Civil Rights “Call to Unity” and “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

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Focus/Summary:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to look at the circumstances leading up to the writing of “Call to Unity” and Dr. King’s response with “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. With those images of the circumstances fresh in their minds develop a letter to replace “Call to Unity” or a letter to replace “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. Students will discuss their response and why.

Vital Themes:

Students will look at the circumstances around Birmingham and analyze the two letters. Students will decide which letter they feel the strongest to replace with their own letter.

Objectives:

Students will be able to look a circumstance and then analyze the reaction “Call to Unity”. Students will have an opportunity to analyze the response to the reaction “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. Students will then have an opportunity to develop a response to the letter they feel most passionate about and discuss why.

Procedures:

Opening the lesson –

1. Students will see a video of the protest in Birmingham.
2. Students will discuss the video and their thoughts about it.

Second lesson –

1. Students will be given a primary source document of “Call to Unity”.
2. I will review the letter with students.
3. Students will be given a copy of “Letter from Birmingham Jail”.
4. I will scaffold “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to ensure student’s comprehension.
**Concluding the lesson** –

1. Students will be required to write a letter to replace either one of the letters they feel the need to replace.
2. Students will read and discuss their letter and why they replaced the original letter.

**Assessing student learning** –

Students will be assessed on analyzing circumstances of events and taking a stance on an issue. Students will also be assessed on developing a response to an issue they feel passionately about.

**Attachment A**

Primary Source Documents;

“Call to Unity” [www.standford.edu/group/king/frequentdocs/clergy.pdf](http://www.standford.edu/group/king/frequentdocs/clergy.pdf)

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "an appeal for law and order and common sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.


**MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:**

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.