

10.2.1

Unit Overview

“[T]he cup of endurance runs over”

Text(s)	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr. “In This Blind Alley” by Ahmad Shamlu “Freedom” by Rabindranath Tagore “Women” by Alice Walker
Number of Lessons in Unit	20

Introduction

In this unit, students read Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” alongside three short poems, focusing on how King develops his argument for direct action on civil rights. Students begin to analyze how central ideas emerge and develop in the letter, and determine how King uses rhetoric to advance his point of view and purpose. Poems by Rabindranath Tagore, the first Indian to win a Nobel Prize in 1913, Iranian poet Ahmad Shamlu, and Alice Walker offer a counterpoint to King’s work, providing international and feminist perspectives on the human rights movement.

Students engage with King’s text as a persuasive essay, continuing to build skills for close reading and rhetorical analysis as well as developing their ability to identify and evaluate the claims an author uses in support of his argument. At the same time, students work to strengthen their analytical skills through written assessments and collaborative discussions in which they learn to articulate and support their ideas using textual evidence. By examining the text alongside three poems, students begin to consider how these different texts develop common central ideas about human rights.

For the Mid-Unit Assessment, students determine King’s purpose in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and analyze how he uses rhetoric and specific word choices to advance that purpose.

For the End-of-Unit Assessment, students craft a multi-paragraph response analyzing how King develops and refines his claims to advance his purpose.

Literacy Skills & Habits

- Read closely for textual details.
- Annotate texts to support comprehension and analysis.
- Engage in productive evidence-based conversations about text.
- Determine meaning of unknown vocabulary.
- Independently preview text in preparation for supported analysis.
- Provide an objective summary of the text.
- Paraphrase and quote relevant evidence from a text.
- Delineate and evaluate an argument.
- Paraphrase and quote relevant evidence from a text.
- Write original evidence-based claims.
- Generate and respond to questions in scholarly discourse.

Standards for This Unit

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading	
None.	
CCS Standards: Reading—Literature	
RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
RL.9-10.6	Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
CCS Standards: Reading—Informational Text	

RI.9-10.3	Analyze how an author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
RI.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g. how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
RI.9-10.5	Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
RI.9-10.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
RI.9-10.8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.
CCS Standards: Writing	
W.9-10.2.a-f	<p>Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other relevant information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic. e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the

	information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
W.9-10.9.a, b	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>a. Apply <i>grades 9–10 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]”).</p> <p>b. Apply <i>grades 9–10 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning”).</p>
CCS Standards: Speaking & Listening	
SL.9-10.1.a-e	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts and issues</i>, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</p> <p>b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.</p> <p>c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify or challenge ideas and conclusions.</p> <p>d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.</p> <p>e. Seek to understand other perspectives and cultures and communicate effectively with audiences or individuals from varied backgrounds.</p>

CCS Standards: Language	
L.9-10.1.a	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. a. Use parallel structure.
L.9-10.2.a	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. a. Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses.
L.9-10.4.a, b	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 9–10 reading and content</i> , choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy).
L.9-10.5.a	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

Note: Bold text indicates targeted standards that will be assessed in the unit.

Unit Assessments

Ongoing Assessment	
Standards Assessed	RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.4, RI.9-10.3, RI.9-10.4, RI.9-10.5, RI.9-10.6, RI.9-10.8, L.9-10.5
Description of Assessment	Students answer questions, write informally in response to text-based prompts, and present information in an organized and logical manner.

Mid-Unit Assessment	
Standards Assessed	RI.9-10.4, RI.9-10.6, W.9-10.2.a-f, W.9-10.9.b
Description of Assessment	Students write a multi-paragraph response to the following prompt: Determine a purpose in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and analyze how King uses rhetoric and specific word choices to advance that purpose.

End-of-Unit Assessment	
Standards Assessed	RI.9-10.5, RI.9-10.6, W.9-10.2.a-f, W.9-10.9.b, L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2
Description of Assessment	Students write a multi-paragraph response to the following prompt, based on their work in this unit: Analyze how King develops and refines his claims to advance his purpose.

Unit-at-a-Glance Calendar

Lesson	Text to be Covered	Learning Outcomes/Goals
1	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 1)	In this first lesson of the module, students read and analyze the salutation and first paragraph of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail” in which King addresses the clergymen to whom he is writing and introduces one of his purposes for writing the letter. For most of the lesson, students listen to a Masterful Reading of the entire letter, pausing to note their initial questions and reactions. Students also engage in a small group discussion about how King opens the letter. This lesson culminates in a Quick Write that requires students to analyze the impact of the specific words or phrases in the opening of the letter.
2	“Letter from Birmingham Jail”	In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 1–5 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King explains

	(par. 1–5)	why he is in Birmingham and why he believes the demonstrations are necessary. Students engage in small group discussions to analyze how King unfolds his reasons for being in Birmingham. To support their analysis, students analyze the impact of King’s figurative language and word choices. The lesson culminates in a Quick Write about how King develops his reasons for being in Birmingham.
3	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 6–9)	In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 6–9 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King describes the racial injustice in Birmingham and explains why direct action is necessary. Students analyze one paragraph in pairs and then prepare for a collaborative whole-class discussion with a targeted analysis of different sections of the letter. Students use their targeted analysis to prepare for a collaborative whole-class discussion about the validity of King’s argument. Student learning culminates in a Quick Write that requires students to explain how paragraphs 7–9 develop a claim King makes in paragraph 6.
4	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 6–9)	In this lesson, students reread and analyze paragraphs 6–9 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King describes the racial injustice in Birmingham and explains why direct action is necessary. Students review these paragraphs through the lens of rhetoric and analyze how King uses rhetoric to advance his purpose. Students analyze the specific methods of rhetoric, such as descriptive language, appeals to conscience, and rhetorical questions. Student learning in this lesson culminates in a Quick Write that requires students to explain how King uses rhetoric in paragraph 9 to advance his purpose.
5	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 10–11)	In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 10–11 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King lays out the necessary urgency with which his group approaches their direct, nonviolent action in opposition to segregation. Students analyze these paragraphs to delineate his argument and claims and assess the sufficiency of his supporting evidence. In groups, students engage in a thorough reading and discussion of the text. The lesson ends with a Quick Write on the following prompt: Delineate the argument and specific claims in paragraphs 10–11. Assess whether King’s evidence is

		relevant and sufficient.
6	<p>“In This Blind Alley”</p> <p>“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 1–11)</p>	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze the poem “In This Blind Alley” by Ahmad Shamlu in dialogue with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” In his poem, Shamlu investigates the human cost of living in a violently oppressive society, globalizing for the students issues that King discusses in his letter. Students analyze this poem to understand its central idea and to explore how Shamlu uses figurative language and word connotations. In small groups, students engage in a class reading and discussion of the text. The lesson ends with a Quick Write on the following prompt: Analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices, including figurative language and connotations, on the development of a central idea present in both “In This Blind Alley” and “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”</p>
7	<p>“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 12–15)</p>	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 12–15 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King defends his central claim that segregation laws are unjust. In this lesson, students delineate King’s argument and assess the validity of his reasoning by engaging in a thorough reading and discussion of the text. The lesson ends with a Quick Write on the following prompt: Delineate King’s argument in paragraphs 12–15. Assess the validity of his reasoning.</p>
8	<p>“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 16–18)</p>	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 16–18 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King defines unjust laws and demonstrates the importance of civil disobedience. In this lesson students analyze these paragraphs through the lens of rhetoric, determining King’s purpose and analyzing his use of rhetoric to further that purpose. The lesson ends with a Quick Write on the following prompt: Determine King’s purpose in paragraphs 16–18 and analyze how he uses rhetoric to advance that purpose.</p>
9	<p>“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 19–21)</p>	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 19–21 of “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King claims that the white moderate is the main reason injustice against African Americans has not yet ended. Students explore how King develops this claim by criticizing the white moderate. Students also analyze how this section of the text initiates a</p>

		shift in King’s argument. The class culminates with a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does King’s new claim in paragraphs 19–21 refine his central claim in paragraphs 1–18?
10	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 1–21)	<p>In this Mid-Unit Assessment, students use textual evidence from paragraphs 1–21 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to craft a formal, multi-paragraph essay identifying King’s purpose and addressing how King’s rhetoric and specific word choices advance this purpose.</p> <p>Students review their annotated text, lesson Quick Writes, discussion notes, homework notes, and Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tools to organize their ideas. Students then develop their essays with relevant and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, and quotations.</p>
11	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 22–23)	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 22–23 of “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King continues his criticism of the white moderate’s lack of action to end injustice. Students analyze how King appeals to his addressees and uses rhetoric to advance his criticism. Students demonstrate their learning in a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does King’s use of rhetoric advance his purpose in paragraphs 22–23?</p>
12	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 24–25)	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 24–25 of “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which King refines his claim about himself as an extremist and expresses his disappointment in the white moderate. Students engage in an evidence-based discussion to analyze how King shifts his thinking about being an extremist and how he uses this shift to express his disappointment. At the end of the lesson, students complete a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does King use paragraphs 24–25 to refine his claim in paragraphs 22–23?</p>
13	“Freedom” “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 1–25)	<p>In this lesson, students read and analyze the poem “Freedom” by Rabindranath Tagore in dialogue with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Students explore how Tagore begins to develop a central idea through specific textual details, in particular the images that he develops in relation to freedom. Additionally, students use Tagore’s</p>

		poem to reflect upon the way in which King develops similar ideas in his letter. Students engage in an evidence-based discussion before completing a Quick Write on Tagore and King's use of imagery to develop a common idea.
14	"Letter from Birmingham Jail" (par. 26–33)	In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 26–33 of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which King criticizes the white church for its failure to take a stance. Students discuss how King unfolds his analysis of the church's position and the way in which he orders his points. Following this discussion, the lesson culminates in a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does King unfold his analysis of the church in paragraphs 26–33?
15	"Letter from Birmingham Jail" (par. 26–33)	In this lesson, students reread and analyze paragraphs 26–33 of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Students review these paragraphs in order to analyze how King develops and refines ideas from earlier in the text. After engaging in evidence-based discussion of the ideas developed in paragraphs 26–33, students take part in a jigsaw activity in which they determine how these ideas refine ideas from earlier in the text. The lesson closes with a Quick Write in response to the following prompt: How does King use paragraphs 26–33 to develop and refine an idea from earlier in the text?
16	"Letter from Birmingham Jail" (par. 34)	In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraph 34 of "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which King affirms the justice and inevitable success of his cause. Students explore how King uses rhetoric and the placement of the passage to advance his purpose. Following an evidence-based discussion, students demonstrate their learning by completing a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does King's use of rhetoric and placement of this paragraph advance his purpose?
17	"Letter from Birmingham Jail" (par. 35–39)	In this lesson, students carefully read and analyze the final five paragraphs of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail." As students read, they determine King's purpose for writing these paragraphs and explore his use of rhetoric to support this purpose. Students participate in small group discussions to further their understanding of King's use of word choice and rhetoric to advance his

		purpose before completing this Quick Write to demonstrate their learning: How does King’s use of rhetoric in the final five paragraphs advance the purpose of the letter as a whole?
18	“Letter from Birmingham Jail” (par. 35–39)	In this lesson, students reread the final five paragraphs of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” As students read, they analyze how King uses these paragraphs to refine ideas he introduced and developed earlier in the letter. In a jigsaw activity, students consider how ideas presented in a single paragraph echo and refine similar ideas King presented in other parts of the letter, and then share their observations in new groups. A whole-class discussion enables students to hear what their classmates have noticed and to record important ideas before completing a Quick Write at the end of the lesson on the following prompt: How does the conclusion of the letter refine an idea developed throughout the letter?
19	“Women” “Letter from Birmingham Jail”	In this lesson, students read “Women,” a poem by contemporary writer Alice Walker. Students work in pairs to analyze Walker’s poem before working in small groups to consider how the poem develops ideas similar to those that Martin Luther King, Jr. developed in “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” After a brief, whole-class discussion, teachers assess student learning via a Quick Write asking students to explain how Walker develops a central idea also present in King’s letter.
20	“Letter from Birmingham Jail”	In this final lesson of the unit, students complete the End-of-Unit Assessment that evaluates cumulative student understanding of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” After sharing ideas about King’s purpose for writing the letter and claims he makes in the text, students independently complete a multi-paragraph response to the following prompt: Analyze how King develops and refines his claims to advance his purpose. In their response, students identify important claims King establishes in the letter and then analyze how he develops and refines the claims throughout the letter. Students explore structural choices, rhetoric, and word choice.

Preparation, Materials, and Resources

Preparation

- Read and annotate “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” “In This Blind Alley,” “Freedom,” and “Women.” Number the paragraphs in “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” the stanzas in “In This Blind Alley,” and the lines in “Freedom” and “Women.”
- Review the Short Response Rubric and Checklist.
- Review the 10.2.1 Mid-Unit and End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubrics.
- Review all unit standards and post in classroom.

Materials/Resources

- Copies of “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” “In This Blind Alley,” “Freedom,” and “Women”
- Self-stick notes for students
- Writing utensils including pencils, pens, markers, and highlighters
- Methods for collecting student work: student notebooks, folders, etc.
- Access to technology (if possible): interactive whiteboard, document camera, and LCD projector
- Copies of handouts and tools for each student: see Materials list in individual lesson plans
- Copies of the 10.2.1 Mid-Unit and End-of-Unit Text Analysis Rubrics
- Copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist
- Copies of 10.2 Common Core Learning Standards Tool