**“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 One: Reading Accountabilit***y (It’s important that you read the entire letter, because next week, [Section Two] the assignment will go beyond “reading check” questions and involve analysis and rhetorical elements we have discussed in class.)*

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. How does King describe the terms by which he hopes to answer the critics?
2. What is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia?
3. What biblical figure does King compare himself to?
4. What does King say “is a threat to justice everywhere?’
5. What are the four basic steps to a non-violent campaign, according to King?
6. At workshops on non-violence, what two questions were asked of the protestors?
7. What word does King say he is “not afraid of?”
8. In what year did the U.S. Supreme Court outlaw segregation in public schools?
9. Who are the two “saints” King quotes?
10. Name three people King claims are “extremists.”
11. What does King say he is disappointed in?
12. What organization/group of people does King say he can’t “join in praise” of?
13. King states, “it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends.” But what does he say is even more wrong?
14. List at least two “heroes of the South King mentions.
15. Why does King say this letter is so long?