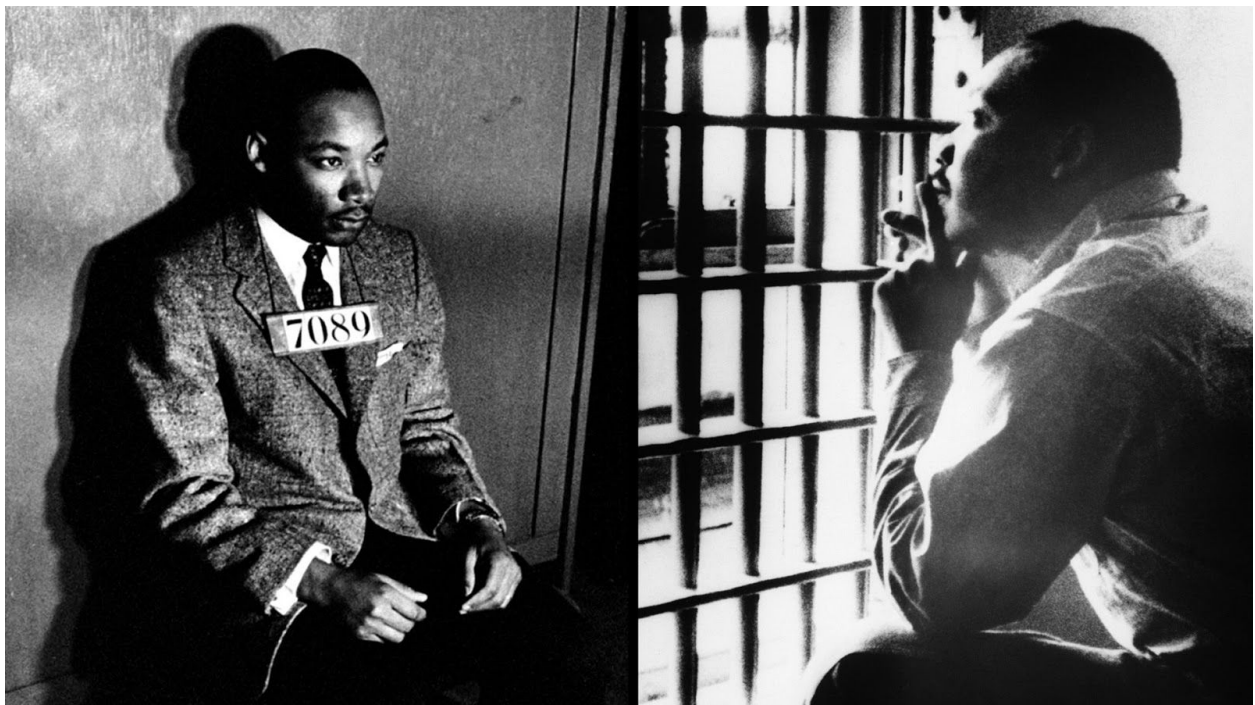


Name: Jared Huhta

Group concept: During the Civil Rights movement, African-Americans were able to maintain their humanity when faced with adversity, trauma, tragedy and grief. They were resilient and withstood attacks on their humanity through resistance. Their perseverance continues to inspire us to strive for freedom.

Subject: 8th grade US history

Title: "Forming a Resistance Movement: Lessons from a Jail Cell"



Left: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. poses for his mugshot after his arrest in Birmingham. Right: King in his Birmingham jail cell. Photo from The Atlantic.

Brief narrative: African-Americans endured extreme racism and hatred in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1950s-1960s. Arguably the most racist city in the country, Birmingham's black residents were targets of dynamite attacks, along with segregation everywhere they went. Black leaders reached out to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and urged him to assist their non-violent resistance movement that involved boycotts, protests and training for future activists. King agreed and joined the efforts of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth's Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights campaign. On April 16, 1963, police arrested King and other protestors for violating a city ordinance that prohibited public protests -- specifically African American protests. This was King's 13th

arrest. While in prison, King received a newspaper with an editorial written by local clergymen urging King to cease his protests. King responded in the margins of the newspaper. Today, his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” remains the best critique of apathetic “good people” and the best guide for a successful nonviolent protest.

The theme of this lesson is resilience, resistance and urgency. Students will pair off into small groups and read segments of “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” They will answer guiding questions and then share their responses with the whole class. Students will then learn about the difficulty of nonviolence and will compare King’s instructions for social movements with modern protests.

Guiding questions:

1. What difficulties did African-Americans face in Birmingham?
2. Why did King feel the need to respond to the clergymen?
3. What is King’s response to the clergymen?
4. What modern movements align or do not align with King’s guidelines for a successful protest movement?

Learning objectives

1. Interpret primary sources to determine the theme and arguments in King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”
2. Analyze modern social movements and compare with the Birmingham campaign.
- 3.

Class periods: 1-2 (1 for 94 minute classes, 2 for 45 minute classes)

College & Career readiness standards:

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RH.6.8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RH.6.8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RH.6.8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RH.6.8.4 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

NCSS.D2.His.6.3-5. Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.

Preparation: This opening activity can be done individually or with 2-3 students in a group. Students will explain how they would respond to the following scenarios (which would have happened to black protestors in 1963 Birmingham). They will discuss and write down their responses.

- 1. You board and pay to ride a public bus. However, you're asked to sit elsewhere because someone else wants to sit in your exact spot. The bus is relatively empty.*
- 2. You and your friends go out for hamburgers at the local diner. You sit at the counter but are asked to immediately leave because of the color of your skin.*
- 3. A police officer arrests your little brother for refusing to give up his bus seat, a violation of the city ordinance. You know that if you speak up, you will also be arrested.*
- 4. You and your white friend go to register to vote. Your friend registers in under 10 minutes. However, you're interrogated for an hour and are asked bizarre questions. You are then rejected and sent home.*
- 5. At a protest, a police officer knocks you down to the ground. His dog bites you and your little sister.*

Lesson activities:

1. Show intro video about Birmingham in 1963. <https://youtu.be/z7FtmhlcFWo> (5 minutes)
2. Mini-lesson (with brief slideshow): MLK comes to Birmingham (15 min)
3. Jigsaw reading: "Letter from Birmingham Jail" Divide students into groups of 4-5. Hand each group a segment (3 segments) from the letter with the appropriate questions related to their segment. Some groups will have the same segments.
4. Students work with their reading groups and analyze the documents. They then answer the questions. After about 20 minutes, bring the class back together and go over the document together. Go over students' answers.
5. Read over the paragraph starting with "In any nonviolent campaign, there are four basic steps..." Have students write down the four steps in their notes.
6. In their reading groups, students will then think of a modern social movement (Black Lives Matter, protests in Puerto Rico, March for Our Lives, Women's

March, etc.). Using the internet, students will research the movement and write down its platform and any activities. They will then answer the question: Would these campaigns fit into MLK's idea of a successful a "nonviolent campaign"? Why or why not?

7. For a formative assessment, they will then answer the exit slip question: *After reading "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" in class, pick a quote from the letter that most stands out to you. Explain why you chose that quote and how it applies to today's society. (7-10 complete sentences)*

Reference websites:

https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=YREdAAAAIBAJ&sjid=8poEAAAAIBAJ&pg=7376%2C1391871>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/letter-from-birmingham-jail/552461/>

Materials and Media

- [Slideshow](#)
- [Excerpts with questions](#) (small groups)
- [Excerpts with questions \(on their own\)](#)
- [Intro video](#)