

Analysis of martin luther king's why can't we wait assignment

[History](#)



Life was poor in every direction for Africa and Americans. They had little chance for success in life and acceptance among whites was not even fathomable. In the excerpt King uses emotive imagery, rhetorical questions, and historical allusion to persuade the audience to accept his point of view and to take action instead of waiting aimlessly for someone else to take initiative, hints the title *Why Can't We Wait*.

King effectively utilizes emotive imagery to appeal to the audience's emotion, while at the same time, creating a vivid picture of the grim circumstances that haunted African Americans in the 1950s. He starts out with the brief but insightful summary of the life of a young 'negro' boy. King states "The stench of garbage is in the halls. The drunk, jobless, the junkie sees are shadow figures of his everyday world." He uses this to appeal to the audience's emotion by astutely pointing out how his life was of poor quality. This makes the reader more understanding and agreeable for when he gets into his main point.

Martin, in a restrained manner, uses rhetorical questions to bring his main point to light. He says "why does misery constantly haunt the Negro? ... Had the forebears done some tragic injury to the nation". This shows how unfortunate the 'negro' population was, and for what? King despite the fact that he knows the answer, asks what was so wrong about African Americans that they deserved this type of treatment. This also uses logos, because the audience will think that King's argument did nothing wrong. This, in turn, further persuades the audience once to accept his point of view and be more amenable to persuasion.

King cleverly uses historical allusion to prove his point further and to persuade. The subject matter which he presents to achieve his rhetorical purpose of persuasion by depicting the 'negro' situation is historical in nature. He references periods in history where African Americans have helped the United States in a way that few have. He states "for two hundred years, without wages ... To commanding influence in domestic commerce and world trade." This illustrates the helpful lives of 'Negroes' that have been dedicated to the betterment of the US, and yet are treated poorly and unfairly among whites.

This shows that people cannot sit idly by and wait for action that needs to be taken immediately. He persuades them into this with his sympathy, ethical historical allusions. King also alludes to other significant 'negro' figures and their accomplishments, such as Crispus Attucks. He uses historical allusion as a tool to accomplish his original purpose.