

# Letter from birmingham jail analysis analysis

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Martin Luther King Jr. wrote the “ Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” after an unjust proposal made by eight white clergymen. Their claims were to be that no Negro “ outsider” should be allowed to establish or lead any protest and should leave them to their local neighborhoods. King replied directly to the clergymen, but used religious ties to also have his voice heard in the public. In his counter argument, King strategically used logical evidence, emotional aspects and good motives to present his perspective to the clergymen. In the beginning paragraphs, King states the main goals of his letter.

He then goes on to set up the main points of his argument by stating, “ 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. ” This not only presents an error in the clergymen argument, but it also ties into Kings belief that such demonstrations were necessary to get the point across of injustice taking place in Birmingham. Next, King mentions the intensity of segregation in Birmingham than that of other cities, strengthening his argument of why the blacks feel the need to speak out.

Kings logical statements appeal to the readers thoughts, giving them a new outlook on their own reasoning’s. Another logical aspect of Kings letter is when he expresses his efforts of negotiations with Birmingham merchants. The negotiations were to be that signs showing racism would be taken down and civil rights protest would be stopped. After awhile the promises of racist signs being removed did not follow through, resulting in Kings direct action. This example used by King, shows that the direct action was not originally

the idea for trying to work out discrimination in Birmingham, but rather inevitable.

To emphasize his argument, King stated, “ You may 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. ” But they had tried the negotiations, and King mentions that yes, negotiations would be better, but the community does not follow through with their deals. Thus, the need for direct action to force the issue upon the community is further exemplified. King combines the use of ethos and pathos as he compares himself and the rights of men to religious backgrounds.

His first comparison is with the Apostle Paul, where Paul had “ carried the gospel of Jesus Christ,” as to King’s carrying of “ the gospel of freedom. ” King addresses this similarity to show why he felt committed to go to Birmingham, because like Paul, he needed to respond as an aid to his people. Towards the end of King’s letter; he exemplifies courageousness in the Negro demonstrations by relating them to the actions of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they refused to follow what they believed to be unjust laws.

Saying that if they are supposed heroes by going against unjust laws, why shouldn’t the people see Negro demonstrators the same way? They are also God’s children and by those disobedience’s, they were really showing the grace of God. These connections to religion supports their fighting against unjust laws as a divine cause. While the comparisons to Christian backgrounds may better help a religious reader better connect to King’s

message, emotional suffering helps all whites sympathize to the blacks hardships.

Starting out with mentioning how long the blacks have had to “ wait” for desegregation when their Godgiven rights already provide for them, but the whites seem to take them away. King then addresses why the blacks cannot keep waiting by showing what many have had to experience though their lifetimes. The repetition of the words “ when you,” begins as statements of what blacks have had to endure, but slowly builds up onto the readers emotions making them realize the vastness to what blacks have really gone through.

King also shows how a child’s uncorrupted minds can be possessed into hatred towards the white people, “ Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean? ” Feelings as a child can build up through their lifetime, just as “ when the cup of endurance runs over. ” These emotional appeals brought into perspective how the simple Negro demonstrations were nothing compared to what they have had to endure while waiting, and that it was time for the waiting for finally end. At the end of his letter, King shows his ability to ask for forgiveness from the clergymen if anything he had written offended their beliefs.

By doing this, King is stepping up above the two groups differences in demonstrating that he is not writing this letter in order to humiliate, but rather to help share his beliefs in the hope that they too could understand why the civil disobedience’s were necessary. The way King hopes to be able to meet each clergyman as a friend displays his deep wanting for

desegregation to be fully established. Good intentions towards both whites and blacks were used to wrap up Kings letter in a way to show that both can live harmoniously together.

The uses of logical references, emotional comparisons, and good motives help the reader see the faults in segregation and a new meaning on civil disobedience. By addressing the necessity of demonstrations, comparing himself and his followers to biblical figures, emotionally connecting the reader to the hardships of blacks, and his ability for wanting to become “friends” with the same people who persecute him allows King to help readers understand how racial prejudiced must be abolished.