

Professor ALP
1/24/14
ENGL 101

Sample Essay Assignment

Prompt: In a paper of **3-5 pages**, and using at least four quotations, explain what you believe are the most important aspects of King's ideas about justice in "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." Then, discuss a contemporary situation that involves questions of justice, and explain what you think King's view on this situation would be.

Approach:

- As you read, make sure you are annotating your book. Your success on this paper will depend at least in part on the depth of your thinking about it.
- Take notes in class about your ideas regarding freedom, and keep track of the in-class writing we do on the topic – this will help you generate ideas for your paper.
- Remember that you will have a thesis in this paper. Your goal is to make this thesis clear, compelling, and convincing to the reader. As you think and write, continue to ask yourself which modes of writing – description, explication, argument, etc – will best support the thesis in each section.

Audience: Your audience here is the class and me.

Formatting: Make sure that you have a heading in the upper left corner of your paper, and that this heading is single spaced. Make sure, also, that you have a title. Finally, make sure that your paper is double-spaced and that the paragraphs are indented (use the "tab" key, or five spaces with the space bar.)
Make sure your paper is stapled.

ALP Scaffolding Exercises

After receiving the essay prompt in 101, the ALP students would work on some reading skills in the 052 section. The first slides show the initial in class free write to get students thinking about the idea of justice. This would come prior to the formal reading of “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”. After the discussion, we would go through the annotation example and the mapping example, giving the students some practice in annotation and confidence to struggle through a difficult read. The next session would start with the final free write asking about justice within the context of their new understanding of the text. This is also an opportunity to break down sections that might be particularly challenging and ensure that the students have the understanding they need to produce a successful 101 essay.

Free Write

Think about the question, “What is Justice?”.

In your writing notebook, write down any thoughts or questions that come to you over the next five minutes. Try to keep writing even when you don't know what to say. This is an opportunity to explore a broad idea.

Discussion

What did you come up with?

How does one person's idea differ from another person?

Where are our ideas similar?

Is there one definition of justice?

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail" MCK Jr

google date -
is there reference?

16 April 1963

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 statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

what was the charge?

Thesis Statement?
I wonder who held this view?

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

coiled up -
civil rights group
seeking non-violence

Must be
sit-ins or
something similar

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

should I look this up?

He is really
getting into his
point here -
JUSTICE!

Definition:
aware of

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

Famous quote!
Would be good in the paper.

Whoa. Breakdown -
we are all in this together

these were not his
criticisms - look up
statement?

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail" MLK Jr

Justice Map

"If an unjust law is no law at all"

"Justice too long delayed is justice denied"

Bombings

Mutilations
Signs

Unfair Police & Court Treatment

Racial Injustice =
Segregation

Religious or Moral laws vs. Human laws

Segregation laws - would the majority follow the laws that were

Civil Disobedience

Ghandi

Boston Tea Party

Jesus?

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"

"Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds"

Justice

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC - Wilems)

Order vs. Justice

"Laws and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice"

"... help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood"

Non-violent

Direct Action

Boycotts

Sit-ins

Marches

Free Write

Write for five minutes on the following prompt:

Now that you have read and annotated Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", how has your understanding of Justice changed? What do you think the meaning of Justice was to Martin Luther King, Jr.?

Discussion

Did your thoughts on Justice change after the reading?

What do you think Rev. King would say?

Classwork Activity for 052 in ALP: Write a Letter to Dr. King

Purpose: This exercise will help you think about the topics that you will be exploring for your essay discussing “Letter From A Birmingham Jail.” The second part of your essay assignment asks you to “Discuss a contemporary situation that involves questions of justice, and explain what you think King's view on this situation would be.” This classwork will assist you to explore some ideas for that part of the essay.

Assignment: Write a letter to Martin Luther King Jr. asking for his opinion about the issue that you hope to explore in your essay. Your letter should first explain in depth the contemporary issue you are examining. Then, you will ask Dr. King what his opinion and thoughts are on the issue. Feel free to ask Dr. King about other parts of “Letter From A Birmingham Jail” as well.

Audience: Dr. King. Imagine that you are able to contact Dr. King today, in 2014. Assume that Dr. King is not an expert on the contemporary issue that you are asking him about.

Format: The letter should be in the appropriate basic business letter format and at least 3 paragraphs in length.

Revising a Paragraph That Deals With a Quote

- Homework Assignment for the ALP students: Write a paragraph that explains one idea about justice that you find interesting in "Letter From A Birmingham Jail. Make sure you use at least one quote.
- *This is a worksheet that might help the students revise that paragraph. The goal is twofold: to help the students understand how paragraphs like this can be constructed, and to give them a head start on the 101 paper.*

Here are some things that you might want to think about including in a paragraph that deals with a quotation from a text.

1. How do you introduce the quote?
2. Is the quote itself properly formatted?
 - Is it in quotation marks?
 - Are you only using as much of the quote as you need to? (Don't use a whole sentence if you only need a word!)
3. Is your writing flowing smoothly into the language of the quote.
4. Have you cited the quote? (Do this at the end of the sentence, even if your writing continues after the quoted material ends.)
5. Do you explain, in your own words, what the quote means? (Don't just assume that the reader of your paper understands the quote the way you do!)
6. How do you connect the quote, and your explanation of it, to the thesis of your paper? (Remember that this paragraph is ultimately going to be part of a longer paper.)

The goal of this exercise **is not** to give you a set of instructions or a blueprint. Instead, it is to give you ways to think about improving your paragraph construction. Take the next few minutes and look at the ideas below. As you do, find the places in your own paper where you are already doing these things, or where you might consider revising to add them.

1. Introduce the quote. The point here is to let the reader know what's coming. Introductions of quotes sometimes look like these:

- In his essay "What You Don't Know Makes You Nervous," Daniel Gilbert writes that
- or*
- One example the author uses in the book is of a
- or*
- Here, Gilbert makes an important point:

2. Put the quote in quotation marks. Only use as much of the quote as you need to. Remember that you have to make it clear to the reader that the quote comes from someone else, by putting it in quotation marks. It's also a lot easier not to quote complete sentences unless you need to.

In his essay "What You Don't Know Makes You Nervous," Daniel Gilbert writes that our "innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct," and I agree with him.

- or*
- Here, Gilbert makes an important point: "the simple things in life" are always "worth having."

Notice that Gilbert's entire sentences are not quoted. For example, Gilbert's entire sentence in the first example is "Americans had a great deal more to fear than that, and their innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct." In these examples, though, we only wanted to talk about the part that relates to money buying happiness or about the simple things in life. Therefore, the underlined part is the only part we quoted.

3. Make sure your language flows smoothly into the language of the quote.

If you look at each of the above examples, you will notice that the words at the beginning of the sentence, like *Daniel Gilbert writes that our* flow smoothly, and without grammatical mistakes, into the language of the quote itself, "innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct." We can test this by removing the quotation marks from the example:

In his essay *What You Don't Know Makes You Nervous*, Daniel Gilbert writes that our innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct, and I agree with him.

This is a grammatically correct sentence. Putting the quotation marks back in, so that it is clear which part of the language is ours and which part is the author's, doesn't change that.

In his essay "What You Don't Know Makes You Nervous," Daniel Gilbert writes that our "innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct," and I agree with him.

4. Cite the quote at the end of the sentence, even if your writing continues after the quote ends.

The information we need here is the author's last name, if we don't know it from the paper already, and the page number on which the quote appears. These go in parenthesis at the end of the sentence.

Note: the period always comes at the very end.

Next, the author argues that our "innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct," which is his way of saying that there is something accurate in the way that we connect income and well being (Gilbert 79).

In his essay "What You Don't Know Makes You Nervous," Daniel Gilbert writes that our "innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct," and I agree with him (79).

- because we mentioned Gilbert's name in the introduction to the quote, all we needed at the end was the page number. The citation always goes at the very end of the sentence.

5. Explain, in your own words, what the quote means.

This means that after you get done citing the quote, you have to tell us what *you think* it means. This is important, because the reader has to be clear about why you are quoting this, and how it relates to your argument. Remember that we don't all have the same interpretation of a reading.

In his essay "What You Don't Know Makes You Nervous," Daniel Gilbert writes that our "innocent belief that money buys happiness was entirely correct" and I agree with him (79). His point is that people during the Depression were right to be afraid that not having money would make them unhappy. He also wants to extend this argument to contemporary America, and claim that the same is true of us today. I agree because...

6. Connect the quote, and your explanation of it, to your thesis.

Finally, remember that you will rarely be asked to write a paragraph that stands alone, without being connected to anything. The point of this worksheet is to help you prepare for our English 101 paper. The prompt for that paper asks you to explain what you think is important about King's theory of justice; it also asks you to think what King might make of a contemporary issue of social justice. Looking back over your paragraph, can you envision a way that it could fit in to your ideas about either of these things? Work on expanding the paragraph to connect it to a larger idea you have.