

**10.2.1****Lesson 4****Introduction**

In this lesson, students reread and analyze paragraphs 6–9 of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (from “In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps” to “tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue”), 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 on the following prompt: How does King use rhetoric in paragraph 9 to advance his purpose in paragraph 9? For homework, students consider the word “tension” as King uses it in paragraph 9 and continue their AIR through the lens of a focus standard of their choice.

**Standards**

Assessed Standard(s)	
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.
Addressed Standard(s)	
L.9-10.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

**Assessment**

Assessment(s)
<p>Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students answer the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does King use rhetoric in paragraph 9 to advance his purpose in paragraph 9?</li> </ul>

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- State King’s purpose for paragraph 9 (e.g., King’s purpose is to explain why direct action is necessary).
- Demonstrate how specific examples of rhetoric from paragraph 9 advance King’s purpose (e.g., King uses repetition of the word “tension” to reinforce that the purpose of direct action is to create tension in Birmingham. He also uses figurative language with the image of “open[ing] the door to negotiation” to illustrate that direct action is a strategy to force Birmingham’s leadership to engage in good-faith negotiations; etc.).

## Vocabulary

**Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)**

- gainsaying (v.) – denying, disputing, or contradicting
- engulfs (v.) – swallows up
- segregated (adj.) – discriminated against a group, especially on the basis of race
- notorious (adj.) – widely and unfavorably known
- good-faith (adj.) – in accordance with standards of honesty, trust, sincerity, etc.
- moratorium (n.) – a suspension of activity
- runoff (n.) – a final contest held to determine a victor after earlier contests have eliminated the weaker contestants
- sit-ins (n.) – any organized protest in which a group of people peacefully occupy and refuse to leave a premises
- unfettered (adj.) – freed from restraint; liberated
- gadflies (n.) – people who persistently annoys or provokes others with criticism, schemes, ideas, demands, requests, etc.

① Students were given these terms in 10.2.1 Lesson 3.

**Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)**

- by-product (n.) – a secondary or incidental product, as in a process of manufacture
- postponement (n.) – the putting off or deferring until a later time
- dramatize (v.) – to express or represent vividly, emotionally, or strikingly
- tension (n.) – the state of being stretched or strained
- bondage (n.) – the state of being bound by or subjected to some external power or control
- monologue (n.) – a prolonged talk or discourse by a single speaker, especially one dominating or monopolizing a conversation
- dialogue (n.) – conversation between two or more persons

① Students defined these terms in 10.2.1 Lesson 3.

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RI.9-10.6, L.9-10.5</li> <li>• Text: “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr., paragraphs 6–9</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Homework Accountability</li> <li>3. Reading and Discussion</li> <li>4. Quick Write</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10%</li> <li>2. 15%</li> <li>3. 50%</li> <li>4. 15%</li> <li>5. 10%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Copies of the Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool for each student
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 10.2.1 Lesson 1)

## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).
💬	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
❗	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

### Activity 1: Introduction Lesson Agenda

10%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standard for this lesson: RI.9-10.6. In this lesson, students read the same paragraphs from the previous lesson but shift their focus to how King's effective use of rhetoric to advance his purpose. Students track the specific examples of rhetoric King uses and determine how these examples support King's purpose for writing the letter.

- Students look at the agenda.

Remind students that they began analyzing rhetoric in Module 10.1, but they will conduct deeper, more complex analysis throughout this module.

Remind students that rhetoric refers to the specific techniques that writers or speakers use to create meaning in a text, enhance a text or a speech, and in particular, persuade readers or listeners. Point out to students that they use rhetoric in everyday speech to persuade others to agree with a particular point of view. Several rhetorical techniques such as figurative language, rhetorical questions, and alliteration may be familiar to students. Share with students the following examples of rhetorical techniques and lead a brief discussion of the use of rhetoric in everyday speech.

Distribute the Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool so students can record the definition of *rhetoric* as discussed here.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied a focus standard to their AIR text. Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson's AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text.

- Students (or student pairs) discuss and share how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

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Instruct student pairs to share and discuss their objective summaries of paragraphs 1–9.

🗣 Student responses may include:

- King greets his “dear fellow clergymen” (greeting), showing that he respects and considers himself a peer of the men he is addressing.
- King explains that he considers the clergymen of “genuine good will,” so he is writing to “answer criticism of his work and ideas” that the clergymen published in a “statement” that called King’s “present activities [being] ‘unwise and untimely’”(par. 1) and King an “outsider[] coming in” to Birmingham (par. 2).
- King shows that he isn’t an “outsider” because he has “organizational ties” in Birmingham, but also because “injustice is [t]here,” and King believes in the “interrelatedness of all communities” and that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (par. 4).
- King acknowledges that the clergymen “deplore the demonstrations” that King and his affiliates are conducting in Birmingham, but he urges them to “express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being” (par. 5).
- King goes on to demonstrate that he and his affiliates have followed the “four basic steps” of a “nonviolent campaign”: “collection of the facts . . . negotiation, self-purification, and direct action” (par. 6).
- He shows that they only participated in “direct action . . . sit-ins, marches, and so forth” after negotiation failed and that his hopes for direct action are to “open the door to negotiation” (par. 9).

① Consider suggesting that students keep their summaries so they can review the text before the Mid-Unit or End-of-Unit Assessment.

### Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

**50%**

Inform students that throughout the discussion, they will stop to annotate the letter and take notes on the Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool in preparation for the Quick Write assessment.

► Students listen.

① If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a Masterful Reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.

Instruct students to form pairs. Post or project the following questions for students to discuss.

Instruct student pairs to read paragraph 6 (from “In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps” to “political leaders consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

**What is purpose of paragraph 6?**

🗨 The purpose of paragraph 6 is to demonstrate why the time for “direct action has come.”

- ① Remind students of their work with *purpose* in Module 10.1. If necessary, provide students the following definition to record on their Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool: *purpose* means “an author’s reason for writing (e.g., to introduce and develop a central idea, or to convince readers of a claim).”

**What verb does King use to describe the effect of “racial injustice” on the “community” in Birmingham? What image or feeling does this specific word choice create or evoke?**

🗨 King says racial injustice “engulfs” the community (par. 6). The verb *engulfs* creates the image that racial injustice overwhelms or destroys the community. The word *engulfs* creates an image that racial injustice is a widespread and dangerous problem. It also mirrors phrases like “engulfed in flames.”

- ① Consider explaining that this is an example of how King uses descriptive or figurative language as a rhetorical device. Choosing the word *engulfs* instead of a similar but less descriptive word, has a distinct impact on the text. If necessary, remind students of their work with figurative language in Module 10.1.
- ① Consider drawing students’ attention to their work with L.9-10.5 as they interpret figurative language.

**What examples does King use to describe the way African Americans are treated in Birmingham in paragraph 6?**

🗨 King expresses how “racial injustice *engulfs* [the] community” with “its ugly record of police brutality,” “its unjust treatment of Negroes,” and its “unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches” (par. 6).

**How does King’s use of rhetoric in paragraph 6 advance his purpose in that paragraph?**

- 🗨 Student responses may include:
- King uses figurative language (“engulfs,” “ugly . . . brutality,” “unsolved bombings”) to create vivid images that evoke fear, injustice, and inescapability, and to show that King and his affiliates have completed the first step of the nonviolent campaign: “collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive” (par. 6).
  - King uses alliteration (“its *ugly* record of police brutality,” “its *unjust* treatment of Negroes,” and its “*unsolved* bombings of Negro homes and churches”) to create a rhythm in the text,

which strengthens the persuasiveness of his explanation that the “city fathers” have “refused to engage in good-faith negotiation” (par. 6), because if they had these injustices would not be so present in Birmingham.

- ① If necessary, remind students of their work with figurative language and alliteration in Module 10.1. Explain that *alliteration* refers to the repetition of the same sound at the beginning of a word.
- ① Explain to students that in these examples, King also uses a rhetorical device called *appeal to ethos*, which is “an appeal to a listener’s or reader’s conscience or sense of what is right or ethical.”

Lead a brief, whole-class discussion of student responses. Instruct students to use the Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool to record King’s use of descriptive and figurative language from paragraph 6.

- ① Students add to the Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool throughout this module and reference it for assessments.

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Transition student pairs to reading paragraphs 7 and 8.

Instruct student pairs to read paragraphs 7 and 8 (from “Then came the opportunity last September” to “direct action could be delayed no longer”) and answer the following questions before sharing with the class.

**How does King describe the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights’ reaction to the merchants’ broken promise?**

- 💬 They “were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon” them (par. 7).

**How does King use rhetoric in this sentence to advance the purpose he established in paragraph 6?**

- 💬 King uses figurative language (the images of “blasted hopes” and “the dark shadow” (par. 7) of disappointment) to show how destructive are the broken promises and therefore how necessary is the direct action campaign.
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider asking the following questions:

**What images and feelings do the words “blasted” and “dark shadow” create?**

- 💬 Student responses may include:
  - The word “blasted” creates images of things exploded.
  - The words “dark shadow” create an image of things covered over by darkness.
  - Both “blasted” and “dark shadow” create negative feelings.

What do you notice about the phrase “dark shadow of deep disappointment”?

☞ Three of the words begin with the letter *d*.

How does King describe direct action in paragraph 7 and what is the effect of this description?

☞ King describes direct action as a process “whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community” (par. 7).

What is the effect of King’s description of direct action in paragraph 7?

☞ The effect of this description is to show how much King and his affiliates are prepared to suffer and sacrifice to appeal to the conscience of the community.

① Students may identify this description as an example of *appeal to ethos*.

How did King and his affiliates prepare for the direct action campaign?

☞ They had workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked themselves, “Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?” and “Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?” (par. 7).

What effect do the questions in paragraph 7 create?

☞ Student responses may include:

- The questions show the specific “difficulties” those involved in the direct action campaign will face: “blows” and “ordeals of jail” (par. 7).
- Because this information is given in question form, readers can imagine their own answers to the questions—Could I “accept blows without retaliating?” Could I “endure the ordeals of jail?” (par. 7).

Explain to students that King is using a rhetorical device called *rhetorical questions*, which are “questions that a speaker or writer asks but does not necessarily expect the reader or listener to answer directly.” Rather, rhetorical questions are meant to cause the reader or listener to think.

Lead a brief share out of the examples of rhetoric student pairs identified in paragraphs 7 and 8. Instruct students to discuss how the rhetoric they identified supports King’s purpose for writing. Direct students to use their Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool to record the examples of figurative language, alliteration, appeal to ethos, and rhetorical questions as discussed here.

☞ For sample student responses, see the Model Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool at the end of this lesson.



Instruct student pairs to read paragraph 9 (from “You may well ask, ‘Why direct action?’ to “tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue”) and track King’s use of rhetoric on the Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool.

- For sample student responses, see the Model Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool at the end of this lesson.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

- Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to identify King’s use of rhetoric in paragraph 9, consider reminding them of the rhetorical devices they identified in paragraphs 6, 7, and 8. Also consider asking the following questions:

**What word does King repeat throughout paragraph 9? What is the effect of this repetition?**

- King repeats the word “tension,” which gives it emphasis.

**What image does King use to describe the effect of “constructive nonviolent tension” (paragraph 9)? What is the rhetorical effect of this image?**

- Student responses may include:

- King writes that “constructive nonviolent tension” will “help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood” (par. 9).
- King uses alliteration (“dark depths”), figurative language (“rise from the dark depths . . . to the majestic heights”), and contrast (“dark depths” versus “majestic heights”) to vividly demonstrate the importance and power of direct action.

- Consider reminding students of their work with repetition and contrast in Module 10.1.

## Activity 4: Quick Write

15%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

**How does King use rhetoric in paragraph 9 to advance his purpose?**

Instruct students to look at their annotations and tools to find evidence. Instruct students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses. Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.

- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt, using evidence from the text.

🗨️ See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

## Activity 5: Closing

**10%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread paragraph 9 of “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Instruct students to annotate and notice the number of times King uses the word “tension” and then consider the different kinds of tension King describes.

Additionally, students should continue to read their AIR text through the lens of a focus standard of their choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that standard.

- ▶ Students follow along.

## Homework

Read paragraph 9 of “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Then, annotate and notice the number of times King uses the word “tension” and consider the different kinds of tension King describes.

Also, continue reading your AIR text through the lens of a focus standard of your choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.

## Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Class:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
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**Directions:** Identify and record each of the following elements of the author's argument in the text (or portion of text): central claim, supporting claims, evidence, and reasoning. Remember that evidence supports claims and reasoning connects evidence to a claim. Reasoning also may explain the relationship among claims or across evidence.

<b>Text:</b>	
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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.

Rhetorical device and definition	Examples of the rhetorical device in the text (with paragraph or page reference)	Impact of the rhetorical device on point of view or purpose

Rhetorical device and definition	Examples of the rhetorical device in the text (with paragraph or page reference)	Impact of the rhetorical device on point of view or purpose

## Model Rhetorical Impact Tracking Tool

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Class:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
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**Directions:** Identify and record each of the following elements of the author’s argument in the text (or portion of text): central claim, supporting claims, evidence, and reasoning. Remember that evidence supports claims and reasoning connects evidence to a claim. Reasoning also may explain the relationship among claims or across evidence.

<b>Text:</b>	“Letter from Birmingham Jail”
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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.

Rhetorical device and definition	Examples of the rhetorical device in the text (with paragraph or page reference)	Impact of the rhetorical device on point of view or purpose
<b>Rhetoric:</b> the specific techniques that writers or speakers use to create meaning in a text, enhance a text or a speech, and in particular, persuade readers or listeners		
<b>Purpose:</b> an author’s reason for writing (e.g., to introduce and develop a central idea of X, or to convince readers of a claim of X)		
<b>Figurative language:</b> language that differs from the literal meaning of words and phrases	“racial injustice engulfs this community” (par. 6)	The verb “engulfs” creates the image that racial injustice destroys or captures the community. “Engulfs” creates an image that racial injustice is a dangerous, overwhelming problem, supporting King’s purpose that direct action is necessary.

Rhetorical device and definition	Examples of the rhetorical device in the text (with paragraph or page reference)	Impact of the rhetorical device on point of view or purpose
Figurative language	"Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country." (par. 6)	This description creates sympathy by showing the reader how African Americans are terrorized by police. This advances King's purpose to prove that direct action is necessary.
Figurative language	"We were confronted with blasted hopes." (par. 6)	The adjective "blasted" helps the reader understand how devastated the African American community felt when merchants broke their promises. This advances King's purpose to prove that direct action is necessary because negotiation failed.
Figurative language & <b>alliteration</b> : the repetition of sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables	"dark shadow of a deep disappointment" (par. 7)	This image advances King's purpose of showing how harmful racial injustice is to the African American community and how important direct action is.
Figurative language & <b>appeal to ethos</b> : an appeal to a listener or reader's conscience or sense of what is right or ethical	"present our bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community" (par. 7)	This image presents the nonviolent campaign members as victims and makes the reader sympathetic to their cause, advancing the purpose of showing how direct action must happen now.
<b>Rhetorical questions</b> : questions that a speaker or writer asks but does not necessarily expect the reader or listener to answer directly	"Why direct action, why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" (par. 9)	These questions show that the nonviolent campaign already considered and tried negotiations and they failed, advancing the purpose that direct action is necessary.

Rhetorical device and definition	Examples of the rhetorical device in the text (with paragraph or page reference)	Impact of the rhetorical device on point of view or purpose
<b>Repetition:</b> the act of saying or writing something again	“Tension” is repeated seven times in paragraph 9.	Repetition supports King’s purpose of explaining the kind of tension he wants to create which advances his purpose of proving that direct action is necessary to create tension.
Figurative language & <b>contrast:</b> comparison that shows the differences	“rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood” (par. 9)	Moving from a dark image to a hopeful image creates hope and advances the purpose of proving the usefulness of direct action.
Figurative language & contrast	“bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue” (par. 9)	The contrast of monologue and dialogue demonstrates King’s claim that African Americans are silenced in Birmingham and the image of being “bogged down” emphasizes the density and encompassing nature of injustices. These work together to advance King’s purpose by demonstrating the necessity for a solution like direct action.