

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: K-12 Close Reading Task

Text grade band placement: 11-12	
Text	Text Complexity Analysis
<p>Title: “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)</p> <p>Author: King, Jr., Martin Luther</p> <p>Citation: “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” <i>Why We Can’t Wait</i>. New York: Signet Classics, 2000. (1963)</p> <p>Publication Link: http://abacus.bates.edu/admin/offices/dos/mlk/letter.html</p>	<p>Quantitative: Lexile: 1340L</p> <p>Qualitative: This text is appropriate because it is both challenging and thought provoking. The text includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenging vocabulary • use of figurative language • abstract ideas <p>Reader and Task: Potential challenges for students may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vocabulary • background information • complex text structure • tone of text
ELA/Literacy Common Core Standards addressed by task	
<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole. • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).’ • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole. <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes. • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are 	

appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

What key insights should students take from this text?

- Recognize the complexity of Dr. King’s statements
- Recognize how vocabulary and tone are intertwined
- Explain the meaning of the statement, “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”.

Text-Dependent Questions

- According to the text, who was Dr. King’s audience and why was he writing to them from a Birmingham jail?
- The concept of “interconnectedness” is present throughout the letter. Cite two examples of this concept and explain why Dr. King chose to include them in the letter.
- Why does Dr. King outline the procedures taken in nonviolent campaigns? Cite examples of each from the text and its purpose.
- How does Dr. King define justice and injustice? Give an example from his letter of each.
- What is the author’s tone in regards to what is just and unjust? Cite specific examples from the text to support your position.
- After reading the entire letter, what inferences can be made about Dr. King’s mood as he sat in the Birmingham jail? Support your position with evidence from the text.

Writing Mode

Informative/Explanatory

Writing Prompt

Dr. King stated that “an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. What was Dr. King’s purpose in making this statement? Referring to the text, cite examples of the “injustices” he speaks of and the connections made to “elsewhere.”

Scaffolding and support for special education students, English language learners, and struggling readers:

- Students supported with instruction in Tier 2 vocabulary
- Students may:
 - o Read individually and notate as they read
 - o Read aloud (popcorn read)
 - o Break sections down during small group work (ex. pair-share)
 - o Follow up with whole class work

How this task supports the content standards for relevant subject area courses in this grade band

- This task is appropriate for U.S. History courses for students in grades 11-12.
- This task would allow for a close read of a primary source document key to the history of the U.S.