

Martin Luther King, Jr. *Letter From a Birmingham Jail* & Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”

DIRECTIONS:

- Read Martin Luther King’s *Letter from Birmingham Jail* and Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet.”
- Write out thorough responses to the following questions (#1-9 refer specifically King’s *Letter*; #10 to Malcolm X’s “Ballot” excerpt, and #11 refers to both documents).

⇒ These are not questions that should be answered with quick and dirty responses. For many of these questions, answers that receive full credit will be at least one paragraph of 4-6 complete sentences. In more than a few instances, a thorough answer could be 2-4 paragraphs. (Hint: #3, 6, 10. . .)

1. King faced criticism for being in Birmingham as an **outsider**. Explain this criticism, and his response to it, or his rationale for being there.
2. Explain King’s belief about the **interconnectedness of communities** all across the United States? What does it mean to be interconnected? Do you agree with this concept?
3. Fully describe the FOUR STEPS necessary for **civil disobedience**, as outlined by King.
4. Describe the circumstances that lead up to King’s **nonviolent direct action** approach in Birmingham.
5. Explain, in detail, King’s reaction to the advice “wait” and “give us time to act.”
6. Dr. King describes what a **just laws** look like. Additionally, he explains at length some ways in which laws can be unjust. Using King’s description of just vs. unjust law, **create a “just law rubric” or “just law checklist”**. (Be sure to examine what it means for a law to be just “on its face but not in application.”)
7. King refers to the holocaust to explain that people are morally obligated to act against unjust laws. Why does he use the holocaust as an example? What connections does he make? Consider the social/political context in the U.S at the time the letter is written.
8. King is more disappointed with the white moderate than with the KKK. Explain this phenomenon. How could King be more upset with moderate whites than violent extremists like clansmen?
9. How is the perspective and strategy proposed by **Malcolm X different from King’s**? Please support with examples from text.
10. Describe **your own reaction** to these readings. Also, what effect, if any, does it have on your view of recent events such as the Black Lives Matter movement, fight for LGBT rights, immigrant rights, economic justice, as well as your life experience up to now?