

Graduate Project: Connecting Civil Rights to the AP Government Exam  
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Note: Advanced Placement U.S. Government & Politics written exam questions are fairly proscribed; though the ideas, research, and questions below are my own, they intentionally mimic the College Board's language in directions and question format to best prepare students for the exam. While assessments are aligned with a particular lesson, they would be given as a summative assessment at the end of the unit in order to integrate all three lessons into their responses. Additionally, this mimics the exam, where, the essays and short-answer questions are given in one sitting.

### **Lesson 1**

“Letter from Birmingham Jail”

#### **Standards**

PRD-1: Explain how constitutional provisions have supported and motivated social movements.

PRD-1.A.2: The leadership and events associated with civil, women's, and LGBTQ rights are evidence of how the equal protection clause can support and motivate social movements, as represented by: Dr. Martin Luther King's “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Free-Response Questions: Argument Essay: Develop an argument in the form of an essay, using evidence from one or more required foundational documents.

#### **Materials**

1. A class set of Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech and video
2. A class set of Martin Luther King's “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
3. “MLK Letter from Birmingham Jail” Al Jazeera video

#### **Procedures**

1. Anticipatory Set: What do students know about the historical context of the “I Have a Dream Speech”? What lines do they know? Read and listen to the speech. As students read/listen, they should highlight the lines that stand out - that make the crowd respond or make the hair on the back of their arms stand up. What is it about these lines that make them powerful?
2. Direct Instruction: Show “MLK Letter from Birmingham Jail,” a short documentary about the context surrounding his arrest, writing the letter, and getting the letter out of the jail.
3. Individual activity: As students read “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” they should follow the same procedure as they did for the “I Have a Dream Speech,” identifying the most effective lines of the letter.

4. Individual activity: Complete a venn diagram that analyzes the rhetorical strategies and arguments made in each of the documents.
5. Group discussion: What was the purpose of each text? Who was the audience for each? Why was each text appropriate for its specific occasion?

## **Assessment**

### Argument Essay

Develop an argument that explains which method - legislative action, judicial intervention, or social movements - has been most responsible for the expansion of Civil Rights.

In your essay, you must:

- Articulate a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the prompt and establishes a line of reasoning
- Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of accurate and relevant information:
  - At least ONE piece of evidence must be from one of the following foundational documents:
    - Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
    - The Declaration of Independence
    - The Constitution of the United States
  - At least ONE piece of evidence from another foundational document from the list or from your study of the Civil Rights Movement.
- Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim/thesis
- Respond to an opposing or alternative perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal