lead to policy change that  
advances civil rights

**So...**

Write down some challenges that a social movement that is using this process might encounter. How might a social movement using this process overcome these challenges?

**So...**

The social movements might encounter:

→ **Policy gridlock!**

→ **Checks & balances in government**

→ **Fragmentation of power among  
government institutions**

**So...**

And they may overcome challenges by:

→ **Using litigation to show how the Equal Protection Clause was not upheld**

→ **Using a variety of nonviolent grassroots tactics to rally public support from a variety of constituencies to put pressure on policymakers and the elected institutions of government**

## **Activity: Making Connections**

- 1. Choose a social movement (Civil Rights Movement, Native Americans, women's rights, etc.). Write down your movement choice in your notes.**

## **Activity: Making Connections**

2. Research ways in which this movement has been supported and motivated by a Constitutional provision (14th Amendment's Equal Protection or Due Process Clauses) or through judicial or legislative action. Keep a log of the information you find.

## **Activity: Making Connections**

3. Investigate any Supreme Court cases that are relevant that come up with your search and explain how the rulings in those cases either **EXPAND** or **LIMIT** this group's civil rights.

→ Be able to explain how the group used the 14th Amendment to push for rights!