


"Letter from Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King Jr.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. King faced criticism by a group of clergymen for being in Birmingham. Explain this criticism, and his response to it—what is his rationale for being there?
2. How does he answer the charge of being an "outsider"?
3. Explain King's belief about the interconnectedness of communities all across the United States. What does it mean to be interconnected? Do you agree with this concept?
4. What are the four basic steps of nonviolent direct action that King discusses? Why does he include these in his argument?
5. How does King reply to the notion that African Americans should "wait" for social justice?
6. How does King differentiate between just and unjust laws? How does he defend his actions through this distinction? What examples does he provide to support his claim?
7. What is King's response to being called an "extremist"? How does he change the connotation of the word so that it works in his favor?
8. What criticisms does King raise against white moderates? What criticisms does he have for the church?
9. Which two seminal U.S. documents does King refer to on the last page? Why does he include these historical references—what impact do they have on his argument?