



SPHERE

Fostering Civil Discourse and Diverse Viewpoints for Every Classroom

Birmingham Letter Extensions

BY SERGE DANIELSON-FRANCOIS

GRADE LEVEL: 11TH-12TH GRADES

Overview

Each lesson of this advanced criminal procedure unit is designed to encourage students to think about how interpretation of the criminal procedure amendments of the Constitution has changed over time and impacted the way civil liberties and rights are protected for American citizens.

Parts of many of the court decisions students will analyze are situated within the context of the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr.'s [letter from Birmingham Jail](#) is a hallmark primary source that alludes to the nature of constitutional safeguards for civil rights and liberties provided within criminal procedure amendments during this era. As students study the evolution of the interpretation of the law over time, we recommend they read MLK's letter to understand the civil rights movement and criminal procedure during that time. We encourage you to use this letter during the lessons alone or in conjunction with any of the following recommended sources that make great comparisons for students to analyze.



Recommended Extension Assignments

HANDOUT FOR USING THE LETTER INDEPENDENTLY OR WITH LESSON 1
LESSON 1: ANALYZE THESE FOUR ELEMENTS FROM MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL

Key term/concept	Letter from Birmingham Jail
Privileges and immunities clause	
Due process clause	
Black codes	
Selective incorporation	

LESSON 2: ANALYZE THESE FOUR ELEMENTS FROM BAYARD RUSTIN'S ESSAY "THE WATTS"

Key term/concept	"The Watts"
Fifth Amendment	
Wrongful arrest	
Civilian police review board	
Economic liberty	

LESSON 3: FIND FOUR POINTS TO COMPARE WITH "PRISON, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?" BY HUEY NEWTON

Letter from Birmingham Jail	"Prison Where Is Thy Victory?"

LESSON 4: FIND FOUR POINTS TO COMPARE WITH “AN UNCIVIL ACTION”

Letter from Birmingham Jail	“An Uncivil Action”

LESSON 5: FIND FOUR POINTS TO COMPARE WITH “41 TO '99: A PHOTO ESSAY”

“41 to '99: A Photo Essay”	Letter from Birmingham Jail

LESSON 6: FIND FOUR POINTS TO COMPARE WITH *PEOPLE V. VAN DYKE*

<i>People v. Van Dyke</i>	Letter from Birmingham Jail

LESSON 7: COMPARE QUOTATIONS FROM ASSATA SHAKUR’S JULY 4, 1973, ESSAY, “TO MY PEOPLE”

<i>“To My People”</i>	Letter from Birmingham Jail
“I have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men, and kept our babies empty-bellied.”	
“I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty, the politicians who lie to us with smiling faces, and all the mindless, heartless robots who protect them and their property.”	

LESSON 8: USE LESSON 1 HANDOUT TO DISCUSS INCARCERATION AND MLK’S VIEWS

LESSON 9: COMPARE “THE CHALLENGE OF CRIME IN A FREE SOCIETY”

	“The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society”	Letter from Birmingham Jail
Similarities		
Differences		
Conclusions		

LESSON 10: USE LESSON 1 HANDOUT TO DISCUSS INCARCERATION AND MLK’S VIEWS