**“Letter from Birmingham Jail” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (August, 1963)**

**PURPOSE: To not only appreciate Dr. Martin Luther King as an important figure in civil rights, but to analyze and recognize his rhetorical intellect—how he ingeniously used figurate language and logic to make his arguments.**

It's not often that a text is almost word-for-word completely relevant fifty years later. It's tough to write something like that. You never know when the next iPhone or Snapchat or ectoplasmic fusion-powered retro-cannon is going to come around and revolutionize everything. MLK probably hoped that his strategy of non-violent civil disobedience wouldn't be needed anymore by now because his dream that everyone would just love each other already would be a reality.

Unfortunately, everyone doesn't love each other, so we still need his letter. Hate groups still flourish, employment discrimination is still alive and well, and it took until 2014 for Wilcox County High School in Georgia to hold a racially integrated prom.

Birmingham, Alabama was one of the worst places in America to be a Black American, so the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Dr. King's crew, the SCLC) decided to go there to demonstrate against the segregation laws. They did, and according to plan, many people were arrested.

Dr. King was among the arrested and sent to jail for protesting segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. After reading an open letter from eight white clergymen in the local newspaper criticizing him and his fellow activists, MLK decided he might as well write back to let them know what was on his mind.

Dr. King used the opportunity to bring everybody up to speed about the protests in Birmingham, what they were about (horrible systemic racism), why the protestors were civilly disobeying (racist) laws and ordinances, why the protestors had truth and justice (and Jesus and America) on their side, and how Dr. King was disappointed with clergymen in the South and so-called white moderates who supposedly believed in his cause but didn't like the "tension" and unrest caused by the protests.

**Section Two: Ethos, pathos, and logos**

Last week you answered some questions about the text to ensure you read the text and understood the basic gist of the letter. This week we are going to look at how Dr. King uses ***ethos, pathos***, and ***logos*** to make his argument (the ***rhetoric*** of his letter).

1. Find at least two instances where Dr. King uses *ethos* to make his argument, and use quote integration to write or type the quotation; be sure and state the page number of the quotation you’re citing. For example: On page three, Dr. King reminds the reader that, according to St. Augustine, “An unjust law is no law at all.” This is ethos because Dr. King is citing a religious scholar (a credible source) to make his argument.

Find two more on your own.

1. Find at least two instances where Dr. King uses *pathos* to make his argument, and use quote integration to write or type the quotation; be sure and state the page number of the quotation you’re citing. For example: On page two of the letter, Dr. King asks the reader to imagine explaining “to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children…” This is pathos because Dr. King is making an argument based on emotion.

Find two more on your own.

1. Find at least two instances where Dr. King uses *logos* to make his argument, and use quote integration to write or type the quotation; be sure and state the page number of the quotation you’re citing. For example: On page three, Dr. King tells the reader that he “was arrested Friday on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong with an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade, but when the ordinance is used to preserve segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and peaceful protest, then it becomes unjust.” This is logos because Dr. King uses a fact to demonstrate, or provide a real-world example of his argument.

Find two more on your own.