

Unit 1: Summary and Response Essay

Background:

Given the foundations of *Eloquentia Perfecta* that we have discussed in our various readings, you will use your understanding of pathos and ethos to form a summary/response essay that analyzes the rhetorical/stylistic choices of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Your Task:

In a **1000-1250 word** essay, you will explore the answers to the following questions: How, why, and to what effect does King use either pathos or ethos in his letter to persuade his audience(s) to agree with his main point? Be sure to use summary, paraphrase, quotations, and analysis to support and illustrate your thesis.

Essay Structure:

I. INTRODUCTION FORMAT

- A.** The first page should include a **summary** of King's letter (1 paragraph, approximately 1 page) that utilizes rhetorical strategies appropriate for academic summary. Be sure to include M.L.A. style in-text parenthetical citation for every sentence.
- B.** Then you will transition into a more **traditional introduction** (1 paragraph) that contextualizes your **thesis statement**, which will come near the end of the introduction paragraph and will generally answer the questions located in the task above.
- C.** Be sure to consider your **audience** when writing your introductory paragraphs: an educated and interested reader, but perhaps they do not know all of the details that you know after exploring this topic.

II. BODY PARAGRAPH FORMAT

- A.** You should have a minimum of **2-3 body paragraphs** (each paragraph will be between 1/2 -1 page long) supporting your thesis statement.
- B.** Each **topic sentence** needs to make a claim that supports some aspect of your thesis. The topic sentences must follow these guidelines: they should not simply be facts but rather sub-points to be supported; they should be different from but related to some aspect of your thesis; they should be different from the other topic sentences.

C. Be sure to use a combination of paraphrase, summary, quotations, and your own analysis to develop your argument.

III. TITLE, CONCLUSION, and WORKS CITED PAGE

A. After you have written your essay, please craft a **title** that represents its content so that your reader will know what your essay is about before they begin to read it. Please indicate the **word count** beneath your title.

B. Please include an M.L.A. formatted **Works Cited** page at the end of your essay.

C. As a suggestion for **concluding** this essay, instead of repeating exactly what you wrote in your introduction and thesis, consider sharing with your reader what happened after "Letter from Birmingham Jail" was published.

The following Student Learning Outcomes will be met upon completion of this assignment:

1. Critical Reading: Students learn to comprehend, analyze, and assess arguments presented both in assigned short to medium length non-fiction prose texts and in written texts found in independent research.

- "A Call for Unity" by eight Alabama clergymen
- "Letter from Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King Jr.
- Excerpt from *King* by Harvard Sitkoff
- "Martin Luther King, Jr." *Contemporary Black Biography*

2. Formulating Thesis/Primary Claim: Students learn to develop, in response to important civic and academic questions at issue raised in course readings and research, a specific contestable claim to serve as focus and governing principle of an argumentative essay.

- For the first essay, this general question-at-issue will help you formulate your thesis: How, why, and to what effect does King use either pathos or ethos in his letter to persuade his audience(s) to agree with his main point?

3. Arrangement/Structure: Students learn to organize papers on the whole-text and paragraph levels to facilitate reader comprehension and to meet the specific needs of different rhetorical situations.

- Students will consider why the summary of "Letter from Birmingham Jail" comes first followed by your own introduction/thesis.
- Students will focus and order body paragraphs based not on King's organization only but on your own logic.
- The conclusion will feel like an "outro" rather than being a repetition of your "intro."

4. Development: Students learn to support their claims with sufficient, relevant, and credible evidence derived from reading and research (primary and secondary) and to acknowledge and address counter-arguments.

- Students will gather relevant textual evidence from "A Call for Unity" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and practice integrating those illustrations using a combination of quotations, paraphrase, and summary.

5. Grammar and Style: Students learn to write in a mature and credible civic and academic manner by avoiding basic usage errors, using accurate punctuation, and employing stylistic strategies that improve clarity and concision, as well as to document reading and research in accordance with MLA.

- Students will use a variety of coordinating and correlative conjunctions, paying close attention to parallel structure and punctuation.
- Students will consider an academic audience ranging from freshman to professors in order to maintain collegiate style and relevant context.
- Students will cite every quoted, paraphrased and summarized idea that is not their own, using MLA in-text parenthetical documentation and a Works Cited page.

6. Revision: Students learn to revise drafts in order to improve content, structure, and clarity and correctness of expression, as well as to document sources accurately.

- Students will engage in a peer-response session with a rough draft before the final draft in order to revise.