

Why We Can't Wait Study Guide

Why We Can't Wait by Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Plot Summary

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s presentation of events and forces behind the Civil Rights Movement in "Why We Can't Wait" focuses on the activities surrounding the 1963 Birmingham lunch-counter sit-in demonstrations. In this study guide the use of the word "Negro" will be used, as it is the word that was used in the text and in the historical time period. The short historical introduction of two young Negro children trying to cope with the experience of their race in miserable living conditions provides the introductory backdrop for King's evaluation of the Negro Revolution. One hundred years after the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation the American Negro still struggles to be free from shackles of slavery in other forms.

Birmingham is the largest and most segregated city in Alabama. Bull Connor, the city's Commissioner of Public Safety is the racist enforcer of the city's Jim Crow laws that keep the city segregated in Governor George Wallace's Alabama police state. The burning issue of the conflict focuses on the lunch-counter in Birmingham's department and drug stores. Negro shoppers in the stores are welcome to spend their hard-earned money buying merchandise on any counter there except for the counter where the white shoppers can take a seat to get a soda and sandwich or other snack. Negro customers are not allowed to buy food at the lunch counter in any Birmingham department or drug store. Other Jim Crow laws allow the use of only the facilities marked "Colored."

Martin Luther King, Jr. and his associates plan, develop and implement nonviolent resistance to eventually transform Birmingham, Alabama into a model city of integrated southern civility. This short history traces the American Negro's struggle from slavery through specific civil rights activities in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama to its climactic success in the March on Washington. "Why We Can't Wait" is King's look back to evaluate progress of American Negro civil rights since the Civil War era and the Emancipation Proclamation. The book is written and published in the 1960s with an Afterword written in 1999 by Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. Double-sided photographic inserts provide a dramatic presentation of well-dressed leaders contrasted with thuggish Birmingham police intimidating women and children. The short chapters titled like "The Sword That Heals" and "Black and White Together" flow together well. Text content is straightforward without flashback and images that may confuse reading. The order of events portrayed holds the readers attention in suspense and interest.



The Negro Revolution - Why 1963?

The Negro Revolution - Why 1963? Summary and Analysis

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s presentation of events and forces behind the Civil Rights Movement in "Why We Can't Wait" focuses on the activities surrounding the 1963 Birmingham lunch-counter sit-in demonstrations. The short historical introduction of two young Negro children trying to cope with the experience of their race in miserable living conditions provides the introduction for King's evaluation of the Negro Revolution. One hundred years after the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation the American Negro still struggles to be free from the shackles of slavery in other forms.

Martin Luther King, Jr. compares the condition of a young Negro boy in Harlem to that of a young Negro girl in Birmingham. They both experience miserable living conditions that follow them. The boy's father is unemployed and his mother is a live-in maid. The girl's father is a department store porter and she cares for six small siblings since their mother's death. The mother has a car accident she can survive but for the slow ambulance ride to the all-Negro hospital. The author reflects on the memory of Negro history despite school textbook whitewashing. Students hear in Sunday school and Negro History Week that Negroes like Crispus Attucks shed blood fighting alongside George Washington and Benjamin Bannecker help design the capital. Other black people forced to work without pay and in chains drain swamps, build homes, pick cotton and do other dirty dangerous jobs that support America's domestic and world trade. Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation may free slaves, but the young boy and girl both know white supremacy in 1964 is why King writes the story of "Why We Can't Wait."

The summer of 1963 is expected to be a pleasant time for fifty million American families looking forward to their vacation. Business and employment are at acceptable levels with money plentiful. The author, MLK compares social conditions to the lightning flashes of an unexpected summer storm. The Negro Revolution begins with uprising in the streets. The Negro is believed to be long-suffering, patiently waiting and well trained to do as told without pushing or talking back. Like lightning strikes in a storm that grows quietly while gaining power and strength until it appears in frightening intensity when the revolt strikes. Twenty million Negroes in revolt confuse and bewilder Americans.

MLK compares the strike of revolt to the strike of a knife in his back years earlier. He is at a book signing when stabbed by a woman with a letter opener. Just as its tip touches his aorta before surgery, so too does the violent Negro revolt touch the heart of America. Delicate surgical action of Dr. Aubrey Maynard saves MLK's life like certain political forces save America's life from a knife of violence. The summer of 1963 is momentous because Negroes across America leave jobs as servants, drivers, elevator operators and ministers to join together in a common cause in the streets.



The reasons why underlying continuing disappointments erupt in 1963 are many. The Supreme Court decrees school desegregation in 1954. However, nine years later in 1963 only nine per cent of southern Negro schools integrate, which shows intent to evade the law. Secondly, neither political party represents Negro interests or keeps promises from the 1960 campaign. There is bitter irony in America's championing the freedom of other peoples while leaving American Negroes with no social change. American Negroes see black statesmen plead their case at the United Nations with no ability to vote in their own town. The Emancipation Proclamation's 100-year anniversary planning in 1963 to celebrate freedom remind them of continuing bondage. MLK claims the American Negro lives on an island of economic insecurity in an ocean of prosperity. He is imprisoned by color as well as economic circumstances. The young Negro boy and girl introduced by the author are born in need and live deprived of normal education, social and economic opportunities like other American Negroes. Most white working people grow out of the Great Depression's socio-economic climate but Negroes do not by 1963. Employment opportunities are eroded by automation and construction opportunities eliminated by union membership. These factors make the Emancipation Proclamation centennial a bitter experience for the Negro in 1963. Non-violence as a tactic provides a powerful weapon for the American Negroes' cry for justice to triumph.

The Sword That Heals

The Sword That Heals Summary and Analysis

The author claims several psychological and social conditions underlie the Revolution in the summer of 1963. A common understanding that the Negro is willing to patiently wait is not fully accurate. The Revolution is not about a sudden loss of patience that is never there. Slavery suppresses the Negro with physical force. Resistance is punished by physical threat with methods from mutilation to death. Negro families are separated from family members and then sold by slaveholders to keep them emotionally and physically defenseless. The Civil War ends slavery but segregated schools, hospitals and cemeteries "keep the Negro in his place." White men see patience in deep-seated Negro impatience. A Negro politely answers an employer to keep a job and a southern policeman to stay out of jail.

MLK claims jailing threatens the Negro in both North and South to continue the effect and impact of slavery. His evidence is the lack of punishment for police who act like slaveholders by abusing Negroes in jail. Non-violent Negroes who march in hundreds and thousands and are willing to go to jail is a new phenomenon to the white man. The Negro Revolution transforms jailing from disgrace to badge of honor. A second device of tokenism frustrates Negro dreams. MLK uses the metaphor of a carfare token instead of a real coin to illustrate. One individual, a token, is promoted to represent real gains of the race. For example, appointing Negro Judge Ralph Bunche to show that segregation and discrimination are no longer in effect, so if a few are promoted, there is no reason for the rest to protest. MLK considers tokenism a hypocritical gesture not a first step.

During one hundred years from emancipation to 1963, Negroes try several ways to grasp the freedom they are proclaimed to have. Famous figures like Booker T. Washington, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey propose methods. Where one says to accept present conditions another looks to a talented few to pull up the race. A third claims resurgence and pride in African roots. A final solution seems to lie with the Constitution, federal law and NAACP. Legal change seems to bring results through the mid-1950s until it proves unsuitable too. A bloodbath is considered but it has no chance of success. Rosa Parks' 1955 refusal to go to the back of the bus in Montgomery raises awareness of blind prejudice that may encourage change without physical force. Black Muslims bring African separatism to the United States rather than return to Africa as Garvey proposes. Joint effort is tried with poor whites who share economic conditions but is unworkable. Even if economics change color cannot. A southern Negro can only move forward alone.

Nonviolent action is seen as a way to change the legal process. Rights confirmed by law can be asserted as a citizen acting with others to demand them. For example, the early Christians in the Roman Empire and Mahatma Gandhi in India with the British Empire are effective models. Public nonviolent resistance exposes the brutality of oppressors denying their rights. The risk of martyrdom may rouse the public



conscience. Ironically, the frontier mentality of "an eye for an eye" is stopped by the moral force of nonviolent action. For example, MLK notes lawyer Atticus Finch who defends a Negro client from lynching with his moral courage alone in "To Kill a Mockingbird." Nonviolence shows heroism not cowardice as in Montgomery's sit-ins, freedom rides and Birmingham. The nonviolent army in Birmingham accepts all physical, social and educational differences of members. The violent army of a power structure is paralyzed, confused and rendered impotent to face nonviolent demonstrators they beat and brutalize in the glare of public sight. Violent actions of oppressors are few when nonviolent Negro demonstrators look oppressors in the eye. Nonviolent resistance is a model to Negroes throughout the nation.

Demonstrations in Montgomery occur eight years before Birmingham. Nonviolence is not used nationally after Montgomery because it is assumed to replace the legal process. Actually direct and legal actions together make both more effective. During those eight years some actions advance desegregation. Lunch counters segregate but voter-rolls add Negroes. Parks and public areas are closed not integrated. Five per cent of participating Negroes willing to go to jail can overflow prisons to make nonviolence effective again. Birmingham is the largest industrial city in the South during the 1930s and symbolizes bloodshed with trade union organizers. Human rights are trampled and fear and oppression run rampant through its power structure. Birmingham is a perfect area to challenge nonviolent action. Belief and faith in nonviolence matures in Birmingham amidst the fires of turmoil.



Bull Connor's Birmingham

Bull Connor's Birmingham Summary and Analysis

MLK describes 1963 Birmingham as a city in time warp for a Negro citizen. There is no evidence Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Bill of Rights, many Amendments or the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing public school segregation have any impact. A Negro child born and raised to maturity in Birmingham begins life in a "jim-crow," i.e. legally enforced Negro discriminatory, hospital with parents living in a ghetto and goes to a "jim-crow" school. Children play in the streets because "colored" parks are inadequate and integrated parks are closed. Shopping is acceptable but having a sandwich or soda at the same counter with white customers is illegal. The Metropolitan Opera does not tour there because it avoids segregated audiences. The NAACP is a "foreign corporation" in Alabama and civil rights activities are illegal. Jobs are available for menial work where lunchroom and facilities are labeled "Colored." Casting a vote has many obstacles. Bull Connor is Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety and proud to "handle the Negro and keep him in his "place." Connor hates both Negroes and the federal government. Intimidation, mobbing, murder, bombing, burning, mutilation, brutality and terror are used on Negroes and anyone helping them. Fear, guilt and silence trap moderate whites who fear reprisal. Birmingham is the largest segregated city of the Alabama police state.

Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (A.C.H.R.) committed his efforts in 1956 to change Birmingham and end the racist rule of Bull Connor. Initially considered a nuisance by Connor, A.C.H.R. is the recognized mass movement of the Birmingham Negro. Boycotts organize in 1962 against downtown merchants who display Jim Crow signs and other infractions to drive down their business by 40 percent. MLK's Southern Christian Leadership Conference sponsors Shuttlesworth's A.C.H.R. and considers joining efforts in Birmingham. Rumors precede a decision and merchants fear the S.C.L.C. convention scheduled there may cause large-scale protests. A merchant group negotiates with Shuttlesworth's group to remove Jim Crow signs and oppose ordinances banning integrated lunch counters. Shuttlesworth promises no more boycotts if the merchants keep their word. Bull Connor threatens to take press cards and merchant licenses. Jim Crow signs reappear so A.C.H.R. and S.C.L.C. take action.

Both groups agree this combined action in Birmingham may be their toughest fight and could significantly slow or stop segregation throughout the country. Planning combined action is named "Project C" for Confrontation and classified top-secret. MLK calls a planning session to set timetable, strategy and tactics. Target is the Birmingham business community where money is spent by Negroes in all departments but the lunch counter where they are prohibited. Food is a symbol and human necessity makes the project more significant. MLK and his associate Ralph Abernathy meet in Birmingham's Gaston Motel to set up Project C headquarters. The Easter season has the greatest impact since it is the second highest shopping period of the year. Six weeks remain

between March first and Easter, April 14, but March 5 is the date of a mayoral election. Candidates include "Bull" Connor and moderate segregationists. MLK and others hope Connor loses so they plan demonstrations for after the election. Planning begins but election results require a runoff election on April first. Demonstration is postponed to a day later. A plan site is set up in singer Harry Belafonte's New York apartment for their return on April 2.

New Day in Birmingham

New Day in Birmingham Summary and Analysis

Target date arrives April 3, 1963, with a new mayor, Albert Boutwell elected but unable to take office. The loser, Bull Connor claims his administration cannot be removed until 1965 and will take his case to court. Project C begins smaller but well-organized with small group sit-ins at department stores and drugstores. Groups asked to leave after warnings are arrested but the operation starts quietly. Nightly meetings build interest and enthusiasm by visitors like Abernathy and MLK speaking on the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Freedom songs are sung to call to mind days of slavery. Volunteers willingly turn in knives they carry to defend against Bull Connor's dogs. Invitations are given new volunteers who join twenty, thirty and forty at a time. Recruits meet with the Leadership Training Committee for screening, testing and assigning to march, errands, phone calls or the like after signing the nonviolence pledge. MLK considers getting arrested but wants to resolve a problem before then. Negroes are socially brainwashed and need to be encouraged. Many wonder if they act too soon before the new mayor's government has time to reform. Opponents of timing may not be aware of two prior delays, results of other campaigns, the years Negroes waited, their own false optimism or feel left out of planning and timing. MLK resolves doubts by reassuring groups he is not an outsider and is there to help Fred Shuttlesworth transform fear and suspicion to unity.

Thirty-five arrests are made for lunch-counter sit-ins from April 3 to 6. A march on City Hall takes place April 6. Demonstrators march silently and two by two till reaching Bull Connor's officers who arrest forty-two for parading without a permit. They sing while taken to jail without resisting. These demonstrations are followed by larger groups with effective merchant boycotts and new targets. Birmingham jails steadily fill up. Initially Bull Connor tries nonviolence to defeat resisters like the Police Chief in Albany. He has an injunction issued April 10 to cease marching until a court hearing. Civil disobedience is used to oppose a court order that delays and entangles them through injunction. After announcing this tactic, MLK's bail bondsman is notified by the city his financial assets are inadequate to pay bail. MLK reconsiders being jailed if he is needed to raise bail money. Reflecting on alternatives, he decides being jailed is a stronger witness to their cause.

They go to Zion Hill church where they begin to march singing "We Shall Overcome." MLK is arrested and held in solitary confinement. His wife and mother of their new baby cannot reach him. Coretta King calls Attorney General Robert Kennedy to ask help. His brother, President Kennedy calls to reassure Coretta he will look into the matter. Shortly after, MLK's jailers let him call her. Two attorneys visit and assure him Clarence Jones, his friend and New York lawyer will visit the next day. Jones' tells MLK that Belafonte raises \$50,000 for bail bonds and will help however he can, which restores MLK's faith.

Letter from Birmingham Jail

Letter from Birmingham Jail Summary and Analysis

On April 16, 1963, MLK replies to a joint critical statement of eight Alabama clergymen from different denominations. They criticize King's actions as "unwise and untimely." He thinks they are of good will and sincere so he replies. While in jail he answers their critical comments about his efforts in detail. Specifically, he replies to being called an "outsider" by his invitation from a local affiliate of S.C.L.C. that he presides over. Fundamentally however, he makes a biblical and moral claim that any injustice in Birmingham threatens justice everywhere so there are no "outside agitators." He tells them their concern about demonstrating is better used in correcting the conditions that Negroes endure.

Four specific steps support activity in a non-violent program. They include fact-finding to confirm injustice, negotiation, self-purification and finally direct action. The author itemizes activities and events, timetables, schedules and adjustments to proceed through each step of the program. MLK's letter specifies the ethical care and attention to which his affiliated groups follow principled foundations of the campaign process. For example, King lists the steps and delays to plan around and accommodate the city's regular and runoff elections.

Philosophical and biblical principles are presented in the author's comments on just and unjust laws. For example, MLK claims St Augustine considers unjust law to be no law at all. He adds St. Thomas Aquinas' view of any law that degrades human personality is unjust. Segregation damages personality of both superior and inferior parties by turning persons into "things" according to Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. The argument is confirmed by Protestant theologian Paul Tillich's opinion that separation is sin. MLK concludes his ecumenical argument with the Supreme Court's 1954 decision that outlaws segregation. This law is just because it is morally right. Furthermore, he supports civil disobedience to break Birmingham's Jim Crow laws. These laws are unjust because they are morally wrong. In addition, MLK supports accepting the consequences of one's civil disobedience, i.e., jail time whether or not a law is just. For examples, he cites the early Christians and Roman Empire, Germany's Hitler and Jews and the poison hemlock Socrates drinks.

MLK replies to the charge of extremism that Jesus is extremist for love in his command, "Love your enemies," Abraham Lincoln by freeing slaves and Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. The writer fears the southern ministers, priests and rabbis are not the allies he hopes for but rather opponents of the freedom movement. Ironically he hears clergymen proclaim the gospel is not about social issues but prefer things as they are. MLK remains hopeful the church will meet the challenge of the Birmingham action. He claims it may be wrong to use moral means to uphold immoral ends like segregation.



Black and White Together

Black and White Together Summary and Analysis

King and Ralph Abernathy accept bond to leave jail for strategic planning. They agree to let students participate in demonstrations despite probable criticism. Student response is enthusiastic and they willingly volunteer for nonviolent activity. Although the media is supportive they question the "use" of children. When a young child answers "freedom" to a policeman about what she wants and six other children sit in the library's children's section to read, they agree. Participating children let the movement implement Gandhi's principle to "fill up the jails." At one point, 2,500 are in jail and many are young. MLK remembers Montgomery when an older woman explains she is in the movement for her children and grandchildren. Ironically seven years later children are in it for themselves.

On May 4, the press publishes photos of Bull Connor's police holding clubs over women on the ground and police dogs baring teeth to children. With less jail space for new prisoners Connor uses violence in the streets. Disciplined demonstrators are nonviolent but some in the crowds watching throw rocks and bottles at police. Moral indignation of observers throughout the nation increase sympathy for the movement that begins building confidence in winning. Birmingham's white citizens do not participate in Bull Connor's attacks like a year earlier. Even his police won't turn hoses on a peaceful group led by Reverend Charles Billups to a Sunday prayer meeting. An ironic twist in Birmingham law lets prisoners charged with civil contempt set their own jail term rather than the five day standard criminal contempt term. Leaders charged with civil contempt are seen as martyrs since they are imprisoned indefinitely or until they recant which is unlikely.

Four basic issues are discussed in negotiations, including: desegregation of lunch counters and facilities in department and variety stores; non-discriminatory hiring and promotion of Negroes in Birmingham's industry and business community; dropping charges against jailed demonstrators; and a biracial committee to set out a timetable for desegregation in Birmingham. White business and industry leaders won't negotiate until the Attorney General's representative Burke Marshall arrives. They still resist until a lunch break when thousands of Negroes are seen in town peacefully assembled and singing.

After lunch one of the white leaders says they ought to be able to work something out. They agree to implement all four issues. However, a Saturday night Ku Klux Klan bombing of King's brother's house and rioting in the streets starts when Negro district bars close. Segregationist Governor George Wallace sends in the state police. On the next day the President sends three thousand federal troops and begins to federalize the Alabama National Guard. MLK returns to Birmingham to challenge the expulsion from school of all students that participate in demonstrations. The Alabama Supreme Court rules Bull Connor and his commissioners out of office the next day. Support and encouragement pours into Birmingham from all over the country. A signed agreement

climaxes a long struggle for freedom and human dignity that MLK hopes to be a model of southern race relations.

The Summer of Our Discontent

The Summer of Our Discontent Summary and Analysis

MLK recounts a young Negro's last words as he is being executed to be calling on Joe Louis the black fighter to save him. It is a prize fighter rather than God, government or white men he begs to save him. Twenty-five years later his plea is transformed to symbolize confidence and challenge from desperation. Another black fighter Floyd Patterson visits Birmingham in the summer of 1963 to show unity with his people. Integration results during the summer appear as fewer signs of segregation in restaurants, hotels, parks and public places. Underlying psychological change takes longer and is less evident. One white executive says Negroes seem to walk straighter. Industry changes slower than retail however since many corporate offices are in northern states where racial injustice does not affect profitability.

MLK contrasts the spontaneity and random nature of a revolution to the tightly designed and precise execution of a ballet. Revolution moves forward in different cities depending on response by the white power structure and experience of the Negro leadership. Some segregated cities react to nonviolent demonstrators with brutality and assassination. For example the N.A.A.C.P. secretary Medgar Evers is assassinated and cattle prods are used on demonstrators. The revolution changes America because freedom is contagious and Washington gives top Congressional priority to civil rights legislation.

The process of revolution appears with two related trends. Over time and slowly new forces and strength join the movement while others opposing revolution grow stronger in resistance. Solidarity demonstrations are joined by over a million in larger cities from New York to Los Angeles. Affiliates of S.C.L.C. grow to 110 from 85. Church leaders begin to lead marches and serve time in jail with Negro domestics and truck drivers. Ironically, moderate proponents of equal but separate Negro institutions react to mass application of integration without barriers. History of the United States nation develops in genocide against the American Indian before Negro racism takes its place. The Negro Revolution of 1963 brings white American majorities in harmony with Negro objectives.

Climax to the 1963 summer of discontent occurs with A. Philip Randolph's proposed March on Washington. On August 28, 1963, 250,000 people, including dignitaries and celebrities travel to the capital to join the March on Washington. White clergymen of all denominations including rabbis, priests, bishops and cardinals join. Hundreds of thousands march in Washington but millions watch at home on television.



The Days to Come

The Days to Come Summary and Analysis

MLK recounts a time in history when a Negro belongs to the slave owner who has a legal right to him or her. Some slave owners agree to let a slave purchase freedom. A legal document called manumission proves the holder is no longer bound by physical slavery. Some Negroes spend their lives buying freedom for slaves and some white men raise money to ransom other slaves. The author claims this same idea underlies the question when society asks what more the Negro expects with integration. The question misses the point that a human Negro already has this right by law, justice and heritage. Neither gradually recognizing nor less withholding of rights is an appropriate response to partial atonement due immediately. King and Roy Wilkins, his associate, are asked on "Meet the Press" whether they can restrain Negro discontent. Negroes are no longer willing to compromise after centuries of broken promise, legislation and other ineffective steps.

Compensation is proposed for the hardships endured against Negroes in the past. Other nations, like India compensate the untouchable caste that is discriminated against to help them catch up. Struggle for equal rights is really for equal opportunity provided other groups and accepted as a guiding American principle. For example, the principle benefits the deprived in child labor laws, unemployment compensation, social security, retraining programs and a GI Bill of Rights for veterans. Similarly, the Negro is deprived of wages for work as a slave, exploited and humiliated for centuries. MLK proposes a Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged that can transform immediately the conditions of Negro life. In addition this legislation may benefit other disadvantaged groups like forgotten poor whites, to develop full employment and large scale socio-economic programs. He proposes a bill like the Wagner Act for the rights of labor to organize.

If such a Bill is presented, alliances must form to extend the movement into the larger community. The Negro appears as dissatisfied, vibrant, powerful and able to act out and specify difficulties to restructure. For example, an alliance with labor can strengthen both as it did in the thirties and forties. The federal government must move strongly towards freedom with the responsibility to ensure legal proceedings provide equal justice. President Kennedy before his assassination began transforming himself into a strong figure with positive objectives.

MLK does not endorse any presidential candidate despite his confidence in Kennedy. Historically, Negroes are skeptical and have few adequate choices. Congress has many southern reactionaries who control committees to determine legislation. If Negroes develop a conscious voting bloc, they may have more flexibility, bargaining power, clarity and responsibility to assess political opportunities. The civil-rights conflict contributes to the society as a whole by exposing unhealthy aspects of the American society. The expression of non-violent demonstrations provides an example to the world

for a method to change race relations. The use of non-violence in securing the Negroes' civil rights may answer the world's barbarism.

Afterword

Afterword Summary and Analysis

The Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. comments in 1999 on Martin Luther King and the Birmingham situation. He lists examples of successful African-Americans in Manhattan and California and a young African-American boy and girl in Chicago and small southern town both dreaming and studying about the possibilities for their future. These figures contrast with MLK's introduction of the young and impoverished boy and girl with no ability to dream a realistic future. Jackson reflects on differences between MLK's 1963 and thirty-six years later in his experience of 1999. He is reminded how far the nation has come since then. There is no freedom and equality as promised in the Declaration of Independence for anyone not white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and a male landowner. One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1963, the time arrives to launch the campaign to test civil rights in Birmingham.

The impact of his work in Birmingham affects the results of life in other cities like Selma, Washington, Chicago and others. His results affect life for blacks, whites, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. According to Jackson, MLK marches for right and wrong not just black and white. Others, like Presidents Carter and Clinton succeed because MLK enables them to rise above their southern roots. Jackson calls America a "King democracy" and considers MLK the greatest American patriot of the twentieth century.



Characters

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is also referred to in this book by his initials MLK. King is the author of "Why We Can't Wait" and a famous leader of the Civil Rights movement. This work is called a "classic exploration" of events and forces underlying the Negro civil rights movement. Prior to this book, MLK writes "Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story" in 1958, and "The Strength to Love" in the same year 1963. Three later works are listed in the Bibliography. While promoting an earlier book MLK is stabbed by an insane woman at a book signing. The tip of the letter opener she uses touches his aorta and threatens his life. His life is saved by the delicate surgery of Dr. Maynard Aubrey. Coretta King is his wife and the mother of his children.

Specific principles guide his activities as a civil rights leader. The Reverend Dr. King is a Christian who practices nonviolence exemplified by Gandhi and other Christians. He claims the risk of martyrdom helps to raise awareness that may change the public conscience. MLK is a leader of S.C.L.C. which is the parent organization of A.C.H.R. in Birmingham, Alabama. This organizational tie is a natural alliance to join with Fred Shuttlesworth's merchant boycotts. They agree to a combined Project C. MLK believes Birmingham is a prime target to advance his beliefs and convictions because of its size, Jim Crow laws, racists Bull Connor, George Wallace and 100 year anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

MLK is a minister so he is particularly sensitive to criticism in a letter published by eight fellow churchmen. King is in jail for civil disobedience by following his conscience, which the churchmen call "unwise and untimely." The author is not used to answering critics. However MLK believes these churchmen act in good faith with sincere criticisms. He answers their critical comments with a reasoned thoughtful explanation of his efforts and apologizes for a long letter. Thirty-five years later another fellow churchman the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. praises MLK's efforts that result in America becoming what he calls a "King democracy" and calls him the greatest American patriot of the twentieth century.

Eugene Bull Connor

Eugene "Bull" Connor is the name of the racist Commissioner of Public Safety in Birmingham, Alabama. Bull Connor prides himself on being able to "handle the Negro and keep him in his 'place.'" From his official position he uses methods of intimidation, brutality, segregation and terror to persecute Negroes. He is a major character in the police state enforcement of Alabama Governor George Wallace. Any interference in Birmingham's racist policies and practices risks reprisal. Connor enforces Jim Crow laws by threatening merchants who do not comply with loss of their merchant license.



Bull Connor opposes any federal action to enforce integration or implementation of the 1954 Supreme Court decree to desegregate schools. Birmingham is ruled by Connor under the protection of Alabama Governor George Wallace who is also a segregationist. Connor is a cunning, threatening and underhanded local official. For example, he refuses to issue press cards so his actions in Birmingham are not reported to the nation. Connor initially uses non-violent police methods with demonstrators while at the same time issuing an injunction against demonstrations, which he knows will delay and stop them in court. Bull Connor gives the appearance of being law-abiding to enforce the city's local Jim Crow laws.

In 1963 Bull Connor runs for the office of mayor in Birmingham. He is not elected but faces a runoff vote with another racist candidate Boutwell. Although Boutwell wins the runoff election, Bull Connor refuses to relinquish control to him and threatens to fight the election in court. He refuses to leave office until the Alabama Supreme Court rules against him. This legal action of the Court symbolizes a turning point in the segregationist practices of Alabama and Birmingham. Bull Connor's action and authority is finally overruled by the State of Alabama Supreme Court.

Benjamin Bannecker

Benjamin Bannecker is the name of a Negro designer who helps design the capital in Washington, DC. Similar to Crispus Attucks, Bannecker's story is in Sunday school and Negro History Week but not in white school textbooks. Despite his contribution to the capital design team Bannecker is just another forgotten Negro that makes a professional difference to the nation but is not mentioned in the nation's white man history.

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln is the name of the President of the United States who is famous for freeing the slaves by signing the Emancipation Proclamation and other events. His Proclamation is the focal point against which King measures the progress of social change over the one hundred years since then to 1963.

Dr. Aubrey Maynard

Dr. Aubrey Maynard is the name of the surgeon who operates on MLK to save his life. King is stabbed by an insane woman with a letter opener. Dr. Maynard uses delicate surgery to remove the letter opener tip next to his patient's aorta. King uses this story as a metaphor of the surgical work the civil rights movement must do to correct the wound of racism without killing the society.



Judge Ralph Bunche

Judge Ralph Bunche is the name of a Negro judge appointed to the judicial bench to demonstrate that segregation and discrimination are not being practiced. The appointment of Bunche is used by MLK to illustrate that tokenism is hypocritical.

Booker T. Washington, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey

Booker T. Washington, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey are proponents of three alternative paths for Negroes to follow during the one hundred years from emancipation to 1963. Washington advocates for a Negro to be content with his present circumstances. W.E. Du Bois proposes that a talented few outstanding Negro men of accomplishment pull up the rest of the race by their achievements. Marcus Garvey is a proponent of encouraging Negroes to be proud of their African roots. Each of these movements towards social equality is replaced by the belief in and reliance on the Constitution, federal law and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People by the mid-1950s

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks is the name of a Negro demonstrator who refuses to give up her seat and go to the back of a segregated bus in 1955 Montgomery, Alabama. MLK relies on her example eight years earlier as a model for the Birmingham sit-ins.

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi is the name of a famous Indian advocate of nonviolent public resistance to bring about social change. Gandhi opposes the violent actions of the British Empire in their attempts to colonize India. MLK relies on the example of Gandhi to promote nonviolence that can accomplish social change.

Crispus Attucks

Crispus Attucks is the name of a black seaman who fought and shed blood alongside George Washington. His story is told in Sunday school and Negro History Week but is typically not mentioned in any white school textbooks. MLK includes Crispus Attucks as an example of the untold heroes who help to build the nation but happen to be Negro and therefore ignored by the white power elite.



George Wallace

George Wallace is the name of the racist governor of Alabama in 1963. His ally in the implementation of segregation in Birmingham is Bull Connor. President Kennedy sends federal troops to Birmingham and prepares to federalize Wallace's Alabama National Guard to enforce desegregation.

Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth

Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth is the name of the leader of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (A.C.H.R.) that was formed in 1956 to end racist rule of Bull Connor in Birmingham. Shuttlesworth's organization is affiliated with King's S.C.L.C. Shuttlesworth and King mount a joint effort called Project C in the Birmingham demonstrations.

Ralph Abernathy

Ralph Abernathy is the name of an associate civil rights leader who accompanies Dr. King to the Project C planning meetings at the Gaston Motel.

Harry Belafonte

Harry Belafonte is the name of a Negro singer who offers the use of his New York apartment as temporary planning headquarters for Project C. Belafonte raises money for bail to support the cause while King is in a Birmingham jail.

Albert Boutwell

Albert Boutwell is the name of another Birmingham politician who is equally racist but not as violent as Bull Connor. Boutwell and Connor both vie for the office of mayor in a runoff vote. Boutwell wins the runoff election but Connor refuses to yield his office to him until the Supreme Court of Alabama officially dismisses him from office.

Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.

Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. is the founder and president of a civil rights group, called the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition. His organization promotes social, political and economic justice for all races, genders and creeds. Reverend Jackson was a candidate for President in 1984 and 1988. Jackson and his wife have five children and live in Chicago, Illinois. Reverend Jackson writes the Afterword to MLK's "Why We Can't Wait" in 1999.



Eight Alabama Clergymen

Eight Alabama clergymen of several denominations is the name given to a group of clergymen from the Birmingham, Alabama area who oppose the actions of MLK and his affiliates. The group writes an open letter to King criticizing his efforts as an "outside agitator" among other claims. MLK responds to their joint letter while in the Birmingham jail by answering their objections from a spiritual, ecumenical and secular point of view.

Reverend Charles Billups

Reverend Charles Billups is the name of a preacher that leads a peaceful group to a Sunday morning prayer meeting at Zion hill church. The march he leads is notable because the police refuse to follow an order given by Bull Connor to turn their hoses on Reverend Billups and the peaceful marchers.

Burke Marshall

Burke Marshall is the name of an attorney sent to represent Attorney General Robert Kennedy in Birmingham. Marshall assists in the successful negotiations to resolve the Birmingham conflict.

A. Philip Randolph

A. Philip Randolph is the name of the civil rights advocate that proposes the successful March on Washington in August, 1963. The March results in a peaceful demonstration of almost 250,000 people of all walks of life, color and belief to support civil rights.



Objects/Places

Birmingham, Alabama

Birmingham, Alabama is the name of the city in Alabama where the Negro Revolution of 1963 takes place. Birmingham is a perfect arena to test the use of nonviolent resistance because it is the largest and most segregated city in Governor George Wallace's Alabama police state. Bull Connor is the racist commissioner of the city who uses violent methods to enforce segregation.

Emancipation Proclamation

Emancipation Proclamation is the name of a document signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 which declared the Negroes free from slavery and combined with the Civil War ended slavery.

The Negro Revolution

The Negro Revolution is the name MLK uses to describe the movement over time that culminates in the Birmingham demonstrations.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (A.C.H.R.) and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.) are the names of organizations that Martin Luther King, Jr. and his associates lead or are involved with to promote the cause of civil rights for the American Negro and other disadvantaged persons.

Montgomery, Alabama

Montgomery, Alabama is the name of a city in Alabama where Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus in 1955. Nonviolent resistance was initially tested in Montgomery. MLK uses the Montgomery example as reference the Birmingham demonstrations.

Lunch counters

Lunch counters are counters in department or drug stores where shoppers can buy a drink and sandwich or other short order while shopping. Birmingham lunch counters do



not allow Negroes to buy and eat food and drink even though they can spend money at all other department counters in the store.

Jim Crow

Jim Crow is a name used to describe a practice of legally enforcing discriminatory behavior against Negroes. Establishments like hospitals, schools, parks and other facilities that Negroes can use are nicknamed "jim-crow" schools, etc.

Project C

Project C is the name given to the classified top-secret project to plan combined action in Birmingham. The "C" refers to "confrontation." The Leadership Training Committee is a group responsible for screening, testing and assigning tasks to volunteers who sign and agree to the nonviolence pledge.

Civil disobedience

Civil disobedience is the name of an action that opposes on principle a law that is determined to be unjust. For example, the author supports civil disobedience of Birmingham's Jim Crow laws on the principle they are morally wrong and unjust.

The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan is the name of a segregationist group that uses secret meetings to plan violent action on the property and persons they discriminate against.

Manumission

Manumission is the name of a legal document. Before the Civil War slaves are considered chattel and owned by their slaveholder who can buy and sell them. Chattel is a legal term used to represent property that is owned by an individual. A slave can be purchased and freed by a legal document called manumission.

The March on Washington

The March on Washington is the name given to a demonstration in Washington, DC on August 28, 1963, in which 250,000 people marched on behalf of the Negro Revolution.

Themes

Using nonviolent methods to force social change

MLK admits the violent methods used by armies of the North and South in the American Civil War result in a declaration that Negro slaves are free. However, one hundred years later in 1963 the Emancipation Proclamation is not fully implemented. Social constraints like segregated schools, hospitals and cemeteries "keep the Negro in his place." Menial, low-paying jobs and the threat of jail continue the effects of slavery. Jailed Negroes out of public view are at risk from southern police acting like slaveholders by abusing them. Fear of jail threatens Negroes to keep their place and stay out of jail.

Social change is necessary to implement Negro emancipation. MLK cites the examples of early Christians against the Roman Empire and Gandhi in India against the British Empire to illustrate effective nonviolent methods. King promotes nonviolent action as a way to support change in the legal process. Every citizen has rights confirmed by law that can be asserted by demonstrating with nonviolent methods. Public nonviolent resistance exposes the brutality of oppressors who deny their rights. A jailed Negro out of public sight can be secretly abused. However, a police state beating and brutalizing nonviolent demonstrators in the glare of public sight is obvious to all.

Bull Connor's 1963 Birmingham is a perfect environment to implement social change with nonviolent action. Human rights are trampled and Connor's violent methods use fear and oppression to maintain the Birmingham power structure. MLK's Project C to confront the power structure assumes five per cent of the Negro participants willing to go to jail are enough to overflow prison. The Negro Revolution changes jail from disgrace into a badge of honor. Non-violent Negroes who march and willingly go to jail are a new experience to Bull Connor. With jails overflowing and less space for new prisoners Connor uses violence in the streets. In early May press photos are published showing Bull Connor's police holding clubs over women on the ground and police dogs baring teeth to children. Birmingham's white citizens do not participate in his attacks like a year earlier. Demonstrators remain nonviolent but some in the crowds watching throw rocks and bottles at police. The moral indignation of national observers seeing Birmingham's violence increases sympathy for the movement that builds confidence. Belief and faith in nonviolent methods increases to prove nonviolence can effectively force social change.

The civil disobedience of violating an injunction

The process of using nonviolent methods to effect social change is strengthened when the demonstrators act resolutely to accept the consequences of their civil disobedience. For example, citizens may have a right to express their opinion, but not necessarily to make it a public gathering. A peaceful and orderly expression of opinion may still result in Bull Connor's officers arresting forty-two for parading without a permit. While this



"parade" infraction may be illegal, it may be a result of oversight, negligence or misunderstanding. Presumably it can be corrected with payment of fees and a permit and does not rise to the level of civil disobedience. Similarly small group boycott gatherings or lunch-counter sit-ins at department stores and drugstores that violate "jim-crow" laws are nuisances to police state power that may cause warnings and arrest for assembly with no permit.

Civil disobedience is the illegal expression of an opinion specifically and intentionally in direct conflict with the state's right to exercise its authority in that particular realm. The one who commits civil disobedience is presumably appealing to an authority, secular or spiritual, above the state's authority. For example, while Bull Connor initially meets the Birmingham Project C demonstrations without police violence he issues an injunction to cease marching until a court hearing can be held. Connor's tactic uses court procedures to delay and tie up the Project C movement in litigating the court order to cease marching rather than Birmingham's discrimination, segregation and "jim-crow" laws.

MLK and his associates decide to act in civil disobedience to violate the court injunction to cease marching. By continuing to march before a court appearance they can be held in contempt of court. MLK recognizes that Connor uses the court order, although legal, as a tactic to slow down momentum or stop Project C. To that extent King appeals to a higher authority, i.e., freedom and justice, than Bull Connor's legal maneuvers. King believes the one committing civil disobedience should accept the consequences of his civil disobedience. Specifically, the law is the law, whether just or not. For example, he cites the philosopher Socrates condemned by the State to drink poison hemlock. Ironically the Birmingham law makes martyrs of civil rights leaders charged with civil contempt since they are in jail indefinitely or until they recant which is unlikely.

The determination of a just compared to an unjust law

MLK is criticized by eight fellow clergymen for activities that have landed him in jail. He responds to their critical open letter with a lengthy explanation of the theory and principles that underlie his plan of action. The major element of his discussion relates to the distinctions between just and unjust law. Since these critics are his colleagues in the business of religion, although of many denominations, MLK offers ecumenical comments to clarify his thoughts about centuries of Catholic, Jewish, Protestant and secular ideas.

Philosophical, theological and biblically based principles are considered in the author's discussion of just and unjust laws. For example, MLK claims the notable Church Father, St. Augustine considers unjust law to be no law at all, presumably making it unworthy of obedience regardless of a States' enforcement ability. He reinforces that premise with an argument from Catholic theologian St. Thomas Aquinas' claim a law that is degrading to human personality is unjust. Extending the argument, perhaps for a critical Jewish rabbi, MLK cites the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. According to his notion, segregation damages the human personality of both parties to the discriminatory law, whether black or white, by turning persons into "things." King summarizes the religious

dimension of his argument with Protestant theologian Paul Tillich's idea that separation is sin.

MLK concludes his ecumenical argument in support of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision to outlaw segregation. This law is just because it is morally right. Furthermore, he supports using civil disobedience to break Birmingham's Jim Crow laws. These laws are unjust because they are morally wrong. MLK remains hopeful the church will meet the challenge of the Birmingham action. To support that hope, he claims it may be wrong to use moral means to uphold an immoral end like segregation.

Style

Perspective

Martin Luther King, Jr. is a minister and Negro civil rights leader of the 1960s. He writes "Why We Can't Wait" to resolve questions about events and forces underlying the Civil Rights Movement. This is a short history of the American Negro's struggle from slavery through specific civil rights activities in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama and the March on Washington. Key issue of "Why We Can't Wait" is the centennial celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation. King looks back one hundred years to the Civil War era as a benchmark to evaluate progress of American Negro civil rights. While a nation prepares to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation centennial, MLK presents the condition of America's most segregated and discriminatory city, Birmingham, Alabama.

The author uses detail descriptions of the Birmingham boycotts and lunch counter sit-in demonstrations to illustrate the effective use of nonviolence in the civil rights movement. The city is controlled by the racist Bull Connor in the summer of 1963. His rule is proof of continuing slavery. Connor is eventually put out of power by social changes declared in the Emancipation Proclamation and realized through Civil Rights Movement activities. MLK presents this story to show how, why and where the American Negro can no longer wait. Any reader interested in Negro, but also the civil rights of any citizen can benefit from an understanding of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s writing.

Tone

This is an upbeat optimistic look at specific events of the Civil Rights Movement in 1963. The message that Negro civil rights since the Emancipation Proclamation have not progressed as far as desired is clear. The events that describe the use of nonviolence and civil disobedience in Birmingham, Alabama are objectively described. The author writes in the subjective first person singular or plural to describe feelings, opinions, thoughts and desires for civil rights activities. The reader is presented with an uplifting story of progress amid situations that could be depressing under the pen of another writer.

Structure

"Why We Can't Wait" by Martin Luther King, Jr. is a non-fiction historical work that describes the Negro Revolution of 1963 as it occurs in Birmingham, Alabama. The book is comprised of 166-pages beginning with an Introduction, eight Chapters, Afterword, Selected Bibliography and Index. Chapters range in size between 12 and 27 pages with descriptive titles and Roman numeral chapter subheadings ranging between I to VI. The book is written and published in the 1960s with an Afterword written in 1999 by MLK's sometime protégé Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. Four double-sided photographic pages are inserted between page 54 and 55.



The photographic insert provides a dramatic introduction to the text by showing the faces of names and events depicted within. Particularly graphic shots of well-dressed leaders contrast dramatically with the thuggish appearance of Birmingham police against women and children. The eight chapters are short enough with descriptive titles like "The Sword That Heals" and "Black and White Together" to benefit little from their Roman numeral subheadings. The work flows well from chapter to chapter with the use of linear step by step logical progression from background introduction through chapter occurrences and events. Text content is straightforward without flashback and images to confuse reading. Back matter with Index and Bibliography provides ready reference material but the Afterword is less succinct and direct than the rest of the content.



Quotes

"Just as lightning makes no sound until it strikes, the Negro Revolution generated quietly. But when it struck, the revealing flash of its power and the impact of its sincerity and fervor displayed a force of a frightening intensity." Chapter 1, pg. 2

"As the then Vice-President, Lyndon B. Johnson, phrased it: 'Emancipation was a Proclamation but not a fact.'" Chapter 1, pg. 9

"Since nonviolent action has entered the scene, however, the white man has gasped at a new phenomenon. He has seen Negroes, by the hundreds and by the thousands, marching toward him, knowing they are going to jail, wanting to go to jail, willing to accept the confinement, willing to risk the beatings and the uncertain justice of the southern courts." Chapter 2, pg. 15

"The religious tradition of the Negro had shown him that the nonviolent resistance of the early Christians had constituted a moral offensive of such overriding power that it shook the Roman Empire. American history had taught him that nonviolence in the form of boycotts and protests had confounded the British monarchy and laid the basis for freeing the colonies from unjust domination." Chapter 2, pg. 23

"In Bull Connor's Birmingham, you would be a resident of a city where a United States senator, visiting to deliver a speech, had been arrested because he walked through a door marked 'Colored.'" Chapter 3, pg. 26

"Stores with lunch counters were our first target. There is a special humiliation for the Negro in having his money accepted at every department in a store except the lunch counter. Food is not only a necessity but a symbol, and our lunch-counter campaign had not only a practical but a symbolic importance." Chapter 3, pg. 41

"We were seeking to bring about a great social change which could only be achieved through unified effort. Yet our community was divided. Our goals could never be attained in such an atmosphere. It was decided that we would conduct a whirlwind campaign of meetings with organizations and leaders in the Negro community, to seek to mobilize every key person and group behind our movement." Chapter 4, pg. 54

"The Attorney General promised to do everything he could to have my situation eased. A few hours later President Kennedy himself called Coretta from Palm Beach, and assured her that he would look into the matter immediately. Apparently the President and his brother placed calls to officials in Birmingham; for immediately after Coretta heard from them, my jailers asked if I wanted to call her. After the President's intervention, conditions changed considerably." Chapter 4, pg. 62

"In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham." Chapter 5, pg. 66



"A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected?" Chapter 5, pg. 71

"'Daddy,' the boy said, 'I don't want to disobey you, but I have made my pledge. If you try to keep me home, I will sneak off. If you think I deserve to be punished for that, I'll just have to take the punishment. For, you see, I'm not doing this only because I want to be free. I'm doing it also because I want freedom for you and Mama, and I want it to come before you die.'" Chapter 6, pg. 87

"The following day, in an appropriate postscript, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled Eugene 'Bull' Connor and his fellow commissioners out of office, once and for all." Chapter 6, pg. 97

"Joe Louis would care because he was a Negro. Joe Louis could do something because he was a fighter. In a few words the dying man had written a social commentary. Not God, not government, not charitably minded white men, but a Negro who was the world's most expert fighter, in this last extremity, was the last hope." Chapter 7, pg. 100

"The summer of 1963 was a revolution because it changed the face of America. Freedom was contagious. Its fever boiled in nearly one thousand cities, and by the time it had passed its peak, many thousands of lunch counters, hotels, parks and other places of public accommodation had become integrated." Chapter 7, pg. 107

"What is implied here is the amazing assumption that society has the right to bargain with the Negro for the freedom which inherently belongs to him. Some of the most vocal liberals believe they have a valid basis for demanding that, in order to gain certain rights, the Negro ought to pay for them out of the funds of patience and passivity which he has stored up for so many years." Chapter 8, pg. 117

"It was the people who moved their leaders, not the leaders who moved the people." Chapter 8, pg. 122

"Jimmy Carter could not have gone from a peanut planter in Plains, Georgia, to president if he had to carry the baggage of a segregated South. Bill Clinton could not have gone from a broken home in Hope, Arkansas, had Dr. King not eliminated the stigma attached to any Southern politician." Afterword, pg. 148

Topics for Discussion

Identify, describe and discuss the significance of Abraham Lincoln's historical Emancipation Proclamation as it relates to the Birmingham situation.

Explain and discuss why the year 1963 is the appropriate time as indicated by the author for the Negro Revolution to develop.

Identify and describe two examples of nonviolent direct action and discuss how these actions can effectively counter the reaction of police.

Identify, list and describe at least five aspects of Bull Connor's Birmingham that makes it an appropriate target for MLK's discussion of a Negro Revolution.

Explain and discuss why singing freedom songs at mass meetings are appropriate to encourage participation in planning and organizing the demonstrations.

Describe and discuss the significance of having all volunteers agree to and sign the pledge for nonviolence.

Identify, describe and discuss at least five elements of MLK's letter to his fellow clergymen that explain his actions and plans in response to their criticism.

Identify, list and describe the four specific issues that are to be negotiated and the results of those issues after the demonstration.

Identify, describe and discuss how Joe Louis and Floyd Patterson are symbolic of the change in Negro thought.

Compare and contrast MLK's description of a young Negro boy or girl in 1963 with that of Jesse Jackson in 1999.