

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Collection of the facts – Problem Statement

“These are the hard, brutal facts of the case.”

The very first step of any movement towards justice, according to King, is the “collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist.” Dr. King understood that it is essential to establish the facts in order to see clearly the root of the problem. Once we can state ‘herein lies the problem,’ the strategies on how to change the situation can be developed and gains can be measured against the original facts. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. realized that we need to do our homework and learn everything we can about the issue, problem or injustice so we become experts on the topic. It is only through a nonviolent movement led by facts can we hope to bend "the moral arc of the universe" towards justice.

Every community struggles with problems, and we all belong to many communities. We will each begin by choosing one of these communities (i.e. college student, parent/child, gender, wife/husband, religion, etc.) and identify a problem that community is facing. Because we will write about this problem all semester, it is crucial to choose problems we feel passionately about. To understand and articulate this community issue, problem or injustice, we must do research. We must investigate and gather vital information in order to prove the problem exists and that it is a problem of consequence.

2. Negotiation – Summary Response

“Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. understood that a nonviolent movement needs a process for negotiation. Armed with the facts found in the initial stage, activists can turn to negotiation, balancing what they feel must be done with those policies that can gain support. However, when some individuals are not given a meaningful seat at the table, communities may develop in ways that benefit some at the expense of others. This was the reality that Dr. King sought to change in Birmingham, Alabama in April of 1963. Dr. King's leadership in Birmingham serves as a powerful example of how negotiation can lead to positive change.

For every community facing a problem, there is at least one community profiting from that problem—sometimes without realizing it. Think about who benefited from segregation. Identify a community who is either benefitting from the problem or refusing to acknowledge there is a problem. Find a written argument in support of this community’s position. Summarize this piece of writing and the community’s position. Then respond to this piece of writing by discussing the reasons the arguments are incomplete, weak, unsound, illogical, etc. Provide examples or

evidence to show why this community's arguments are unsound and provide explanations of how the opposing position is incomplete or illogical. Close by stating your own argument, specifically why your argument or position is the stronger one.

3. Self-Purification – Memoir

"We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, 'Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?' and 'are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?'"

When fighting against injustices, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed self-purification was necessary. What exactly did he mean by that? The self-purification step entails questioning our own moral strength and whether we can withstand the violence inflicted upon us without retaliating. How has the problem you identified impacted your life? What are our buttons when it comes to this issue? Will some or all of the community shun us for protesting the problem? Could we be pushed to commit violence? Memoirs help writers tell their truths, take us through a healing journey, and provide a vehicle for social change linking universal stories that can persuade leaders to act toward oppression and social injustice.

Stories can thrill, wound, delight, uplift and teach. Telling a story vividly and powerfully is a vital skill that is deeply valued across all cultures, past and present. The Memoir is a short, powerful story about a particular moment or event in your life. Look back at all your experiences related to the problem you identified. Write a Memoir about an event or a series of closely tied events that have somehow shaped your personal perspective on the problem. Remember that we are writing for an audience that probably doesn't share our knowledge of the event(s), people, setting, etc. It is up to us to make our Memoir come to life. If possible, utilize historical data, library resources, and other forms of research to collaborate the Memoir with facts

6 Word Memoir

Is it possible to tell a meaningful and interesting true life story in just 6 words? Ernest Hemingway was challenged to write a 6 word Memoir. He wrote, "For sale, baby shoes, never worn." We are going to try and write our own 6 word Memoir. It must tell an event and reveal some significance about that event in just 6 words. Full credit is given for any attempt so have fun.

4. Direct Action – Process Analysis

"Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored."

Nonviolent Direct Action fosters tension. Tension is what expands minds, challenges past traditions, and installs societal change. Without tension new ideas can't be introduced and

peaceful betterment can't be achieved. There are many forms of direct action available to use in a nonviolent campaign, including methods of protest (rallies, marches), persuasion (speaking out on social media), noncooperation (boycotts, taking a knee) and intervention (parallel schools, sit-ins). Direct action imposes a "creative tension" that, as King explains, "reaches out to the opponent and so stirs his [or her] conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality."

We are going to plan Nonviolent Direct Actions that address our identified problems. The purpose of this essay is to explain how to do something or how something works. In a Process Analysis essay, the process is articulated into clear, definitive steps. The essay must present the essential steps in enough detail and in a logical order so that our readers could perform the steps themselves or at least understand how it works. Because process analysis explains how to do something or how something works, it usually uses chronological (time) order. It should start with the first step in the action, and then explain each step in the order that it should occur.