

THE CONSTRUCTION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., AND MALCOLM X IN
COMPOSITION TEXTBOOKS: REREADING READERS

By

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Abstract

While scholars have written about the use of textbooks in writing courses, little attention is paid to how textbooks anthologize writers, especially women and people of color. This study examines the portrayal of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X in composition textbook anthologies known as Readers, and sheds light on the ways Readers incorporate writers from African-American backgrounds. Through qualitative methods, I analyze how King and Malcolm X are anthologized in five popular Readers: *The Bedford Reader*, *Rereading America*, *Patterns for College Writing*, *The Conscious Reader*, and *A World of Ideas*. By intertwining the historical-critical method and narratives from my own experiences teaching Malcolm X and King from a Reader, I analyze the embedded cultural meanings in the biographical headnotes, the selection, and the discussion questions in the Readers. The results show that Readers tend to: (1) narrate King's and Malcolm X's biographies according to popular narratives in society; (2) provide little or inaccurate historical context to ground the selections; (3) alter the original sources of King and Malcolm X's text; and (4) format King and Malcolm X's rhetoric according to the Western rhetorical tradition while ignoring the African-American dimensions in their rhetoric. I conclude by discussing how Readers are part of a larger issue within the educational system.

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Introduction

Coming Into Contact With Readers

To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction. [...]
If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, “brethren!” Be careful, teachers!
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Introduction

During my first semester teaching composition at Miami University, I conducted a mid-semester evaluation. Although the students were mainly pleased with the class, their main dissatisfaction was with the course textbook. The textbook—created by the English Department—only contained selections about the writing process, while the students wanted to read works that discussed world issues and history. Since the class was entering into a unit on public debate, I used this opportunity to find historical pieces for classroom discussion and rhetorical analysis. Some of the selections included were Jesus of Nazareth’s “The Sermon on the Mount,” and Mohandas Gandhi’s “On the Eve of the Historic Dandi March.” While the students enjoyed reading those selections, it would be the next reading that would generate controversy.

For the next selection, I chose Malcolm X’s “At the Audubon,” a speech containing his ideas on Black Nationalism and economics. The students read and wrote negative responses about both the speech’s content and Malcolm X. Among the words used to describe Malcolm X

were “Communist,” “racist,” and “asshole.” After talking to a friend who was a graduate student at another university, I assigned Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” because teaching King—according to my friend—was a lot “safer” than teaching Malcolm X. Although I felt that King’s and Malcolm X’s ideas were somewhat similar, especially their views on equality, the students did indeed respond more favorably to King. When I questioned their preferences, one person replied that she was more comfortable with King because of the “I Have a Dream” speech and the Civil Rights Movement. However, the students felt less receptive to Malcolm X because they perceived him as a demagogue who hated white people. While I didn’t comment on their answers, I did file a mental note about using an alternative approach in future teachings of Malcolm X.

I reviewed that mental note during my first semester at the University of Kansas. The reading “Hair” was a short excerpt from the “Homeboy” chapter in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. As constructed in the Reader *Reading Our Histories, Understanding Our Cultures* (1998), “Hair” explains how Malcolm X endured the painful process of straightening, or “conking,” his hair. In the subsequent discussion, some students felt that the excerpt was only about Malcolm X changing his hairstyle to imitate white people. The exploratory notes in the textbook did not help matters—while attempting to provide adequate historical and cultural context, some of its information was erroneous.¹ For instance, the textbook describes “Hair” as a combination of three time periods—“the 1950s when the author was a child and conked his hair; the 1960s when the author is an adult looking back on that behavior; and the present in which we as readers live and look back on these two different historical moments” (24). Malcolm X was

¹ For the dissertation, I define history (and historical) as past events and culture (cultural) as a set of values or social practices. Because these two terms are connected with each other, I define the phrase historical and cultural context as the societal behaviors, expectations, norms, etc of a group during a designated time in history. While no one can fully comprehend all the behaviors of a society in a period, there should be enough information provided that will give the student enough information to understand a reading.

describing an event in the 1940s and reflecting on his experience as an adult in the early 1960s, which would create a narrower time frame for students to understand the text. When I provided them with the historical and cultural factors that would have influenced Malcolm X's decision to conk his hair, some students began to get a better understanding of the reading. However, other students found the reading too "different" from their own experiences. There were also those who found "Hair" too simplistic to be taught in a college course. For them, the excerpt was not a useful "model" of academic writing.

Teaching in the Contact Zone

From these experiences teaching Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, I learned about the complexities of teaching materials to students who may not come from the same racial and cultural groups that I do. How does a teacher of color teach materials to majority white students who are unfamiliar with a particular group's cultural history, and how will that teacher be "read" by the students themselves? In "Participatory Rhetoric and the Teacher as a Racial/Gendered Subject," Cheryl L. Johnson discusses how, as universities incorporate required multicultural curricula in the classroom, students may read this as an "intrusion" into their academic study and may resent having to read texts that explore racial, gender, ethnic, and religious difference (411). Also, because many students are unaware of the cultural or historical contexts of the selections they read, they will often misunderstand the selections. As Johnson asks in relation to her own position as a female African-American professor teaching predominately white students, "...how are [students] to read the African-American text in the presence of this African-American female body?" (412).

An additional problem occurs when one teaches texts from an anthology that either fails to acknowledge the cultural context of the person featured in the anthology, or marks the subject

as “different” because that person is non-white. For Gregory Jay, this dilemma reflects one branch of multiculturalism that seeks to embrace diversity and leads to an understanding of various cultural groups (117). Another form of multiculturalism concerns itself with resisting oppression rather than celebrating diversity. This branch of multiculturalism critiques the unequal distribution of power in society and critiques racist policies that have historically constructed racial divisions (117). Because universities have more openly embraced the former branch of multiculturalism, they risk marginalizing the same groups that they intend to empower. Keith Gilyard notes: “How for example, do we avoid trivializing the struggles of certain groups whose confronting of racism and exclusion led, as was proper, to the rhetoric of multiculturalism in the first place? The more ‘multi’ multiculturalism gets, the more it deflects attention from the cultural contributions of any one ethnic group” (18).

In an effort to create a more multicultural pedagogy, composition and rhetoric scholars have turned to Mary Louis Pratt’s concept of the contact zone. According to Pratt, the contact zone refers to “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths, as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (34). Although Pratt’s idea of the contact zone helps to investigate the multicultural classroom as a site of power and authority, other compositionists have argued that the contact zone does not fully explain how students from marginalized cultures will have their voices heard. For instance, in “Negotiating the Contact Zone,” Joseph Harris comments that when his students read and write about Pratt’s contact zone, they view it as a kind of “multicultural bazaar” where students “are not so much brought into conflict with opposing views as placed in a kind of harmless connection with a series of exotic others” (163). For Harris, Pratt calls for a classroom where marginalized voices are heard, even

if it creates conflict and controversy; however, according to Harris, Pratt is vague about how these voices can be accomplished other than assigning readings from other cultures. As Harris explains in the following questions, students in Pratt's concept of the contact zone never fully investigate how they negotiate differences among themselves:

How, for instance, might white students speak with black classmates about a text written by an African author? What forms of evasion, overpoliteness, resistance, hostility, or boredom might be expected to interfere with their talk? And how might these be lessened or acknowledged so something more like conversation and less like a simple trading of positions can take place? Or what happens when a student finds that—due to the accidents of race or class or gender—he or she has somehow become the “representative” of a text (and by implication, culture) that the class is reading? In what ways is this student free to criticize or resist as well as to celebrate or identify with the claims that the text may be making? Or, conversely, how do students who are not members of the same culture as the author of a text gain the authority to speak critically about it? (163)

Marilyn Edelstein goes even further in “Multiculturalisms Past, Present, and Future.” According to Edelstein, as multiculturalism enters into the twenty-first century, it faces several challenges, including: (1) teaching multiple cultures without homogenizing or essentializing them, but also neglecting the commonalities surrounding cultures; (2) creating a relational model of cultures and identities without recognizing the distinct histories, literature, and experiences of racial and ethnic groups; (3) creating a multiculturalism that achieves expected outcomes for white students and students of color; (4) discussing whiteness as an identity without recentering whiteness; and (5) teaching “histories and current practices of racism, oppression,

disempowerment, and violence without ignoring histories and practices of resistance, affirmation, creativity, and agency, and without removing all possibility [...] for agency, activism, and change” (15). While she recognizes Pratt’s contribution to multiculturalism, Edelstein’s pedagogy expands the concept of the contact zone by looking at the productive changes between the contact zones of: students and course materials; students themselves; and teachers and students. Indeed, while Pratt, Harris, and Edelstein offer various methods of confronting the multicultural classroom, they have not discussed the role of composition textbooks within this contact zone—or, for that matter, whether the textbook itself might be regarded as a kind of contact zone. Many aspects of the educational system (publishers, editors, teachers, students, and society) all come together in a textbook to clash and grapple with each other in very obvious asymmetrical relations of power. Some voices are given more agency in textbooks. However, other voices are silenced or—when they are included—altered to conform to the dominant voice in the textbook. My dissertation, then, investigates how all these aspects of the educational system come together in a textbook to teach students about “good” writing and rhetoric.

Objective of Study

My research investigates the construction of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in composition textbooks—and in particular—anthologies or Rhetorical Readers.² Through qualitative methods, I analyze how King and Malcolm X are anthologized in five popular Readers—*The Bedford Reader*, *Rereading America*, *Patterns for College Writing*, *The Conscious Reader*, and *A World of Ideas*. By intertwining the historical-critical method and

² To make a distinction between readers (people who read), and Readers (anthologies used in composition classroom), I capitalize Readers when referring to anthologies.

narratives from my own experiences teaching Malcolm X and King from a Reader, I analyze the embedded cultural meanings in the biographical headnotes, selection, and discussion questions in the Readers. I ultimately argue that if editors incorporate writings by African-Americans in Readers, they should: (1) incorporate more historical and cultural information to situate the selections and (2) recognize that these writers and speakers may inhabit more rhetorical traditions than Western rhetoric. Considering that a majority of composition teachers use such textbooks for their classrooms, it would be instructive to revisit the contact zone thesis with a special emphasis upon the textbook as the major point of contact.

Chapter Overview

Examining the use of King and Malcolm X in Readers was a long journey that included researching textbooks from the turn of the twentieth century; talking to publishers as an Administrative Intern for University of Kansas' First- and Second-Year Writing Program; presenting preliminary research at various conferences; and conversing with various people about their experiences with textbooks during their time as either a teacher or student. Therefore, I decided to structure my dissertation as a pedagogical journey where the reader enters into both my experiences with textbooks and the discoveries I learned about the anthologization of King and Malcolm X. The arrangement of the dissertation, then, is one in which I give context about Readers to ground the research; explain my choice of Readers for this study and the analytical framework to study King and Malcolm X, and discuss how the situation of Composition Readers is part of a larger issue of textbooks production in the American educational system.

Chapter One details a historical overview of Readers within composition studies from the

turn of the twentieth century to the present. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader an understanding of the genre that anthologizes King and Malcolm X for students learning about writing and rhetoric. After discussing an overview of Readers, I review the relevant scholarship on textbooks and conclude with an explanation of how the contribution of this research connects with scholarship on composition textbooks.

Chapter Two outlines the design, critical method, and data collection of the research study. I begin discussing the problems associated with anthologizing works in Readers. Then, I list the research questions; explain the selection process of textbooks for the study; and discuss the pedagogical background of the textbooks used for this research. After explaining the historical-critical method and how its components are relevant to the research, I summarize the structure of the next two chapters.

Chapters Three and Four focus on my results, the former on Martin Luther King, Jr., and the latter on Malcolm X. Each chapter begins with a detailed discussion of my experience teaching both figures from a textbook, then segues into a narrative detailing the evolution of each leader's public images over time, and an analysis of how those changes became incorporated into Readers. The next section contains an analysis of the biographical headnotes, selections, and discussion questions in the Readers. Both chapters end with a narrative about teaching King and Malcolm X from a more informed, rhetorical perspective.

The Conclusion explores the position of Composition Readers within the larger landscape of publishers, teachers, students, and society. Throughout the dissertation, I examine how components interact with each other in a textbook. Nonetheless, in the Conclusion, I discuss each of these components separately, and in much more detail. After doing so, I propose and outline pedagogical strategies for making textbooks better teaching tools within an increasingly

diverse population.

It is my hope that an examination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X in Composition Readers can help generate more interest in researching the role and importance of textbooks in composition studies. Also, I hope my research will help composition instructors and scholars view textbooks as less than a collection of essays and more as a means of defining— and even reinforcing—dominant cultural values. As XinLui Gale and Fredric G. Gale note, although textbooks have been utilized as “indexes to the composition discipline’s evolution” and as “chronicles of the discipline’s history,” composition scholars seldom view textbooks as credible scholarship: “Their publication is often slighted by tenure and promotion committees and their theoretical, pedagogical, cultural, and ideological implications are seldom explored either in print or at important academic conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)” (3-4). This study seeks to counter such practices by generating interest in studying composition textbooks, especially their function in the shaping of the discipline of composition studies and the teaching of writing.

Chapter One

Reading Readers: A Historical Overview and Literature Review of Composition Readers

...if we will keep training teachers to stand by themselves, we can continue to re-invent textbooks in the image of their best nature—as our tools, not crutches we depend upon for all support. Texts can be powerful servants, but only our own pride in and knowledge of our subject will keep them from turning on us and becoming, as they have in the past, oppressive masters.

—Robert J. Connors

Introduction

In a *Simpsons*' episode, "Separate Vocations," Lisa Simpson rebels after a career aptitude test tracks her as a homemaker instead of her dream career as a jazz saxophonist. One of her acts of rebellion includes stealing every teacher's edition textbook from her elementary school. After learning about the theft, the teachers begin panicking:

"What do we do?!?"

"Declare a snow day!"

"Does anyone know the multiplication table?"

When Principal Skinner discovers the textbooks in Lisa's locker, his reaction is to hug the books and exclaim, "Answers! Answers!" While the episode's main critique is tracking students into certain fields, there is also a subtle jab at both teachers and textbooks. Teachers were depicted as lost and crippled because their crutch—the textbook—was gone, reflecting how many people view American education. Rather than the teacher coordinating the class curriculum, the textbook becomes the teaching guide for the class. The educational system reduces the teacher

to a lecturer whose only goal is to make sure students answer the right questions, especially if the teacher is new or has not received sufficient training in the class they are required to teach.

The aforementioned episode mirrors my experiences teaching writing in a composition course. In my first year of teaching, I had a two week course on teaching writing. After receiving a textbook and creating a syllabus, I headed to my first writing course. Still frightened about teaching, I relied on the textbook for the first half of the semester until I gained enough confidence to lessen my dependence upon it. In the process, I began examining and critiquing these textbooks, especially Readers. I noticed several patterns in using Readers. First, the more experience I gained from teaching, the less I relied on the textbook as the main source of knowledge. Second, the Readers I have used mainly offered one technique for teaching writing or reading, leaving little choice for exploring other options. Third, most of the discussion questions in these Readers did not allow multiple answers and mainly focused on simple right or wrong answers. Finally, while Readers offered selections as models of “good writing,” they offered scant explanation of why that model was good in the first place, and they often gave too little historical or cultural context for the selections, leaving students with an unrealistic impression that writing occurs in a vacuum.

Later, I learned that not only was my experience with textbooks far from unique, but publishers created resources to help teachers locate and use a good textbook. While serving as an administrative intern for the First- and Second-Year English Program, my job was to find an appropriate textbook for the first-year writing courses. One publisher’s website asked me three questions: At what type of university do you teach? What are your interests? What type of classes do you teach? Based on these questions, the website generated two textbooks that seemed an ideal match for a composition course at the University of Kansas. When I reviewed

their online catalogue, I found that the publisher had a textbook for almost any topic an instructor chose; there was one on capitalism, nature, and even the way people eat. Because there were so many teachers, the publishers reasoned, it was important that teachers find a book that would fit the interests of both teachers and students.

Ultimately, these experiences consolidated my interest in the development of Composition Readers. While scholars such as Robert Connors and Lynn Bloom have discussed some history regarding textbooks, they do not devote much attention to minority representation, nor to the genre of the Composition Reader. I constructed my own narrative after surveying over one-hundred Readers published within the last one-hundred years to understand the history and purpose of Readers, and to locate any trends that emerged during the twentieth century. I argue that Readers, essentially designed to supplement writing instruction, have become the focal point of writing classrooms; yet, they fail to provide an adequate cultural and historical context for reading and analyzing prose works. I preface my narrative with a caveat that I am not giving a comprehensive history of Readers. My goal here is to provide enough background information that will aid the reader in understanding Readers, and to explain how elements of this genre will affect the way textbooks incorporate Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Finally, I will review the scholarship surrounding composition textbooks and Readers to illustrate how compositionists have studied textbooks.

The Early Years: Late 19th Century to Early 1930s

To understand the history of Readers, one must examine the cultural and historical forces that produced Readers, especially since one of the main purposes of a Reader is to model good writing for students. In *Defending Access: A Critique of Standards in Higher Education*, Tom

Fox notes that before composition became a university requirement in the late nineteenth century, good writing meant that a writer was able to effectively convey his or her intended message to an audience: “Good writing was good because it accomplished what it was supposed to do; it was measured by its efficacy in discrete situations” (24-25). However, earlier views of writing changed in the latter half of the nineteenth century as writing became more prescriptive and unitary.

The prescriptive and unitary view of writing reflected the development of the composition course as a service course; it functioned as both a gateway for students entering the university and a reinforcement of dominant cultural values. As the United States began developing a national identity and became an increasingly industrial society, wealthy industrialists started to pressure higher education to create courses of study that would meet the needs of business and industry. Their demands led to the creation of a freshman composition class that incorporated what eventually James Berlin and others termed current-traditional rhetoric, which involves having an isolated writer who—after learning the rules of writing—receives a topic, organizes his or her ideas, creates a thesis statement, writes an outline, and composes a draft. In shifting the focus of writing from the content to the form, current-traditional rhetoric dictated that good writing was correct in usage and grammar but required objectivity between the writer and subject matter. Ultimately, the composition class served the interests of the professional classes who wanted writing that was technical and emphasized correct form. The course would eventually assist the interests of a nation that—in the midst of experiencing a wave of mass immigration from Eastern Europe—viewed higher education as a way to distinguish the working class from the dominant class while privileging primarily white groups.

Defining good writing as an emphasis on form fostered the need to locate effective models of good writing, which eventually led to the creation of the modern Composition Reader. According to John C. Brereton, Readers developed during the late nineteenth century from “a pedagogical mix of imitation and modeling”; however, many instructors viewed imitation as too authoritarian and prescriptive, preferring instead the freer concept of modeling (315). Beginning in the 1880s, teachers began assigning students selections derived from standard, highly popular collections of essays, speeches, and stories intended for either general readers or secondary schools. By the 1890s, the first Readers came into focus since composition teachers felt that neither secondary-level Readers nor rhetorical anthologies met their needs. Adapted from older collections of texts such as William Holmes McGuffey’s *Readers* and Charles M. Sanders’s *Rhetorical Readers*,³ modern Composition Readers were assembled for class use. Some of them included the “apparatus” of introductory remarks, questions on the reading, and potential topics for writing (315). One of the first books explicitly printed for college composition was publisher Henry Holt’s “Specimens” series. Each book in the series focused on one specific mode of discourse: George Pierce Baker’s *Specimens of Argumentation: Modern* (1893); Hammond Lamont’s *Specimens of Exposition* (1894); C.S. Baldwin’s *Specimens of Prose Description* (1895); and W.T. Brewster’s *Specimens of Narrative* (1895). The last in the series—Edwin H. Lewis’s general Reader *Specimens in the Forms of Discourse*—was published in 1900 and became the first complete modal Reader (Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric*, 232). Including forty

³ William Holmes McGuffey (1800-1873) published a series of Readers that helped frame the morals and tastes of American culture. His Readers were designed as instruction for both students and teachers with discussion questions after each selection. Between 1836 and 1960, over 120 million copies of McGuffey’s Readers were sold, placing its sales on the same level as The Bible and *Webster’s Dictionary*.

Charles M. Sanders’s *Rhetorical, or Union Fifth Reader: embracing a full exposition of the principles of rhetorical reading: with numerous specimens, both in prose and poetry from the best writers, English and American, as exercises for practice; and with Notes and Sketches, Literary and Biographical, forming together a brief, though comprehensive course of instruction in English Literature* (1863) was an anthology containing pedagogy on elocution and selections considered models of exemplary rhetoric.

different authors with sixty readings— mainly by white men—the volume contained a chapter for each mode of discourse and a chapter on criticism. According to Lewis, the purpose of the Reader was “to furnish illustrations supplementary to lectures or a manual” and “to supply material for the inductive inference of rhetorical principles on the part of the student” (iii).

However, as Lewis stated in his preface, the readings in the textbooks were not meant to serve as models for writing since models were not recommended for college students. Yet, the purpose in studying the selections was three-fold:

[...] to help the student understand the underlying principles of invention; to familiarize him with certain living organisms as informed by these principles, lest in forgetful haste he apply the principles mechanically; and finally to reveal his powers to himself by experiment and self-comparison. (iii-iv)

As Robert Connors noted, with a stylistic update here and there, Lewis’s preface could be included in any contemporary Composition Reader. Also, in establishing the Reader’s purpose, Lewis would set another standard for Composition Readers—an explicit definition of “good writing” or an implicit definition through the chosen selections offered in the Reader.

After 1900, Composition Readers flourished. Small and inexpensive, these Readers came to serve several needs for composition courses in the early twentieth century. Connors attributes their popularity to the needs of composition instructors in the early twentieth century (“Textbooks,” 111). Connors terms the period between 1900 and 1930 as the “Dark Ages” in composition (111). Composition instructors during this period were graduate students, lecturers, and young assistant professors. They had little formal training in composition, partly because the system that trained the instructor viewed composition as “intellectually valueless,” a “degrading hackwork apprenticeship” to literary studies, and a pursuit that did not teach the instructor

anything about writing instruction (111). Therefore, instructors who entered the composition classroom during this period learned about rules and the tenets of writing from Readers they instructed their students to buy. Instead of having a composition scholar or curriculum expert at its helm, composition programs were led by general administrators (Brereton 21). Although there were some colleges and universities that respected writing pedagogy, English departments viewed composition as a long apprenticeship that would eventually reward a professor with literature courses—“the serious intellectual occupation of the discipline”—once promotion came (22). With the exception of the University of Michigan’s program,⁴ there was no doctorate, learned journal, or research seminars in composition (22). Yet, some of the Readers from this time reveal how instructors viewed writing instruction and how their purposes reflected certain pedagogical approaches.

One approach was the idea course, which focused on close analysis and emphasized the structure of ideas more than style (16-17). An example was 1913’s *English Prose: A Series of Related Essays for the Discussion and Practice of the Art of Writing*. Edited by Frederick W. Roe and George R. Elliot, *English Prose* was designed under a scheme the editors believed was new. Instead of categorizing chapters under modes of discourse, Roe and Elliot organized their chapters into nine related groups, representing “a different phase of life”—The Personal Life; Education; Recreation and Travels; Social Life and Manners; Public Affairs; Science; Nature;

⁴ Some well-known figures from University of Michigan included Fred Newton Scott (1860-1931) and Gertrude Buck (1871-1922). Scott, who earned a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1889, became a full professor at Michigan and shaped Michigan’s Department of Rhetoric, which included both introductory composition courses and higher level rhetoric courses until the department was absorbed by the English Department in the early 1930s. He became the first president of the National Council of Teachers of English (1911-1913), and the twenty-fourth president of the Modern Language Association (1907). He coauthored several textbooks that recognized the social context in language.

Buck, a student of Scott, received her PhD in rhetoric and composition (the first American woman) from Michigan in 1899 and later became a well-known rhetorician as we moved from the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century. She later oversaw courses in writing and rhetoric in the English department at Vassar College. A prolific writer, Buck advocated a social theory to rhetoric that involved using students’ experiences along with inductive and deductive reasoning.

Conduct and Inner Life; and Literature and Art (v). Disagreeing with the notion that composition classrooms should be based upon formal exercises and drills because “the ideas of undergraduates are too far to seek,” the editors believed that “form and content go together and one must not suffer at the expense of the other” (v). Therefore, it presented a series of “rich and vital” selections that “instructors themselves will feel challenged to add to the class discussion from their own knowledge,” while “arous[ing] thought and provok[ing] oral discussion in the class-room, as well as furnish suitable models of style” (vi). Predating the aims of David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky’s *Ways of Reading* by more than seventy years, *English Prose* differs from other Readers by including longer essays since other collections “contain pieces too short and unrelated to satisfy the ideals” of the Reader (vii).

From the idea course came another program that developed into one of the most common of early twentieth century composition classes—expository writing. Stressing key works of nonfiction, the expository course required students to analyze prose and either have them react to the ideas of the prose or imitate its structure or style (Brereton 17). The leader of the expository writings theorists, Maurice Garland Fulton—described by Connors as a “pedestrian anthologist”—studied every aspect of expository writing produced between 1870 and 1912. His work reflects the best available synopsis of expository theory, *Expository Writing* (1912) (Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric*, 235). This Reader contained forty-three essays illustrating expository writing, mainly scientific in content. Fulton’s Reader had four stated purposes: (1) to “make definite and systematic application of learning to write through the examination and imitation of good models”; (2) to center “attention upon exposition since it is the kind of writing that is most directly serviceable in practical life and that most readily exemplifies the essential qualities of effective composition—accuracy, logicalness, and economy of presentation”; (3) to

draw the selections “chiefly from the field of scientific writing because of the intrinsic interest of such subject-matter” to young people; and (4) to have the selections “of such length that the analysis of them will afford a “severe logical setting-up exercise” (Brereton 392-393). Fulton believed scientific writing to be more appealing to students than literature because of its strong emphasis on “writing accuracy, directness, conciseness, power of system and organization,” and “sense of logical relationships,” making the “direct expression” of scientific writing more appealing to the student than the “indirectness” of belletristic essays (394). Universities at that time did not offer enough training for students to “think straight,” according to Fulton. Thus, he added complete articles, chapters, or parts of books rather than shorter excerpts featured in other Readers (395). In print from 1912 through 1953, *Expository Writing* provided the central model for all subsequent exposition texts and consolidated expository writing as a genre in the minds of most college teachers.

Perhaps an even more popular class was the composition course focused on English literature. Widely adopted by 1900, this course drew on the traditional rhetoric course’s emphasis on *belles lettres*, style, and examples from English literature (Brereton 16). By having students write about something substantial as English literature, the literature approach and its variations were easily adopted as the model for liberal arts colleges (16). Frederick M. Smith’s *Essays and Studies: Prose Selections for College Reading* (1922), for example, targeted instructors interested in “the problem of ‘freshman English’” and described how instructors at Cornell University—Smith’s teaching school—tried to solve “the problem” of teaching “young folk to think clearly, to write simple and correct English, and to like good books” (vii). A group of instructors conducted several experiments at Cornell to deal with “the problem”—including incorporating Readers that offered chapters on narration, description, argumentation, and

exposition—and concluded that the best way to teach composition was to emphasize quantity (vii). Smith included essays that could serve as models for student writing and also encouraged an interest in reading, life, and their impacts:

Quite apart from making him read for expression's sake, we must, if such a thing is possible, waken his interest in books, and induce him to read for the pure joy of reading: and we must direct his thoughts a little to the problems of his own life as a worker and a citizen. More than all we must hope to inspire him with the unshakable belief that life is a thoughtful man's job that must be faced cheerfully and courageously. (ix)

Instead of categorizing the chapter by the modes of discourse, Smith organized themes reflecting the desire to create habits of good reading: “Books and Study”; “The Conduct of Life”; “The Outdoors”; “Cities and Men”; and “A Little Group of Interesting People,” which consisted of “great” literary works by writers such as Henry James and Herman Melville. While there were no main forums for theory and discussing writing among composition instructors, Readers provided a means of theorizing pedagogy, eventually laying the foundation for composition studies as the field entered into the mid-twentieth century. Along with the foundation came a recurring theme within these Readers—the dominance of selections by white male writers devoid of any historical and cultural context.

Coming of Age: Late 1930s to Mid-1960s

During the late 1930s, The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) gained strength with a growing number of college teachers joining the organization. *The English Journal*, which only had 1,000 subscribers in 1930, developed into a high school and college

journal and soon spun off a separate journal, *College English* (112). The burgeoning interest in freshman writing led NCTE to organize the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949. In turn, members of CCCC felt that they needed their own journal: *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) was thus born in 1950. What originally began as a journal documenting the events of CCCC evolved as “a growing body of knowledge” shaped by a “growing group of practitioners,” thereby giving instructors for the first time a resource other than a textbook to learn theories about writing (112). Moreover, CCC also provided a platform for discussing textbooks. In the late 1950s, CCC began offering a review section on newly published composition readers. Advertisements previously placed in the back of earlier Readers were now included in CCC, giving publishers another means to distinguish their textbooks from others on the market.

However, even as new ideas in the composition field began to take shape, composition Readers changed little. Most of the Readers still focused on either the modes of discourse, expository writing, writing about literature, or the concept of “great ideas.” Originally meant as supplementary material for a writing course, by the mid-twentieth century the Reader became the centerpiece of the course. Once small enough to fit inside a pocket, Readers became heavy, bulky books offering more selections from which instructors could choose. While some white women like Virginia Woolf and Rachel Carson were included in Readers, most Readers still emphasized such canonical white male writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Aldous Huxley, Henry David Thoreau, and George Orwell. By the 1950s, however, and with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement, a few African-American authors—predominantly men—were slowly being included.

From the textbooks reviewed for this study, the African-American appearing most frequently was James Baldwin. Already known for his fiery novels and provocative essays on race, Baldwin's stinging critiques on American racism were suitable for Readers attempting to be socially conscious. The most frequently anthologized works were "Stranger in the Village," "Letter to My Nephew," and "Notes on a Native Son." While editors placed Baldwin in Readers in an effort to be "relevant" and inclusive toward African-Americans, these Readers provided simplistic discussions of race. One example was Dorothy Van Ghent and Willard Maas's *The Essential Prose* (1965). Describing Baldwin as "an eloquent spokesman for his race in *The Fire Next Time*," Van Ghent and Maas included the selection "Letter to My Nephew," an excerpt from "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation" in *The Fire Next Time* (448). In the selection, Baldwin urges his nephew not to base his self-worth on acceptance in American society, but to focus on internal growth and to recognize the limitations of American society. However, Van Ghent and Maas offered little, if any, context for the reading, save the copyright note. Moreover, while Baldwin mentions race in the excerpt, the discussion and writing questions are rather superficial, as shown in the following writing prompt:

As a writing assignment, you might use the letter form (which has the advantage of setting up a live situation of communication, a motive of speaking directly to someone—even though the someone may be an imagined person) to write your own reactions to and thoughts about the civil rights revolution that is going on in this country. Try to center your writing about some controlling feeling or idea, and keep it simple—away from abstractions, close to experience. Or, getting away from racial issues entirely, you might use this form to write to a person

younger than yourself (real or imaginary) about those things you feel is most important the younger should know (for all of us carry in us the child we once were, whom we see in other children, and have the impulse to tell that child what we have learned that would help him). (453)

The problem with an assignment like this is that it does not invite an examination of Baldwin's choice of a particular literary form, the letter, or the context, given that he is addressing his nephew during the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. The assumption is that students have thoughts and reactions to the "civil rights revolution," which they may or may not have discussed with anyone. Neither does the prompt consider Baldwin's unique position as an African-American during this time period, nor why he would be compelled to write a letter to his nephew on the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. Finally, by having an alternative to the first half of the prompt, the second half offers students an escape: they are allowed to evade race altogether, given permission to digress or substitute if they are uncomfortable with the topic. Examples like Van Ghent and Mass might be seen to anticipate another trend: when discussing racial matters, Readers offer selections that have the potential of being socially conscious, but that instead, elect to sanitize the reading to make it palpable for the dominant culture. Still, Van Ghent and Maas's Reader helped establish a new era of including nonwhite voices within Composition Readers, one that would become more pronounced during the second half of the twentieth century.

Student's Rights To Their Own Reader: Late 1960 to 1990s

During the late 1960s, compositionists became interested in the writing process and, especially at this time, writing as self-expression. The Dartmouth Conference in 1966 called for writing instruction that encouraged students to find personal writing styles that were

unconstrained by conventions. One theory that emerged during this period was expressivism, a strain of writing pedagogy associated with the work of, among others, Donald Murray and Peter Elbow. Expressivism provided an alternative to current-traditional rhetoric, which emphasized correct grammar, standardized writing, and elitist values about writing. In contrast, expressivism conceived writing as an art through which the self is able to discover itself—or at least find its true, authentic voice. For some expressivists, it's not clear that writing can be taught at all; but, the teacher can create an inviting environment in which the student can learn through dialoging with herself, other students, and the teacher about writing. Even though expressivism has received much criticism since then, it did represent a serious challenge to traditional approaches to writing pedagogy, as did the controversial Students' Right to Their Own Language document which soon followed. Not surprisingly, in a time of general upheaval, composition Readers began to appear that challenged the received canon by including selections written by women and people of color. *Speaking for Ourselves: American Ethnic Writing* (1969) included selections from Native American, Black, Hispanic, Asian American, Jewish American, and “White Ethnic” writers. Stating that they were concerned with “the two-thirds of the American population that is *not* white Anglo-Saxon Protestant native-born of native parentage,” editors Lillian Faderman and Barbara Bradshaw included writers who could address, more directly, issues like poverty, prejudice, or conflict within their own ethnic groups (viii). Another anthology, Francis E. Kearns's *Black Identity: A Thematic Reader* (1970)—composed of both Black and White writers on “the themes of Negro experience and identity in America”—applied a “literary” approach to a “social” problem. Divided into two parts, Part I contain five chapters, each organized around a specific theme such as slavery, black militancy, and cross-racial sexual attitudes while providing an alternative table of contents for modes of discourse; Part II—the

black experience and identity—contains no apparatus at all, thereby allowing the instructor to independently use the works or connect them to Part One.

Readers also began to focus on contemporary issues. John O. Cole and F.L. Schepman's *The Rebel: His Moment and His Motives* (1971) took its theme from Albert Camus's "What is a Rebel?" and sought to "broaden and deepen" discussions about rebellion and "the psychological and philosophical" complexities of those who rebel by assembling a diverse array of authors from Frederick Nietzsche to Stokely Carmichael (ix). David Horowitz, Michael Lerner, and Craig Pyes's *Counterculture and Revolution* (1972) contained works from activists associated with the counterculture movement including Eldridge Cleaver, Timothy Leary, Abbie Hoffman, and even John Lennon and Yoko Ono. *The Urban Reader* (1971) examined the complexities of city life and its problems through short stories, poetry, song lyrics, articles, and photographs by writers who have either lived or worked in the American city like Kurt Vonnegut, Paul Simon, and Allen Ginsberg. Although these Readers explored contemporary issues suitable for emerging student populations, they did not have a long circulation life. Most of them went out of print after the first or second editions. Though they may not have survived the vast market of traditional Readers like *The Norton Reader*, they reflected the need of composition textbooks and composition studies to become more culturally and historically aware of the social movements and various student demographics.

By the 1980s, Readers began emphasizing more of a historical and cultural interest in their texts, and this led to the development of a subgenre known as the Multicultural Reader. Piloted in the early 1980s with the first edition of *Crossing Cultures*, the Multicultural—or Cross-Cultural—Reader became the textbook industry's drive to tie their marketing strategies to the ambiguous terms "diversity" and "difference." With the increasing popularity of literature by

people of color and women like Maxine Hong Kingston, Maya Angelou, Toni Cade Bambara, Gloria Naylor, Mitsue Yamada, and Richard Rodriguez, book publishers targeted two distinct audiences with Multicultural Readers. The first audience included “culturally mainstream audiences” who needed to expand their horizons and “need[ed] to be exposed to the diversity of cultures and values” to exist in the present world and to shape the future (Shapiro 524). The other audience included marginalized students—people of color, women, and sexual minorities—who needed a way to connect to the academy and “be able to value their own personal and cultural identities, and who challenge the institutions to expand its vision” (524). Barbara Roche Rico and Sandra Mano’s *American Mosaic: Multicultural Readings in Context* (1991) presents readings from several ethnic groups. Beginning with immigrants of the late nineteenth century, Rico and Mano include American Indians, Chinese Americans, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Japanese Americans, Chicanos, and current immigrants to America. To augment their aim of presenting a wide range of writings from each ethnic group, Rico and Mano provided legal documents examining how the dominant culture responded to each ethnic group since they felt that expository essays could not “reflect the richness of the literature that was produced” (xi). Along with including first person narratives, journalistic writings, oratory, fiction, and poetic works, Rico and Mano provide a list of supplementary works for more information on each group since they could not provide all of the writings from an ethnic group. In recognizing this limitation, Rico and Mano understood that their Reader is more of an introduction to ethnic groups rather than a comprehensive overview.

As the late 1980s merged into the early 1990s, Readers concentrating on the “great ideas” of the Western tradition—a staple of Readers since the early half of the twentieth century—enjoyed resurgence (Hoffman 530). While the original Great Ideas Readers contained selections

from “dead white males,” selections in the current Great Ideas Readers began including more texts by women and people of color (530). Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau’s *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: Methods and Models of Argument* placed Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1990) alongside Plato and Thomas Jefferson’s “Declaration of Independence.” Along with providing the necessary apparatus of discussion questions, the majority of these readers provided lengthy headnotes for the selections containing historical and cultural information along with footnotes that give background information for more reading comprehension.

While these Readers became popular in the final decades of the twentieth century, there were still complaints from certain cultural groups about representation in more mainstream Readers, spurring the development of more specialized, or “custom,” Readers. Some of those Readers were specifically targeted to African-American students or people interested in African-American culture, reflecting the need to create a curriculum that spoke to the needs of African-American students, especially those enrolled at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

African-American Contributions to Composition Textbooks

According to John C. Brereton, while African-Americans were forging a distinct voice or series of voices in nineteenth-century America, black educators did not express any concerns about writing instruction (21). Black college faculty and students were forced to assume white styles and standards, while Black, Latino, or Native American concerns seemed invisible in the professional literature of writing instruction between 1875 and 1925 (21). However, while mainstream literature on writing pedagogy may have ignored the needs of African-Americans, scholars such as Scott Zaluda and David Gold have argued that instructors at some historically

black colleges and universities used a writing pedagogy that incorporated current-traditional rhetoric with social action. In his study of poet and Wiley College instructor Melvin B. Tolson, David Gold writes that these schools “were set up to serve explicitly civic purposes, building on long-standing tropes in African-American political discourse that emphasized the role of education and literacy in promoting citizenship and community strength” (228). The pedagogy of social action at some HBCUs would continue throughout the twentieth century and would surface in Readers about African-American life.⁵

One example was Teresa Redd’s *Revelations: an Anthology of Expository Essays by and aboutBlacks* (1993). *Revelations* developed after Redd’s colleagues at Howard University complained about the “disappointing” lack of essays by and about African-Americans in Composition Readers (xviii). According to Redd, only 5% of the essays in *The Harper & Row Reader* and *The Norton Reader* were written by African-Americans, and while multicultural Readers offered writings by blacks, those writings were not expository, which Redd felt was the most important type of writing in a first-year writing course (xviii). Therefore, *Revelations* highlighted African-American men and women writing “model” expository essays about the “Black experience” for African-American students who gain validation in knowing that they had experiences to write about while mastering writing techniques (xviii).

Similar Readers focusing on African-American life developed in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Two of the editors of *Heritage: African American Readings for Writers* (1997)—Joyce M. Jarrett and Margaret G. Lee—were professors at Hampton

⁵While not strictly a composition scholar, Hallie Quinn Brown (1845-1949) deserves mention here. A professor of elocution at Wilberforce University from 1893 to 1923, Brown produced pedagogical materials that geared rhetorical instruction towards the needs of African-American students. Her texts *Bits and Odds—A Choice Selection of Recitations* (1880) and *Elocution and Physical Culture* (circa 1910) incorporated selections written in African-American Vernacular English, and promoted African-American history and culture. Brown’s work was grounded in the view that rhetoric served a social and moral responsibility for people. For a more detailed reading of Brown, see Susan Kates’ “The Embodied Rhetoric of Hallie Quinn Brown.” *College English* 59.1 (1997): 59-71.

University. Designed for writers who have an interest in African American culture and its influence in American society, *Heritage* was a collection of fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction written by and about African Americans. Emphasizing that African American culture is not monolithic, the editors chose a wide range of subjects that would reflect this diversity, as shown in some of the titles of the chapters: African American Language, Intra-racial Prejudice, Political Philosophies, and Civil Rights. Not only would these readings serve as models, according to the editors, the selections would also offer the potential to “touch the soul of the reader” (xix). *Get It Together: Readings about African-American Life* (2002) included one editor from Benedict College, Jacqueline Brice-Finch. Arguing that key issues faced by African-Americans have not substantially changed throughout American history, *Get It Together* uses for its title an African-American colloquial phrase that reminds one to be “thoughtful, aware, concerned,” and “involved” so that one can “survive and thrive,” thereby making one a “productive, conscientious member of the community” (xi). Thus, *Get It Together* incorporates mainly nonfiction works dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day to focus on issues pertaining to African-American issues and events while “promoting critical thinking about how these issues affect all Americans” (xi). In discussing various aspects of African American life, these Readers built upon the HBCUs tradition to use education as a tool for community development and social action. Moreover, Readers centering on African-American culture responded to a need in composition studies on recognizing African American students, and the significance of presenting diverse selections by African-American writers rather than a representative few.

Recent Developments: 21st Century

Created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century based upon the needs of teachers, Composition Readers continue to evolve according to the needs of the market. Originally inexpensive and small books, the contemporary Reader developed into hefty, costly textbooks compartmentalized according to themes. Along with Readers that emphasize a Multicultural or Great Ideas perspective, there are Rhetorical Readers, Environmental Readers, Pop Culture Readers, Argument Readers, and Critical Thinking Readers. As well, several new developments have emerged over the last few years. For instance, in response to students who find current Readers bulky and pricey, James C. McDonald's *The Reader* is a textbook which takes traditional elements of a Reader and transforms them into a magazine layout. Described as being "visually appealing, well-designed," and reflecting the materials students read outside the classroom, *The Reader* is a mix of "real-world genres" (Web pages, magazine articles, blogs, editorials, and ads) and "academic genres" (research papers and scholarly articles) to create interesting course readings for students and to assist them in being a "savvier consumer" when reading texts in and out of college (i;iii).

While some Readers are changing their layout, others are changing by going online. Publishers such as Norton, Bedford/St. Martin's, Pearson/Longman, McGraw-Hill, and Cengage have produced custom made, online versions of a Reader. Containing a library of 300 selections, *The Norton Reader* categorizes its selections by author, title, date, theme, literary genre, rhetorical genre, or rhetorical strategy and contains full-color images of advertisements, graphic-novels, and photographs. Once the instructor chooses the readings (or apparatus if desired) and other information related to the course, Norton creates a course-specific Reader. Possessing a database of over 600 stories, poems, plays, and essays, *The Bedford Select Reader* allows the

instructor to create a Composition Reader or literature anthology while adding the pedagogy of Bedford/St. Martin's and the instructor's own material. Small and cost effective (the price of these Readers is determined by the number of selections an instructor uses), these online Readers have returned the genre back to its original intention of providing cheap, small texts with models of good writing. Yet, in returning to its original goals, Composition Readers still have to deal with their techniques of anthologizing writers, especially when the content may not be familiar to all students. It is this contention that has been a long standing debate among a few scholars in composition studies.

Literature on Composition Textbooks and Readers

As composition studies became consolidated within English as a field, scholars began examining and critiquing the role Readers and textbooks play in the shaping of knowledge. In "Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production: The Place of Theory in Writing Pedagogy," Katherine E. Welch argues that few composition textbooks reflect current composition theories and research. Instead, composition textbooks are based upon two theories: (1) a truncated version of Cicero's five classical canons; and (2) Alexander Bain's five modes of discourse (269). This reliance on the canons, modes, and "perfect" writing models in textbooks leads student writers to become intimidated, and it leads writing instructors away from composition theory (270). Welch notes that these antiquated theories benefit instructors more than students because they train new teachers and uphold the current-traditional methods of veteran teachers. Welch writes: "A textbook becomes an enabler in the hands of the writing teacher as rhetor. For the inexperienced writing teacher, the text teaches the instructor the crucial aspects of language theory that create the possibilities of writing" (279). One prominent example used by Welch is the role of excerpts in freshman writing courses. According to Welch, excerpts used in

composition textbooks have not been contextualized and they persuade students that writing exists “beyond the usual constraints of relationship, history, lines of thought, and conditions of belief” (273). As Welch continues her argument:

These pieces are made to appear to come out of nowhere and they invite student writers to compose pieces out of nowhere. The setting up of a piece of prose, becoming at home with it, is therefore difficult. These textbooks implicitly and strongly show writing instructors and their students that famous writers do not set up their work and that they do not think about context. (273)

The result is an ideology that teaches students that writing is divorced from life and cultures; such an ideology promotes dull writing. Welch advocates for a pedagogy that favors written student texts over a textbook. Using student texts would allow instructors a better strategy in relaying the importance of context, thereby creating a more active than passive writing classroom.

In “College Anthologies of Readings and Assumptions about Literacy,” Christopher and Kathleen Gould propose four criteria for evaluating composition readers. First, a reader should provide “plausible explanations” on why people read, and the explanations should motivate learners from “non-literate” or “semi-literate” backgrounds (205). Second, once a text provides “a defensible notion” explaining why people read, it should tell the student how to read and lead the student through the process (205). Third, the reader should provide “engaging reading selections” (206) Instead of being grouped together by “outdated modes of discourse,” Gould and Gould maintains that a text should fit contemporary needs by grouping selections by topics and offer readings from different disciplines that represent a variety of genres and “ideological points of view” (206) Finally, the questions following the selections in readings should engage

“deliberate critical response” and should proceed through a “coherent developmental sequence” (207). Rather than offering questions to elicit a “correct” answer or a “yes-no” judgment about complex issues, readers should offer a sequence of questions that start with low-level cognitive skills to complex, intellectual tasks (207). After applying these concepts to several readers, Gould and Gould concluded that the readers contain a firm current-traditional paradigm. Gould and Gould conclude, then, that readers should offer students “a variety of heuristics for reading, a more empowering sense of how readers actively construct rather than retrieve meaning, and a greater number of essays likely to provoke critical response from college freshman with non-literate or semi-literate backgrounds” (210).

David Bleich’s “In Case of Fire, Throw In (What to Do with a Textbook Once You Switch to Sourcebooks)” argues that textbooks are written in a style of “direct instruction” characterized by the use of “imperative and declarative voices almost exclusively as instruments of informing students about writing different texts” (16). According to Bleich, most writing courses are taught by inexperienced graduate students who have not received enough instruction in writing pedagogy. Because of this, the writing textbook is viewed as “teaching insurance” that helps “promulgate authoritarian values” and assist in discouraging the “intellectual, social, and political independence” of students and prospective teachers (17;18;19). By analyzing the language used in argument and research textbooks, Bleich criticizes these texts for writing in a patronizing language to students that not only perpetuates the hierarchical structures of society, but also stresses teaching as a “one-way” judgment from teacher to student (34). He further explains:

Textbooks in writing do not ask students to relate their own knowledge, experience, hopes, and wishes to the problems of writing and language use. They

tell students what to do, assuming that students come to college naïve and without understanding of this subject, other subjects, and the terms of existence. (32)

For these reasons, Bleich suggests that writing instructors use sourcebooks, which are collections of stories, essays, and other various readings without the biographical headnotes and discussion questions. Because these readings offer little or no apparatus, sourcebooks permit an “interrogative or inquiry” approach to the subject matter (38). This would make the teaching and learning of writing more socially engaged and accessible.

The research on textbooks within composition studies has increasingly grown over the last thirty years. Scholars such as Robert J. Connors, John Trimmer, and Stephen North have documented the evolution of composition textbooks. Much of this scholarship focuses on how textbooks lag behind the theories and practices within composition studies. While much research has been done on textbook lag, far less attention has been paid to these categories: (1) the impracticality of using textbook selections as student models; (2) the ahistorical selections in textbooks; and (3) the lack of adequate cultural information in textbooks. These areas, therefore, need to be explained further.

The Impracticality of Using Textbook Selections as Models

The debate about using selections as student models began as early as the 1960s. According to James Moffett, models do not help students write well because they create an unrealistic competition for students to imitate pieces of writing by a famous author (208). Models present a mistaken and unwarranted method of learning by getting between the teacher and student. Moffet writes:

They sometimes promote actual mislearning. They kill spontaneity and the sense of adventure for both teacher and students. They make writing appear strange and

technical so that students dissociate it from familiar language behavior that should support it. Their dullness and arbitrariness alienate students from writing.

Because they predict and pre-package, they are bound to be inappropriate for some school populations, partly irrelevant to individual students, and ill-timed for all. (209)

Moffet suggests, then, that these readings should be interwoven with writing assignments instead of being used as mere imitation. As well, publishers should produce anthologies of whole reading selections that are not surrounded by analysis and questions.

Moffet's argument about models is illustrated in John Rodden's discussion of George Orwell. Rodden notes the difficulties of teaching George Orwell, whom many consider the most anthologized writer in composition textbooks, to first-year writing students.⁶ Taking up Cleo McNelly's argument that students may not possess the "cultural literacy" to understand Orwell's writing advice in "Politics and the English Language," Rodden argues that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not possess the necessary skills to model their writing after Orwell (392). As Rodden states, Orwell's essays are "examples of how not to teach composition to a beginning student" (393). Orwell wrote for a literate London audience and never meant for his work to be used in a composition course. Rodden suggests that Orwell should be employed in an advanced composition course where students would be able to appreciate his work, and that lower level composition courses should incorporate accessible model essays that readers will be able to use to imitate the writing techniques in the work and to identify the writing situation (394).

⁶ George Orwell is by far the most anthologized writers in Composition Readers, with his "Politics of the English Language" or "Shooting an Elephant" as the most anthologized works.

If Rodden suggests that a writer like Orwell is too complex for a lower-level composition course, Robert Root reviews how an “accessible” model is used and misused in Readers. Root’s “Once More to the Essay: Prose Models, Textbooks, and Teaching,” researches twenty-four Composition Readers that features E.B. White’s “Once More to the Lake” and argues that there is little consensus about the type of reading White’s essay is and what students should be gaining by reading White’s essay. For example, Root observes that when editors include “Once More to the Lake” in readers, they place unreasonable demands on students in the study apparatuses they write. Consequently, editors divert attention from the circumstances that produced the essay since the essayist was actually “addressing a certain kind of reader on a certain occasion under certain conditions” (96). According to Root:

The moment editors select an essay for theme, structure, composing strategy, or style, or for the author’s gender, ethnicity, or orientation, they skew the reader’s responses toward a specific set of limited readings, channeling the interpretations readers are expected to give the work in order for it to exemplify the purposes it was selected to exemplify. (104-105)

Root concludes that if writing instructors see the composition course as one based on student writing rather than one based on “literature, multiculturalism, argumentation, or reading” that included a writing component, then instructors should recognize not only the assumptions of textbooks editors but also the assumptions of teachers themselves (107). Among the suggestions Root offers is that teachers should use readings as supplementary material for writing instead of making readings central to the course, and review Readers to make sure that they do not “misdirect” students through classifications of the text, apparatuses, contexts, and rationale (107). Though their arguments may contain flaws (instead of stating that Orwell is not meant for

a “lowly” composition student, Rodden would do better by stating that students may not understand Orwell because of their cultural placement rather than their “disadvantaged” background), these scholars argue a recurring theme: writings should not serve as models for students to imitate, but as a means to help students understand writing styles and how they were shaped by historical and cultural moments, an argument upheld by scholars discussing the ahistorical selections in textbooks.

The Ahistorical Selections in Textbooks

Several composition scholars have argued the importance of understanding the historical background that shaped a textbook selection. Richard Ohmann’s *English in America* argues that composition texts during the 1970s frequently divorce students’ situations from their society and history; thus, these texts presented occasions for writing as completely confined by, or completely originating from, the restrictions of composition courses. Although there were some texts that attempted to see the purpose of student writing as “moving toward a place in society,” the authors failed to position the student in the present society, viewing the student as a historical “newborn,” outside of the potential of social change, striving to write his or her way in as a developing individual (148). Continuing Ohmann’s point in “The Essay Canon,” Lynn Bloom argues that most Americans who read essays discover them in freshman Composition Readers, creating a powerful teaching canon during the twentieth century. The teaching canon—which “live[s] and die[s]” in anthologies, curricula, syllabi, class reading lists, and doctoral preliminary lists (403)—was developed by “diverse post-World War II composition teachers,” who either by themselves or with publishers, compiled various anthologies of short nonfiction pieces to not only to serve as student writing models, but also as “stimuli” for class discussions (402). For an

essay to become a member of the canon, it first has to be discovered and reprinted enough times to survive subsequent editions of a reader. In addition, the essay has to pass the following requirements:

- 1) Satisfy the anthologist's criteria for teachability. The teacher should be able to teach the essay without much preparation and should be accessible for students to understand.
- 2) Balance intellectually, politically, and rhetorically with the rest of the textbook. The work should be written by an author of "reputation" or "as a scholar or notable practitioner in the field of writing address." (413)
- 3) Be a good rhetorical model and should be technically interesting.
- 4) Be cost affordable.

Once the essay is included, it becomes reinterpreted to fit the needs and aims of the specific Reader. By including "an extensive rhetorical matrix"—which includes biographical headnotes, discussion questions, and suggestions for reading and writing—the text in the reader develops into another meaning that strips the text of its historical context (418). With the addition of discussion questions, the editors encourage students to be "passive, obedient, and reverent" readers of the material without having students investigate the historical and cultural framework that created the text (419). Both Ohmann and Bloom recognize that when the text is stripped of its historical and cultural context, students see the text as only a piece of past history rather than a continuing dialogue that a student could join. Instead, the student views the text as unapproachable and antiquated.

The Lack of Adequate Cultural Information in Textbooks

If textbooks have been accused of including unrealistic models and ahistorical texts, scholars have reserved their most stinging critique for the lack of cultural diversity in composition textbooks. Although recent textbooks contain more writings from nonwhite and women writers, how they use those writings poses other problems. Michael W. Kleine's "Teaching from a Single Textbook Rhetoric: The Potential Heaviness of the Book" problematizes the uses of textbook rhetorics⁷ in first-year writing courses, especially since they are presented as authoritative with little, if any, self-critique. According to Klein, first-year writing students tend to internalize both the values of the teacher and the rhetoric they have chosen without understanding that these values are historically and culturally constructed, thereby making them arbitrary. As Kleine continues: "...[rhetorics] posture as authoritative and mysterious texts, prescribing writing behaviors and establishing standards of good writing without revealing how and why the values underlying the advice that they give were constructed historically in discourse about rhetoric" (139). Instead of interrogating these various forms of rhetoric, both teachers and students believe that the rhetoric of the dominant culture is the only one available.

The other arguments related to cultural difference are whether a text that prominently features issues related to race actually discusses the topic or gives students alternatives to prevent a meaningful discussion on racism. Just as Van Ghent and Mass offered students an escape from discussing race in James Baldwin's work, other textbooks find ways to circumnavigate the issue. Lester Faigley's *Fragments of Rationality*, for example, analyzes how composition textbooks favor a unified pedagogy. Applying Michel Foucault's theories of discipline and power, Faigley

⁷ Rhetoric, in this context, means a textbook dedicated to rhetorical instruction. Compared to Readers, Rhetorics contain very few, if any, selections.

contends that writing textbooks are “embedded in a long history of institutional practices and discourses that [...] are themselves mechanisms of power working quietly across social hierarchies and traditional political categories” (133). This leads textbooks to uphold a coherence that subdues questioning and restricts reasons to a narrow channel of expertise. One example Faigley includes is Rise Axelrod and Charles Cooper’s *The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*. While one chapter on personal narrative encourages “personal disclosure,” Axelrod and Cooper also require “emotional distance” (158). This contradiction is seen in the writing models Axelrod and Cooper include, especially in “The Argument,” by John Edgar Wideman. The essay recounts Wideman’s experience as one of ten black students in a class of 1700 at the University of Pennsylvania in 1959-1960 during Wideman’s freshman year. Angered that a white student challenged his preference for contemporary rhythm and blues over “authentic,” “country blues,” Wideman tells of the anger he felt over this incident (160). Axelrod and Cooper’s comments are intended to broaden Wideman’s incident into a universal experience. Faigley warns against this type of appropriation because it neglects to examine his personal experience and it avoids studying the racism that Wideman encountered.

Lizabeth A. Bryant also finds this problem in textbooks. In “A Textbook’s Theory: Current Composition Theory in Argument Textbooks,” Bryant argues that textbooks still present “a monologic and monolithic” view of argumentation (113). For Bryant, one of the jobs of a writing teacher is to be aware of the racial and cultural differences that may influence a student’s writing in order to better address these differences. According to Bryant, argument textbooks failed to provide an awareness or attention to difference in culture and race. Through her analysis of argument textbooks such as Gary Hatch’s *Arguing in Communities* and Annette Rottenberg’s *Elements of Argument*, Bryant examines the underlying cultural, gender, class, and

racial assumptions in the text and researches if these texts recognize the various literary practices of different races, cultures, classes, and gender. Her conclusion is that while not all members of a certain group write the same way, there should be heightened awareness by teachers of students who may not write in the Western tradition. Bryant admonishes teachers to, “Be aware of these differences and allow students to let you know when they need help making the crossover to Western discourse. Let them write in their native discourse patterns. Don’t depend on the textbook to help students make the transition” (130).

Other scholars explore the incorporation of nonwhite and women writers within Multicultural Readers. Jay Jordan’s “Rereading the Multicultural Reader,” argues that while Multicultural Readers attempted to include writers from various racial, ethnic, and gender groups, they have been criticized as reinforcing a dominant pedagogy (i.e., white, middle-class, male, standardized English-speaking and writing) that only allows a certain group of writings from certain historically marginalized groups as being academically acceptable (169). Although these readers offer diversity, they suggest “traditionally academic and ‘mainstream’ U.S.—centered assignments for further reading or writing” (169). The end result, then, is a “‘piecemeal’ survey” of multicultural readings that fails to allow students or instructors the possibility to utilize the readings as representations of history and culture (171).

Yameng Liu’s “Self, Other, in Between: Cross-Cultural Composition Readers and the Reconstruction of Cultural Identities,” finds that an “anti-essentialist, anti-objectivist stance” is seldom used regularly in textbooks (71). Through her examination of Cross-Cultural Readers, Liu maintains that it is unrealistic for these texts “to assume that exposure to a couple of articulated views about or from a culture would enable the students to transcend their ‘misconceptions’ and to walk away from the class with a ‘truthful’ representation of that culture”

(80) Since these Readers present culture and ethnicity as an entity well-defined, they unwittingly subscribe to essentialist notions of culture and ethnicity for the sake of contrast and analysis. These Readers fail to interrogate the dynamics of culture and how they have been constructed, negotiated, assigned, prescribed, imposed, or resisted, especially through social, ideological, or political conditions. Liu concludes that instead of focusing on what American and other cultures are “really” like, composition classes focused on inter- or cross-culture should “initiate the students into the set of problematics within which cultural identities are being constituted and reconstituted all the time through an interplay between Self and Other, identity and difference, ‘us’ and ‘them’” (88).

In her review of several Multicultural Readers, Nancy Shapiro maintains that while Multiculturalism Readers embrace the rhetoric of social construction, reader response theory, and critical thinking pedagogy, they have some problems with actually implementing them in their textbooks (528). Shapiro notes the commanding way in which discussion questions are raised in Readers, arguing that discussion questions may give students the only option of a yes or no answer:

The imperative tone of these questions seems particularly incongruous for a text that claims to value student experiences and student voices. These questions reveal assumptions about both the text and the students. If the teachers (or in this case, the textbook authors) already know the answers to the questions being asked, where is the opportunity for students to establish any authority over their interpretation of the text? If the information requested is, in fact, critically important to understanding the passage, how do the questions guide the students to finding the information? These questions are a barrier to engaging a text, not

an invitation. Insiders will already know how to answer them; others are implicitly excluded. (528)

The difficulty of inclusion is another point Shapiro argues in her review. Shapiro warns that selections emphasizing ethnic diversity run the risk of stereotyping groups by having one particular selection as a representative of an entire ethnic group and creates a “rhetorical dead end” by overemphasizing the personal narrative (526). Shapiro notes that over 50% of the selections in four out of five Readers surveyed are personal narratives, the style of writing that is the least required type of academic writing. If these writings are to be included, Shapiro concludes, they should be placed within a structure that encompasses all the goals of a freshman writing course.

Sandra Jamieson further explores this failure in “Composition Readers and the Construction of Identity.” Jamieson examines how Multicultural Composition Readers could negatively affect the identities of nonwhite students and the thinking of both nonwhite and white students. According to Jamieson, when students come into the composition classroom, they come prepared to “reinvent” themselves to write according to the academy’s standards. Therefore, they use composition readers as models for their academic writing and recognize themselves in the Readers by identifying with certain authors; however, students misrecognize themselves in the models they select. For Jamieson, when texts written by people of color or white women appear in composition texts, they usually discuss what she terms as “second-rate” topics like race and gender issues while white men discuss universal topics (165). Moreover, when narratives of people of color appear, they are simplistic images in which the person is “disempowered and lacking any real agency” (166). The writer is often a child or is a victim of language or linguistic complexities and either cannot protect themselves against the problem, or

is not mature enough to deal with it in adult terms. Because the questions after each text fail to interrogate complex questions, nonwhite students and white women “misrecognize” themselves because these models are examples of what not to do in a piece of academic writing. The white student recognizes themselves as being in a stronger position because the essays chosen are examples of the writing accepted in academic discourse.

Conclusion

Created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as supplementary material to teach writing, Composition Readers continue to be one of the most popular resources in teaching composition at American colleges and universities. Read annually by some 2.2 million college students, Readers help some college students become aware of well-known essays and the humanities curriculum (Bloom, “Once,” 20;22). Also, publishers of Readers have become one of the biggest influences in composition studies, especially when one considers that the biggest textbook publishers are sponsors for CCCC, the largest annual conference in the composition field. Since textbooks have become a major teaching tool, scholars have questioned the use of textbook selections as models for good writing; the ahistorical selections found in Readers; and the simplistic manner in which textbooks represent nonwhite cultures.

Taking readings from various sources and placing them in Composition Readers cannot be avoided; however, the problem with the Readers is that there is a lack of adequate historical and cultural context for the readings, especially those texts written by certain ethnic and racial groups. Since textbooks guide teaching to a large extent, and multicultural selections are increasingly becoming part of Readers, composition scholars must address the problem of adequately contextualizing people from marginalized groups in Readers by investigating the

textbooks and suggesting possible solutions. While there have been examples of how certain writers have been used in Readers, there has not been an in-depth study of how people of color have been incorporated in Readers. For the rest of this dissertation, I will examine how Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X have been constructed in some of the bestselling Readers. Before I discuss the result of my findings, however, I will provide a method that explains why I chose King and Malcolm X, and the steps I undertook in my research.

Chapter Two

The Process of Studying Readers: An Overview of the Method Used to Analyze Readers

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. [...] He will find his “proper place” and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.

—Carter G. Woodson

Introduction

I begin with two obituaries I created:

“I Have a Dream” (1963). Created by Martin Luther King, Jr., during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Considered one of the most powerful pieces of oratory during the height of the Black Freedom Movement⁸ of the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, after the popularity of the movement waned, and King’s assassination turned him into a nonviolent dreamer, “I Have a Dream” suffered from hyperanthologization.⁹ Composition textbooks have charge and the viewing is available in any textbook.

Here is the second obituary:

The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965). An “as told to” narrative produced in collaboration with Alex Haley, the autobiography describes one man’s personal and philosophical evolution. Released after the passage of the Voting Rights Act

⁸ Although the 1950s and 1960s has historically been termed the civil rights movement, contemporary scholars are currently categorizing this period as The Black Freedom Movement.

⁹ A condition of anthologizing a text too much.

of 1965 and before the Watts rebellion, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* stands as a powerful testament to one of the most controversial historical figures of that time. The cause of death was hyperexertion.¹⁰ Composition Readers have charge of the remains and viewing is allowed during a first-year writing course.

These obituaries reflect the pressing problems when anthologizing any work by a historical figure, especially if that figure is a person of color. The process of anthologizing works for a writing class results in what I term the “cemetery effect.” At one point, the selections were vibrant, living texts. Produced during a historical and cultural moment—sometimes through collaborations—these texts served as contributions to various issues and were even considered controversial and radical for their time. However, as time and culture moves on, other pressing matters generate more controversy, and previously influential selections calcify or mummify into a cultural artifact, a remnant of what society may reconstruct as a “gentler” time period. Years evolve into decades, and the documents become like rare museum pieces—revered, but a series of “safe” documents reflecting an idea that most people now generally accept. Just as the document is on life support by the people who remember the era, composition anthologies pull the plug and help the document make its peaceful transition. The textbook is now the cemetery that preserves the remains of the selection for people to view when necessary. The headnotes become the tombstone that briefly remarks on the life of the writer; the text’s meaning is buried under piles of other information that may not be relevant to the selection; and the discussion questions are part of the eulogy that neatly summarizes the highlights of the reading by presenting a particular perspective on both the selection and the writer. My goal for this research is to examine the consequences of a text’s death in a Composition Reader, and what steps publishers, teachers, and society can accomplish by resurrecting texts and making them

¹⁰A condition of taking an excerpt and removing its proper historical and cultural context.

breathing, viable works again. Therefore, this chapter outlines the methods and process I undertook in my research.

Research Questions

I began my research by asking two initial questions: What happens when a text—originally designed for a particular audience in one historical period—becomes part of an institutional textbook on writing and rhetoric? What is the effect of using these selections as “models” of good writing and rhetoric? Using these preliminary questions as a foundation, I shaped and refined them into the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do Composition Readers provide sufficient historical and cultural information on Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, especially through biographical headnotes, excerpted selections, and discussion questions?
- 2) What does existing historical and cultural information presented in textbook selections tell composition scholars about the underlying pedagogical challenges when teaching African-American writers, leaders, or public speakers?
- 3) When including selections by African-Americans that deal with race, what should textbook editors consider when writing headnotes and discussion questions?
- 4) When including readings by African-Americans that deal with race, what should composition instructors consider when teaching those readings?

The Readers

From a wide range of Readers, I narrowed my list to focus on the most popular ones featuring selections by King and Malcolm X.¹¹ Developing the criteria for this selection, however, was challenging because publishing companies were not willing to share textbook sales numbers for anything beyond their corporate needs. Moreover, since many textbooks are bought used, there is no definitive method for fully gauging how many copies of a textbook are sold every semester. These factors contributed to the following criteria for the selection of textbooks for my study. Each Reader must:

- 1) Contain selections from King and Malcolm X on the topic of race.
- 2) Be published from 2005 to the present.
- 3) Be specifically designed for college composition classrooms.
- 4) Have undergone at least five editions, an indication of longevity and popularity among composition instructors.

I reviewed three commercial websites—Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Alibris—looking specifically at their sales rankings during the months of August 2009 and January 2010.¹² I chose these two months because they represent the beginning of the fall and spring semesters for colleges and universities when students are actively buying textbooks. From the comparison rankings of various textbooks I created a list of the most widely used textbooks in first-year writing classrooms. The following list goes from highest to lowest in sales ranking:

¹¹ See Appendix A for a complete list of Readers consulted.

¹² I chose these websites because they are the most popular ones concerning bookselling.

- 1) *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide*. 11th edition
(Bedford/St. Martin's)
- 2) *The Bedford Reader*. 10th edition (Bedford/St. Martin's)
- 3) *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. 7th
edition (Bedford/St. Martin's)
- 4) *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. 8th edition
(Bedford/St. Martin's)
- 5) *The Conscious Reader*. 11th edition (Pearson/Longman)¹³

In order to understand how King and Malcolm X are used in these Readers, one must first know the background and purpose for each Reader, which I provide in the following descriptions.

Patterns for College Writing

Both a Rhetoric and a Reader, *Patterns for College Writing* contains seventy-four “professional” texts intended both to interest students and provide “outstanding” examples of good writing (viii). Part One of the textbook, “The Writing Process,” is a “mini-rhetoric” that offers advice on drafting, writing, revising, and editing. Part Two, “Reading for Writers,” contains a balance between “classic” and “newer” authors (vii). The chapters are divided into modes of argument, including a definition of the mode; examples of the mode; significant writing strategies associated with the mode; and college student essays to illustrate the pattern.¹⁴ For each

¹³ For each Reader, I chose the most recent edition printed at the time of the research.

¹⁴ The modes include narration; description; exemplification; process; cause and effect; comparison and contrast; classification and division; definition; argumentation; and a combination of all the patterns. The fact that modes are still contained in several Readers illustrates that while textbooks still try to maintain relevance, they still hold on to past concepts. Robert J. Connors’ “The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse” did much to discredit the use of modes in the composition classroom. However, publishers still publish an alternate table of contents to describe modes, recognizing that some instructors—especially in certain regions of the country—still prefer using the modes approach.

specific selection there is: a biographical headnote about the author; “extensive” historical, social, and economic information about the selection; and questions that assist students in recognizing the audience, style, structural techniques, writer’s purpose, and the “nuances of language” (viii).

The Bedford Reader

The Bedford Reader was first published in 1982 as the first publication under the newly created Bedford Books.¹⁵ Primarily a modes-oriented Reader, *The Bedford Reader* encourages students to become better writers through “reading and emulating the good writing of others,” the others meaning the writers incorporated throughout the textbook. In classifying chapters around modes of discourse, *The Bedford Reader* aims to present rhetorical methods “realistically” as people use them, as natural and flexible forms that assist invention that would aid any writer’s purpose (iii). The hallmark of the Reader is that half of the seventy-two selections are by women and one-third of the selections reflect academic diversity with subjects on science, history, business, popular culture, sports, sociology, education, communication, environment, technology, politics, the media, and “the minority experience”¹⁶ (2). Through these selections, *The Bedford Reader* feels that there are abundant examples that demonstrate good writing, even if the students may feel challenged by the writers and the selections. As the

¹⁵Created in 1981 by Charles Christensen and Joan Fienberg, Bedford Books soon became a leading firm in college English, especially with the introductory composition and literature fields. In 1998, Bedford Books merged with St. Martin’s press and is now part of the Bedford, Freeman, and Worth publishing firm, which is owned by Georg von Holtzbrinck Publishing Group in Stuttgart, Germany. Although the firm now publishes in both the humanities and science, Bedford/St. Martin’s still has a significant presence in composition studies with their publication in Readers, handbooks, rhetorics, creative writing, and a bibliography concerning issues about writing within the profession. *The Bedford Reader*, *Patterns for College Writing*, *Rereading America*, and *A World of Ideas* are all published under the Bedford/St. Martin’s imprint.

¹⁶ Essentially, “the minority experience” refers to the experiences of people of color, reiterating how race is placed on every group except white, making white the “default” standard to measure other groups.

editors state, “Don’t feel glum if at first you find an immense gap in quality between E.B. White’s writing and yours [...] The idea is to gain whatever writing techniques you can” (2).

Rereading America

Rereading America defines critical thinking as “learning to identify and see beyond dominant cultural myths” that consciously or unconsciously influence students reading, thinking, and writing (v). A Multicultural Reader, *Rereading America* presents “diverse” writings that represent “an unusual variety of voices, styles, and subjects” and readings that directly “speak” to the concerns and experiences of students (v). To achieve this purpose, *Rereading America* focuses on myths dominating U.S. culture with topics such as family, education, success, gender roles, race, religion, and the “global perspective of America” (v). This will allow students to understand how the dominant culture influences their ideas and values while offering “creative” and “empowering” examples of writers who attempt to reevaluate myths of the U.S. (viii). Each chapter centers on a myth and contains an introduction that contextualizes the myth for the student. The chapter selections contain a title; background information about the author; and three sets of questions that involve close reading, connections to other selections in the text, and research questions related to the selection.

A World of Ideas

Edited by Lee Jacobus, *A World of Ideas* developed from Jacobus’ viewpoint that there were a lack of Readers that did not introduce students to “the important thinkers” whose writings should be “basic to everyone’s education” (v). A Great Ideas Reader, *A World of Ideas* contains selections “of highest quality” chosen because they clarify “important ideas” while “sustain[ing]

discussion and stimulat[ing] good writing,” meaning that students should generate good writing from reading the “great works” (v). According to Jacobus, what makes *A World of Ideas* different from other Readers is that the textbook presents most of the selections as they originally appeared. Among the forty-seven selections included in the textbooks include Niccolo Machiavelli, Virginia Woolf, Plato, Karl Marx, Frederick Douglass, Henry David Thoreau, and Carl Jung—thinkers who, Jacobus believes, created “ideas that shaped generations” (vi). Because students perceive Plato and Thoreau as “serious and important,” students will take the writing course more seriously, and will learn to “read more attentively, think more critically, and write more effectively” (vi). Since he bases the Reader on the Great Ideas format, Jacobus divides *A World of Ideas* into eight sections: government; justice; the individual; wealth and poverty; mind; nature; ethics and morality; and gender and culture. Each chapter contains a broad introduction to situate the ideas of each section. The individual selections contain: “detailed” headnotes about a person’s life and the rhetorical structure of the reading; prereading questions to aid students in understanding the challenging content; and questions involving critical thinking, research, and connecting one selection to another reading.

The Conscious Reader

Originally published in 1974, *The Conscious Reader* states that learning to write well means “learning to read well” (xix).¹⁷ A Great Ideas Reader, *The Conscious Reader* contains a collection of “classic, contemporary, and erudite” writings to show the important function of

¹⁷*The Conscious Reader* is the only textbook on this list published by Pearson/Longman. Created by a merger between Pearson Books and Longman Publishing, Pearson/Longman is now part of the Pearson Education corporation, which bills itself as having “the most widely trusted and respected programs in educational and professional publishing,” by offering materials for pre-K and K-12 students along with higher education and professional culture. Along with their imprints—Pearson, Prentice Hall, Pearson Scott Foresman, and Pearson Addison-Wesley—Pearson Longman has become one of the largest language publishers in the world.

reading to students' lives (22). This is further supported by the chapter titles: Art and Composition; The Search for Self and Personal Values; Personal Relationships; Education; Popular Culture; Art and Society; Science; The Environment and the Future; Freedom and Human Dignity; and Globalism, Nationalism, and Cultural Identity. The texts incorporated into *The Conscious Reader* are designed to challenge students to think, enrich student self-awareness, and broaden worldviews; however, the editors caution students to not dismiss a worldview different from students' own, especially one that may be considered "weird" or "offensive" (23). Each chapter begins with: a brief introduction that connects the texts in the chapter and individual selections containing headnotes and suggestions for discussion and writing to help students understand the texts on several levels. Also, the discussion questions require students to carefully study "thought and structure" while applying their experiences with "the vision of life expressed in the selections" (xxii).

What is common in all of these Readers is their attempt to incorporate multiple voices in their textbooks. However, the problem with each of these textbooks is the tendency to ghettoize the group and the topics. For instance the African-American authors in *The Bedford Reader* (e.g. Maya Angelou, Brent Staples, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, etc.) focus on issues related to racism; the Hispanic authors (Sandra Cisneros, Richard Rodriguez) review assimilation issues; and the majority of Asian writers (Maxine Hong Kingston, Yiyun Li) detail issues related to China. While there is nothing wrong with including writings that reflect an author's background, the trouble occurs when writers of color concentrate on carefully focused topics while the white writers are allowed to discuss a wide array of topics. Since definitions of good writing, rhetoric, and critical thinking are culturally grounded, there is a great stake in analyzing how textbooks use selections as good models. The editors' definitions of this triumvirate also reflect the

textbooks' perspectives on how these three topics reflect various cultural audiences or the audience of one, dominant cultural group. Moreover, a selection from a person of color makes it more imperative to examine the placement within a specific culture or within the dominant culture's standards. Therefore, I needed a critical method that would assist me in analyzing how texts created in one historical and cultural moment become adopted into an anthology meant for another audience and time period.

Biblical Criticism

When locating a critical method for this research, I consulted several methods within composition studies, most notably context-sensitive text analysis. This method studies the intertextuality of writing and reading in a text and the specific historical and cultural situation of a text. However, the problem with applying context-sensitive text analysis to my study is that it does not consider the unique situation of anthologies, which takes several writings from several historical and cultural periods and places them within a book meant for another audience.¹⁸ Since composition studies has a history of importing methodologies from other disciplines (e.g. anthropology, cognitive psychology, linguistics, gender studies, etc.), I decided to apply a method from biblical criticism for this research—the historical-critical method. I think it is fair to assume that readers of this study already possess a familiarity with the discipline of composition studies, but I also think it is fair to assume that my readers likely do not possess

¹⁸ Another framework I considered was paratext (a combination of peritext and epitext), which literary theorist Gerard Genette describes as the ancillary information in a text such as name, illustrations, book cover, etc. According to Genette, placing these extra materials in a book will affect the way an audience reads a book. While scholars such as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson incorporate this theory within their discussion of autobiography, I refrained from using this theory because it did not consider the intricacies of an anthology, which are a collection of texts within a main text.

knowledge of biblical criticism. Briefly, then, I will provide an outline of this discipline, and attempt to show its relevance to my project.

According to Carl L. Holladay, biblical criticism commonly examines: (1) the preservation and transmission of the biblical text, including the manuscripts where the text was preserved, its date, setting, and the relationship of one text with another, and the most reliable form of a text; (2) the origin and history of the text, especially the date, process, purpose, audience, audiences, the circumstances that produced the text, any other influences that were presented during the production of the text, and the sources used in its composition; and (3) the message of the text as expressed in its original language, notable the meaning of words and the means in their arrangement to produce “meaningful forms of expression” (128-129).

But what does this have to do with composition studies? Importing this field made sense because both biblical criticism and composition studies have several things in common. Both fields publish collections of various works from history and place them in anthologies designed for a specific purpose; both have to deal with the tensions between the historical audience that originally read the works, and a contemporary audience that reads them now; both are designed for instruction, broadly understood; and—given their relative longevity within their respective traditions—both are considered sacred (or at least canonical) in their fields.¹⁹ Whereas Readers serve as model of good writing for students, the biblical texts serve as models for “good” Christians. Because of these parallels, and because both of the authors I examine here had relationships to the Black Church (though, doubtless, very different relationships), I felt that biblical criticism would afford me a unique perspective to my research, and at the same time, allow me to recognize, implicitly, a shaping influence, for better or ill, on their life’s work. One

¹⁹ As with Readers, texts in the Bible are often prefaced with background about the text, and discussion questions to help guide the selection for the reader.

method that biblical scholars use in reading the text is the historical-critical method.

The following section outlines the historical-critical method with particular emphasis on the New Testament.²⁰

The Historical-Critical Method

Robert E. Van Voorst notes that the historical-critical method investigates how New Testament writings were understood by the writers and readers of each book (24). Its purposes are to: (1) construct the wide-ranging historical situation that created a historical document; (2) determine how the document developed; and (3) examine what the author originally meant to communicate to the audience. For my research, I will add a fourth purpose to the method: to examine how the modern reader attempts to understand the document chosen for inclusion. Applied to *Composition Readers*, this method allows me to review the historical time period that not only shaped King and Malcolm X's texts, but also the time period that would encourage editors to anthologize King and Malcolm X in *Readers*. Second, it aids me in studying the background surrounding both men's documents and the original audience for these documents. Finally, when the documents are placed in an anthology, I examine how the contemporary student may understand each text. Taken as a whole, I review: (1) the world behind the texts; (2) the texts themselves; (3) the historical audience; and (4) the contemporary audience. This involves incorporating several parts of the historical-critical method: textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism.

²⁰ Plus, the rhetorical traditions in the New Testament are similar to the rhetoric found in King and Malcolm X's works. For instance, both traditions value the word as powerful and living. Likewise, Malcolm X dictating to Alex Haley his life is similar to the oral tradition found in the Gospels, which used oral segments of Jesus' life as moral instruction, much the same way Malcolm X's autobiography is structured. Also, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is similar to Paul's letters found in the New Testament as King writes the letter for its oral qualities in mind designed to be read aloud for various audiences.

Textual Criticism

Textual criticism involves reconstructing as precisely as possible the original texts of historical writings. A scholar classifies and evaluates a manuscript through its textual variants, which includes the differing words or phrases between manuscripts. This process allows the researcher to correct the textual variants and establish the “best” reading of the text (Duling 61). Textual criticism creates two principles: external evidence, which evaluates a manuscript’s age, length, and geographical distribution; and internal evidence, which examines the vocabulary, style, or ideas of the manuscripts (61).

In the following two chapters, I analyze the textual variations of “I Have a Dream” found in Readers with the recorded version of King’s speech. For “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” I compare the Readers’ version of the text to an earlier published version of the letter. For Malcolm X, excerpts from his autobiography are used in the Readers for this research. I compared the textual variations of the autobiography with those found in Readers. This includes comparing the titles of the text in Readers with the ones in the autobiography, and comparing the structure of the narrative found in the autobiography with that of the Readers.

Source Criticism

Source criticism studies how New Testament documents rely on other sources that are inside or outside the New Testament. In studying how one source draws from another, the researcher learns more about the meaning of the document, and how the transmission of sources (especially oral ones) would influence a speaker or writer’s content. For this study, I apply source criticism in connection with textual criticism in studying how Readers incorporate the texts of King and Malcolm X.

Form Criticism

Form criticism studies how these written forms worked within an oral culture. As these narratives were retold, their content became more refined with additional details and emphasis on particular narratives. Also, the narratives were tailored to meet the changing needs of the community. I intend to expand form criticism by examining how the “form” of the headnotes affects the way students read King and Malcolm X. In the time after their deaths, the narratives about both men have evolved depending upon the cultural context, becoming refined with each generation’s knowledge about the two historical figures. This study to review how the headnote form characterizes King and Malcolm X, and if those narratives reflect the popular stories retold to each generation, or if the headnotes provide an alternative version that corrects or refutes the popular narratives.²¹

Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism is a summation of the previous criticisms to focus on the text as a whole, cohesive unit. I analyze parts of the Readers (headnotes, historical and cultural information, the text, and discussion questions) and then examine the overall purpose and meaning of King and Malcolm X in the Readers. I make an assessment of how the text functions for the student, and try to determine if it is an accurate, fair, and useful means for students to learn about the rhetoric of the two historical figures.

The historical-critical method describes how the overall form appears to the contemporary reader who has no knowledge of the historical document; plus, the method demonstrates how the editor wants the student to read and understand the text as an example of

²¹ Form criticism also is similar to genre criticism, which studies how particular discourses are socially constructed and generated.

good writing, rhetoric, or critical thinking. My objectives for the next chapter are to take all of the information found when applying these criticisms and present it as a clean and concise document.

Design Plan

Since there was a wealth of information to analyze for both King and Malcolm X, I decided to split the results into two chapters. I begin both chapters with several narratives describing my experiences teaching either historical figure. From the narratives, I segue into a reflection about the problems associated with teaching them in the composition classroom. Then, I provide a brief overview of the historical King and Malcolm X, and how the public's view of each leader evolved after their assassinations. While space does not allow me to describe every aspect of their lives or the various ways people have appropriated their images, I intend to provide relevant information that will help the reader understand why textbooks may describe King and Malcolm X's life within a particular context.²² I use that discussion of the historical and public King and Malcolm X to provide a close reading on the biographical headnotes. From that discussion, I offer a biographical headnote that would serve as a better alternative to the ones found in Readers. The next section is an analysis of the historical information provided about each text. I then enter into a review of the texts themselves and move to an examination of the discussion questions. Finally, I conclude by offering a "revised narrative" about teaching King and Malcolm X in the classroom. Because I researched the Readers while I was teaching composition, I decided to apply my results to my pedagogy, and

²² For a more comprehensive background on King's life, see Taylor Branch's trilogy of the Black Freedom Movement (*Parting the Waters*; *Pillar of Fire*; and *At Canaan's Edge*) or David Garrow's *Bearing the Cross*. For a more comprehensive view of Malcolm X's life, there is the autobiography as well as Peter Goldman's *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* and Manning Marable's *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*.

describe how it made a difference as to how students understood King and Malcolm X, along with their rhetoric.

Conclusion

In his 1963 speech “Message to the Grassroots,” Malcolm X uses the metaphor of a dental experience to describe the plight of African-Americans at that time. When the dentist extracts a tooth, the patient will become nervous and will fight the dentist. However, the dentist will shoot Novocain in the patient’s jaw to calm the person. The pain is still there, but, as Malcolm X terms it, one “suffer[s] peacefully” (qtd in Brietman 15). That analogy also works when describing the situation between the Reader and the student. While a textbook selection is dead and embalmed of its remaining life, the student has to suffer peacefully when reading the text. Depending on the reading, the student may first endure some pain. However, once he or she reads the context that shapes the selection, the student is able to endure the pain peacefully. The text is devoid of any real social commentary, and the student reads enough to make him or her feel good without experiencing the pain of interrogating the ideas in the selection. In my subsequent chapters, I resolve to do two things: (1) revive these texts to make them feel alive again; and (2) make these texts more complex not only for the student, but the teacher as well. Although the issues may be controversial, and they may be painful, there has to be meaningful dialogue to make the writing classroom a place to fully grapple with demanding texts.

Chapter Three

Rereading King: The Construction of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Composition Readers

By idolizing those whom we honor, [...] we do a disservice both to them and to ourselves. By exalting the accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr., into a legendary tale that is annually told, we fail to recognize his humanity—his personal and public struggles—that are similar to yours and mine. By idolizing those whom we honor, we fail to realize that we could go and do likewise.

—Charles Willie, classmate of King

Introduction

Scene One

University of Kansas, Fall 2006. It was my first week teaching ENGL 102: Critical Thinking and Writing. The course began with a discussion on rhetoric, which I defined through the Aristotelian definition of using the “available means of persuasion,” then segued into a discussion of ethos, pathos, and logos, and finally argument. Argument, I pointed out, is an assertion one makes in a speech or essay. My lecture prepared them for an in-class activity that required them to apply argument and rhetorical appeals to “I Have a Dream.” Students read the speech while I played an audio recording of King’s original address. When we began analyzing the speech, several students experienced difficulty with “I Have a Dream.”

“This is not a good example of argument,” one student stated sharply.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because, King doesn’t argue anything until he says ‘I have a dream.’ That is when he makes an assertion. Plus, all of the information he gives before the speech is unnecessary. He’s longwinded.”

Before I could respond, a second student jumped into the conversation.

“Well,” she stated directly but cautiously, “I think it works. He reminds me of those preachers I grew up listening to in church. They talk in circles in the beginning with a lot of background information, but they begin to get happy and start to drive their point home—eventually.”

Good, I thought to myself. Here’s my chance to elaborate.

“Yes, King waited until the second half of his speech to say that he had a dream,” I answered. “And yes, King does remind me of a preacher, especially when he starts slowly and builds up to a climax as his voice gets stronger and more forceful. That could be a part of his ethos.”

After I completed my statement, another student quickly asked another one.

“Is this even the right speech? I remember reading this in high school English, and it started with him saying, ‘I have a dream.’ All the other stuff before that wasn’t there. Besides, that’s how I learned about King—through the dream.”

While students began nodding their head in agreement with the last statement, I began responding nervously.

“Could it be that you learned about King that way because that’s how society remembers him?” I suggested.

“Yeah,” a few students answered softly.

“Society likes to paint King as the dreamer,” I continued. “Think of every January when we celebrate his birthday. What do you usually see in commercials and advertisements? ‘Keep the dream alive.’ ‘Let’s continue Dr. King’s legacy and salute the dream,’ the commercials state. Everyone associates him with the dream and racial equality.”

The class meeting was almost over. Before we dismissed, another question had surfaced. “Why on the video did he begin to read his speech, but he later stopped reading altogether? It looked like two different people delivering the speech almost.” Other students chimed in and we ended the discussion with that question unresolved.

The students had presented challenging questions that need answers. Could it be that the first student—a white male—came from one rhetorical tradition while the second student—a black female—came from another rhetorical background? Plus, why does society often begin King’s speech with “I have a dream” while ignoring his previous statements? Finally, why did King stop reading from his speech and improvise?

Scene Two

University of Kansas, Spring 2007. I’m teaching ENGL 102 again and, as before, begin with a discussion of rhetoric. This time, however, I used King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” rather than “I Have a Dream,” a text that I felt would provide better example of argument. But, “Letter” generated another set of difficult questions.

“Why is he so wordy and longwinded?” wondered one student.

“He broke too many grammatical rules,” added another. “And why is one sentence a paragraph long?”

Though I didn't have the answer they may have been looking for, I mustered enough courage to explore the possibilities.

"Technically, King *did* break several grammatical rules when he wrote the letter. However, it worked for his content. Could you argue that King still had an effective piece of writing even though it may not be what *you* deem as good writing?"

"True," answered the student. "But, I wonder how a teacher may feel if they had to grade it?"

"They probably would've failed it," muttered another student. "Seems like everyone but students are allowed to break the rules and get praise for it."

I thought about that, too. *Well, it is a good piece of writing. But, would this serve as an effective model for teaching about writing?*

In retrospect, I realized a common factor may have affected the way students read "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail." I had copied both texts from Readers, each of which contained the obligatory biography about King, the text, and the discussion questions. I used these questions to facilitate discussion because they concentrated on rhetoric and argument. However, they never addressed the questions my students raised. Could there be other approaches to teaching King that the Readers may not have considered, especially since both "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail" are two of the most anthologized pieces by King? Also, could the popular narratives about King's life influence what content is placed in the Readers? Incorporating elements of the historical-critical method employed in Chapter Three (textual, source, form, and redaction criticisms), this chapter analyzes how King's speech and letter are used in *The Bedford Reader*, *Patterns for College Writing*, *The Conscious Reader*, and *A World of Ideas*.

Rereading the Historical King

Contemporary narratives about King detail him as the hero of the civil rights movement, the lone crusader leading a successful campaign against racism. However, few narratives examine King's last years, which are characterized by his expanding views on human rights and his declining popularity among Americans. At the end of 1963 and the beginning of 1964, King reached the zenith of his popularity. *Time* magazine honored him as "Man of the Year," and he received the Nobel Peace Prize. During 1965, King led his last great march through the South with the Selma to Montgomery March, an event that resulted in the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. At this point, King wanted to shift the Civil Rights Movement from its exclusive Southern context, and spread his message of nonviolent protest to areas beyond the South. As he began this new strategy, King soon realized that although his protest tactics were widely embraced, African-Americans were anything but nonviolent.

Five days after the Voting Rights Act passed, an arrest in the predominately black Watts section of southwest Los Angeles sparked a five day rebellion that left thirty-four people dead and one thousand injured. When speaking to an audience in an attempt to quell the unrest, King was heckled. Incidents like these forced King to embrace causes that had not been traditionally defined within the civil rights movement. He became a champion for America's poor, advocating for a redistribution of wealth; he also became an outspoken critic of America's involvement in Vietnam, arguing that money used to fund the war diverted funds to fight against poverty in America. King's philosophy moved from desegregation to changes that amounted to a social revolution that would fundamentally alter the structure of American society:

If we look honestly at the realities of our national life it is clear that we are not marching forward, we are groping and stumbling. We are divided and confused.

Our moral values and our spiritual confidence sink even as our material wealth ascends. In these trying circumstances the black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes. It is, rather, forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws: racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. It is exposing evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society. It reveals systematic rather than superficial flaws, and it suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced. (qtd in Kasher 219)

Ideas like these made King increasingly unpopular among segments of both white and black people. He failed to make the Gallop Poll's list of ten most popular American citizens in 1967, and his growing radicalism spoiled "the canonization that had begun in earnest when he won the Nobel Peace Prize" (Dyson 303). However, King did maintain enough support from the black community in Memphis, Tennessee, when he came to assist local black leadership during a sanitation workers strike. Although the campaign was marred by violence (a march led by King ended with looted stores and a black youth shot and killed by police), King braved tornado warnings on April 3, 1968, to deliver his last speech to a crowd of striking sanitation workers and their supporters at Mason Temple. Concluding that he may not get to "the Promised Land," King heard the audience noisily cheer after what would be his last speech—a speech which ultimately helped transform King's image into a prophet after his assassination on April 4, 1968 in Memphis.

Following the assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson—whose relationship with King was strained after the latter's opposition to the Vietnam War—called King an "American martyr," and ordered American flags flown at half-mast (Cone 27). The U.S. Senate passed a resolution stating its "appreciation for the immense service and sacrifice of this dedicated

American” (27). Eighty members of U.S. Congress constituted the more than thirty-two thousand mourners attending King’s funeral (27). A day later, a repentant Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which outlawed housing discrimination. However, it would be another act passed by Congress fifteen years later that would cement King’s reputation for future generations.

On November 4, 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill establishing the third Monday of every January as the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Holiday. The establishment of the King holiday probably had less to do with honoring the legacy of King than it did with the desire to show the world how America, still in the throes of the Cold War, had come to grips with its own past of bigotry and hate. During the signing ceremony, Reagan beamed, “As a democratic people, we can take pride in the knowledge that we Americans recognized a grave injustice and took action to correct it and we should remember that in that far too many countries, people like Dr. King never had the opportunity to speak out at all” (“Crusade” 37). The radical King of the late 1960s had now given way to a more conservative King mirroring Ronald Reagan’s America. As former King colleague Andrew Young observed, when Reagan and Congress created the King Holiday, “They voted for Martin’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. They didn’t vote for his anti-Vietnam speech or his challenge to Lyndon Johnson about ending poverty” (qtd. in Cone 32).

Indeed, the radical King of the late 1960s gave way to the early 1960s King—the dreamer who wished for an integrated society. Composition Readers help perpetuate this narrative through the texts they anthologize, and the placement of King’s selections within the chapters of the textbooks. Not surprisingly, the popular “I Have a Dream” and “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” are two selections King produced before 1965, when his campaign was both grounded in

the South and focused on *de jure* segregation. In the Readers surveyed for this study, King's writings and speech have been redacted and assembled to make King the spokesperson for Black Americans in the 1960s. His message about war and poverty disappear in the textbooks, and he is only allowed to speak about civil rights. The titles of the chapters further reiterate the peaceful King: Freedom and Human Dignity, Citizenship, Justice, and Minority Experience. The selections rarely come from the globally-minded King since it would complicate students' understanding of King as a peaceful visionary—a “dreamer” produced by and for a narrowly defined Civil Rights Movement. Using elements of formcriticism, I now move my discussion to examining the headnotes and cultural contexts in the Readers.

Changing Narratives and History in Readers

Form criticism notes how a narrative's meaning and purpose changes according to the needs of the audience and become more structured and refined within a society. Since his assassination, the narrative of King's life has been altered and changed according to the desires of the media and the educational system. The media has changed and developed King's story into a simple one about a man who strove for peace and paid the ultimate price for his “dream,” and several textbooks have also adopted this motif. In “The Limits of Master Narratives in History Textbooks: An Analysis of Representations of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” Derrick P. Alridge maintains that American history textbooks present King as a messiah, symbol of the civil rights movement, and a moderate (664) who is transformed into a “sanitized,” “noncontroversial,” and “oversimplified” person rather than a radical and complex individual (680). Alridge's argument is useful for understanding the way in which Readers present King as the messiah who leads his people out of the bondage of racism through the Civil Rights Movement. *The Bedford Reader*

provides an example of the omission of any discussion of King's later career in its headnote, which is quoted in full below:

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-68) was born in Atlanta, the son of a Baptist minister, and was himself ordained in the same denomination. Stepping to the forefront of the civil rights movement in 1955, King led African Americans in a boycott of segregated city buses in Montgomery, Alabama; became the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and staged sit-ins and mass marches that helped bring about the Civil Rights Act passed by Congress in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. While King preached "nonviolent resistance," he was himself the target of violence. He was stabbed in New York, pelted with stones in Chicago; his home in Montgomery was bombed; and ultimately he was assassinated in Memphis by a sniper. On his tombstone near Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church are these words from the spiritual he quotes at the conclusion of "I Have a Dream": "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, I'm free at last." Martin Luther King's birthday, January 15, is now a national holiday. (614)

The Bedford Reader neatly segments King's life into four sections: (1) lineage; (2) monumental deeds; (3) resistance; and (4) redemption. The first section establishes King's lineage as an ordained minister, a person who is continuing the family tradition of answering the divine call dedicated to lifelong service to his people. The second part lists a series of parallel clauses illustrating King's accomplishments and one sentence highlighting King's award, underscoring the recurring theme of King as the singularly appointed leader without any assistance. The third part creates another set of parallel clauses detailing the dangers King encountered. The events

are listed out of order without background information about their context. For instance, King's stabbing in New York was by a mentally-ill woman and not because of his civil rights activities. Without that detail, students will think that his stabbing was a result of his participation in the movement, which supports a narrative of a King who endured and suffered as the nonviolent moderate. The last section comes full circle, establishing King as the prophet who receives freedom in death and gains universal acceptance with the establishment of a federal holiday in his honor. Examined in its entirety, the biographical headnote describes King as the ordained, messianic moderate of the civil rights movement, and students receive a recycled biography reiterating the popular image of King presented to them earlier. A more complex narrative of King that disrupts the conventional view might read like this:

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was born Michael King in Atlanta, Georgia. His father, Michael King, Sr., was a Baptist preacher. After attending a Baptist World Alliance in Berlin during the early 1930s, the elder King changed his name and his son's to Martin Luther King in recognition of the German priest who initiated the Protestant Reformation. After graduating from Morehouse College in 1948, he earned a Bachelor of Divinity from Crozer Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Boston University. During his pastorate in Montgomery, Alabama, King was elected leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association, an organization that led a 385-day boycott that successfully desegregated the Montgomery bus system.

Following his "I Have a Dream" speech during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, King became recognized by the press as the leader of the Black Freedom Movement, a grassroots movement that demanded

racial and economic equality for African-Americans. By the mid to late 1960s, King became an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War and the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States. While developing the Poor People's Campaign, a multiracial coalition that would dramatize poverty in the U.S., King assisted striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, for better working conditions and a higher living wage. While in Memphis, King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Considered controversial and unpopular during the last years of his life, King's status has grown considerably after his death. The federal government now observes the third Monday in January as a Martin Luther King Day.

My construction of the headnote strives for a revisionist history regarding King's life, especially his name. Typically, in most written and spoken discourse, King's full name is always stated. However, King's original birth certificate is Michael, not Martin. The elder King adopted the name after receiving a spiritual awakening during a Baptist conference. Keith Miller notes that most people close to King usually referred to him as M.L. or Mike, and King himself would sign all his letters with MLK, Jr.; but, the public—especially the media—would normally type King's name as Martin Luther King, Jr. (176-177). While other public leaders at the time only had their first and last names typed or initialed (e.g. RFK, LBJ, JFK), MLK was routinely listed as Martin Luther King. Miller observes that the use of the full name sounded suitable because “Martin Luther” was “eminently appropriate [...] for a Protestant minister directing a massive political protest,” just as “King” brought associations of divine leadership, royalty, or a paramount chief (177). The full name was equally effective for a press which began to view him as the sole leader of the movement, one who was easily reshaped as a modern Moses. Thus, sharing the original name, Michael, helps students better understand how cultural texts can shape leaders,

and how this construction becomes a fixed identity and a definitive narrative. King had two identities—a personal one and a public one—and detailing the different names is a good exercise for teaching about the cultural practices associated with names and naming.²³ Explaining that King was the elected leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association acknowledges that the movement did not start with King and that it was a grassroots effort involving various organizations. Likewise, the inclusion of King’s later years shows King as a more complex individual speaking out against poverty and economic disparity—issues that still plague U.S. society. Finally, concluding how King’s stature has elevated since his death acknowledges his evolution with the passing of time and the reason for his reinvention as moderate civil rights leader.

Aside from biographical headnotes, I would alter the contextual information about “I Have a Dream” and “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The current information paints a broad overview of racism and segregation, or repeats the narrative of King as the sole representative of the civil rights movement. Both *The Bedford Reader* and *The Conscious Reader* detail “I Have a Dream” as the “historic climax” of King’s “campaign for nonviolent resistance” and describe “a world free from the burdens of racism” (614; 800). Other sentences in both Readers erroneously mention the event as a “centennial celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation,” even though the March involved more than honoring a century old document (614; 800). The March itself was titled The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, included several speakers along with King, and presented several goals, especially urging Congress to: (a) create a better living

²³ Names and naming are grounded in several cultural traditions. One is a Christian tradition where a name represents a person’s conversion into a “new person”; in the Bible, Jacob becomes Israel, Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul. In history, Isabella Baumfree becomes Sojourner Truth. In the African-American tradition, names hold a political and cultural function. For instance, after slavery ended, some blacks used Freeman as a surname in honor of their new status. Or, they would give their children initials for first names so that whites could avoid calling their children by their first names (e.g. J.H. Meredith would be named James Howard Meredith after he enlisted in the Air Force in 1950). Finally, the naming of the former slaves would change according to the cultural and historical periods (colored, Negro, black, Afro-American, African-American etc).

wage; and (b) establish a Civil Rights Act (Sitkoff 148). Reducing the March to a celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation strips the event of its larger significance, and students are left with a false impression that one person created and led one of the largest marches of the twentieth century.²⁴

The loss of historical context recurs in Readers' description of "Letter from Birmingham Jail." When contextualizing the letter, *A World of Ideas* and *Patterns for College Writing* offer conflicting and incorrect information. They repeat the popular narrative form of King as a Christ-like image going from town to town saving African-Americans from their bondage with the assistance of King's disciples. *A World of Ideas* notes that King came to Birmingham at the suggestion of SCLC and was arrested because of a series of sit-ins at lunch counters (211). *Patterns for College Writing* writes that King organized a campaign in Birmingham and when jailed for eight days, responded to white moderates who considered him an "outside agitator" (qtd. 588). While King did come to Birmingham, both narratives omit key facts. At the urging of Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, King and SCLC came to Birmingham, Alabama, to desegregate public facilities and downtown businesses. During the early afternoon of April 12, 1963—Good Friday—King led fifty marchers to Birmingham's City Hall. King was arrested and placed in solitary confinement, but gained access to an editorial in *The Birmingham News* written by eight white clergymen questioning the timing of the demonstrations. Remembering a suggestion by a *New York Times Magazine* editor

²⁴ Although the March on Washington occurred in 1963, the idea for a mass rally in Washington, D.C., was in circulation for over twenty years. A. Philip Randolph first proposed the ideas in 1941 to force President Franklin D. Roosevelt to open defense jobs to African-Americans, and in 1948 to pressure President Harry S. Truman to desegregate the armed services (Sitkoff 148). By 1962, Randolph and Bayard Rustin began discussing a march in Washington that focused on a minimum wage hike and legislation for fair employment. Although the proposal for the march was greeted with little enthusiasm by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), SCLC, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the organizations approved Randolph's proposal to dramatize black unemployment in the nation's capital (148). However, as other organization such as the NAACP and The Urban League became involved in the project, Randolph's original focus on economic demands shifted to supporting President John F. Kennedy's civil rights legislation

that he and his advisors should write a prison letter, King responded to the newspaper editorial. He envisioned his letter as a public political statement that would encourage support for the civil rights movement (Bass 117). However, neither *A World of Ideas* nor *Patterns for College Writing* contain the original letter written by the eight clergy members or the specific racial conditions that prompted the SCLC to choose Birmingham for demonstrations. Though the Readers mention segregation and a history of racism, that explanation is too broad and too simplistic. There was racism and discrimination in all parts of the country, not only in the South. What were the racial dynamics in Birmingham that made it a choice city for demonstrations? Here is a suggested narrative that would aid students understanding the specific racial conditions:

In 1963, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights coordinated a program with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to desegregate public facilities in Birmingham, Alabama. Perceived as one of the most thoroughly segregated cities in the U.S., Birmingham earned the nickname “Bombingham” for its unsolved bombings of African-American homes. Along with boycotting downtown businesses, the Birmingham campaign involved marches and demonstrations, which resulted in marchers being sprayed with firehoses and attacked by police dogs. During a march on Good Friday that deliberately violated an injunction forbidding demonstrations, King was arrested and placed in solitary confinement in the city’s jail. Writing on the margins of newspapers, King responded to the following letter written by eight white clergymen: [See Appendix D for the clergymen’s letter]

As Ralph Abernathy noted in his autobiography, Birmingham was a city known for its racial hostility; it was so antagonistic that travelers would drive around the city to avoid it. Some

likened the city to Johannesburg, South Africa, during the apartheid era (230). The SCLC felt that a successful desegregation of Birmingham would encourage other cities in the U.S. to eliminate legalized segregation. This information makes students aware of the various levels of racism rather than a blanket statement that racism was the cause of the Birmingham demonstrations. Too often, students believe that racism at that time only involved segregation. More historical background makes students aware of the depths and complexities of racism during that era. Also, providing the editorial that prompted King to write the letter provides an example of the writing process King embarked when composing the letter, making the letter part of a larger public discourse rather than one that sprang fully developed from King. Using textual and source criticisms, I now move to discuss the variations of King's letter and his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Textual Variations of "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

If students were to read "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in *A World of Ideas* or *Patterns for College Writing*, they would think that King wrote a perfect document in one sitting rather than understanding the longer process of its composition. King began writing the letter in jail on the margins of newspapers, toilet paper, and bits of scrap paper smuggled to him by a prison trustee. Next, King's colleagues and professional editors at Harper and Row edited the text. Soon, The American Friends Service Committee published 50,000 copies of the document in pamphlet form for national distribution among religious groups, labor unions, human relations organizations, and governing agencies (141). Later, King revised the letter for inclusion in *Why We Can't Wait*, a memoir about the Birmingham campaign. Armed with this information, students would know that King read a letter (or prompt), responded to the letter by prewriting, wrote a first draft of the document in segments, had his peers review the document, submitted the

document, and revised the document at a later stage—essentially, everything composition instructors teach their students about the writing process. In the current textbooks, all of this information is lost, leaving students to believe that King wrote a flawless essay while sitting in prison. This is unfortunate because students are missing the opportunity to understand how even great historical figures had to revise their work. Although the original scraps of paper are lost to history, earlier drafts demonstrating process survive. The following two versions serve as a case in point. Here is the first one published by The American Friends Service Committee:

But as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love? “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.” Was not Amos an extremist for justice—“Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ—“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Was not Martin Luther an extremist—“Here I stand; I can do none other so help me God.” Was not John Bunyan an extremist—“I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience.” Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist—“This nation cannot survive half slave and half free.” Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist—“We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal.” So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist we will be. (10)

Compare this second, revised version that appeared in King’s *Why We Can’t Wait*:

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction

from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Was not Amos an extremist for justice: “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Was not Martin Luther an extremist: “Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.” And John Bunyan: “I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience.” And Abraham Lincoln: “This nation cannot survive itself half slave and half free.” And Thomas Jefferson: “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal...” So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. (76)

In both versions, the essence of the message is the same. King lists other historical figures labeled extremists and quoting from them to illustrate the validity of their cause. The difference between the two lies in the presentation. The second passage offers a more polished presentation of King’s ideas; his tone becomes more inviting, especially with the use of colons rather than dashes. Both colons and dashes are appropriately used in each passage, but the dash breaks a sentence with a dramatic pause before King delivers each quote, as if to allow the reader time to remember the historical figure before providing the quote to illustrate his message. The use of colons, on the other hand, allows the reader to comprehend King’s point without feeling scolded. Likewise, the “Was not” along with “And” in the second passage make the reader feel less defensive than in the first one. While the repetition of “Was not” articulates King’s point, he limits the repetition so as not to make the reader defensive. The final “And” balances the argument and makes the text palatable for the reader. Comparing these two documents helps

students learn about argument, while they also view examples of revision and word choice. They learn the nuances or effectiveness of vocabulary and punctuation marks since they can change the overall effect of a piece of writing, ultimately revealing the cultural functions of style when writing.

The most dramatic reworking of King's rhetoric is his "I Have a Dream" speech. The Readers tend to construct King's speech as a written document rather than an oral text delivered to a listening audience, in the process losing the reader's ability to examine the intensity of King's speech and the power of his words.²⁵ One excerpt from the speech as printed in *The Conscious Reader* and *The Bedford Reader* reads:

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today. (802; 617)

Situated in this framework, the reader does not hear King's pauses, the elongation of his words, or the responses emoted by the audience. Thus, the passion of King's words is lost to the reader. However, compare that version with a transcription by Clayborne Carson that appears in *A Call to Conscious: The Landmark Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and

²⁵ The altering of King's speech is one that has generated debate among scholars. For other sources on this issue, there is Haig Bosmajian "The Inaccuracies in the Reprintings of Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' Speech" *Communication Education* 31.2 (1982): 107-14 and "Recovering 'I Have a Dream'" by Keith D. Miller, Gerardo de los Santos, and Ondra Witherspoon in *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy*. Karen Fitts and Alan W. Franceeds. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1995.

“nullification” (Yes,) one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today. [Applause] (85)

Carson’s version remains more faithful to the speech and its delivery by King so that the reader has the benefit of the combined effect. The response by the audience is in parenthesis and moments of applause are provided with brackets, showing the interaction between the audience and King. Moreover, the latter version of the speech is more accurate than the previous excerpt included in Readers. Replacing “down” with “the state of” changes the power of the phrase because it emphasizes the geographical and political borders. “Down” is less formal and names the location; but, it gives the listener a feeling of an area rather than a place defined by a boundary. The deletion of the phrase “with its vicious racists” softens the impact of King’s message. “Vicious” suggests a severe form of brutality, and when placed as a modifier before the loaded word “racists,” it amounts to a stinging indictment on the state of African Americans. Eliminating “one day right there in Alabama” reduces the strength of King’s message of how harsh of a place Alabama is. Finally, the section where King describes whites and blacks joining hands together creates a radically different impression than the previous one about both races joining hands and walking together. For King, the fact that black and white are able to hold hands is a great enough feat in a state where interracial relationships are legally prohibited. “Walking together” suggests a utopian idea, and would be a loaded phrase for people who cringed at the thought of social interaction between blacks and whites. To conclude, the phrases in the second excerpt are stronger but diplomatic, providing equal time to both the injustice and brutality. The first excerpt casts King as a moderate who, although mentioning the injustice, proposes a utopian idea of an integrated society, and yet the latter version, though more accurate

and engaging to the audience, does not consider King's pronunciation of words. Here is one alternative I provide:

I have a dream that one daaaay [pause] doooooown in Alabamaaaa, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with words of "interposition" and "nullification" (Yes,) one daaay, *right* there in Alabama little *black* boys and *black* girls will be able to join hands with little *white* boys and *white* girls as sisters and brothers, I have a dreream today! [Applause]

This rendering places emphasis upon words that help dramatize King's point. In the first mention of "down," for instance, King pauses for several seconds before completing his statement, giving more emphasis on the area King describes. Moreover, emphasis upon "black" and "white" signals the importance of the two races coming together. The pause after the second "day" allows a build up to the dramatic second half of the sentence. Yet, within the pages of the Readers, all of the intensity is lost. The words are static and the various dimensions of King's speech are lost to the student.

Whose Rhetoric?: Redacted Forms of King's Rhetoric in Readers

King's "I Have a Dream" was the last speech given at the March. King probably had to consider several factors as he waited his turn. First, he was in a city that was apprehensive about the number of people participating in the March.²⁶ Second, he had to address a crowd who had

²⁶While popular narrative reinvents the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom as a welcoming event, it was actually met with considerable trepidation. President Kennedy originally disapproved of the march, but relented after he failed to stop it. In Washington, D.C., officials banned liquor sales for the first time since Prohibition; fifteen thousand paratroopers were put on alert; hospitals cancelled elective surgery; and merchants transferred their merchandise to warehouses in anticipation against looting. While march organizers preferred using the Lincoln Memorial as a site because of its symbolism, police liked the location because the demonstrators could be easily contained with water located on three sides.

already listened to several speakers while enduring the summer heat. Third, King was facing a live television audience used to watching daytime dramas and game shows in the day, and an audience who would watch highlights of the march on the evening news, which at that time consisted only of fifteen minutes.²⁷ Giving this reality, it is understandable why Readers would classify “I Have a Dream” as an argument, described by *The Bedford Reader* as “a mode of writing intended to win readers’ agreement with an assertion by engaging their powers of reasoning” (693). However, the textbooks do not describe the cultural background of King’s rhetoric, or how cultures view various rhetorical components. *The Conscious Reader* asks the following questions about “I Have a Dream”:

What role does repetition play in the speech?

It is clear that this section was designed as an oration. What are its rhetorical qualities? (803)

Suggested answers to these questions in *The Conscious Reader’s Teaching Manual* recommend instructors to focus on repetition, tone, voice, or King’s “rich description and diction” (DiPaolo 193). Another recommendation from the manual is that students listen or watch King deliver his speech. Though both suggestions are helpful, they do not consider the cultural influences informing repetition, tone, voice, description, diction, or oration, especially since King’s speech exists within the African-American preaching tradition. As Henry H. Mitchell notes, the use of tone in black preaching encompasses many forms; it can be musical or sustained for a few minutes, and it is often used as the climax of the speech. Or, black preachers use description and

²⁷ The march was one of the first events to be broadcast live worldwide by the newly launched communications satellite Telstar. The three major television networks spent over \$300,000 to broadcast the event. CBS, the ratings leader at the time, covered the rally from 1:30 to 4:30, canceling the highly rated *As the World Turns*, *Password*, *Art Linkletter’s House Party*, *To Tell the Truth*, *The Edge of Night*, and *The Secret Storm*. Based on his previous experience with television, King was adept at creating a message easily understood within sixty seconds for a television camera. While these short quips would help the movement, those same quips would ironically reconstruct him as the nonviolent dreamer after his death.

diction through storytelling and role playing, a method in which the character becomes victorious in the end. Finally, the oratorical qualities could include call-and response, which allows the audience to participate equally with the speaker²⁸; the use of slow delivery and hesitation to build up to an emotional climax; and an emotional conclusion that resolves the suspense and results in an uplifting celebration. In his speech, King performs all of these components in his speech. He begins slowly with a narrative about Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation, details why the audience is at the march, encourages the audience to continue to fight, climaxes with a dream, and concludes with the phrase, “Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!” Therefore, textbooks should describe “I Have a Dream” as both an argument and a traditional African-American sermon. A question might read thusly:

In his speech, King persuades his audience by appealing to ethos, pathos, and logos. As well, King incorporates elements of the African-American preaching tradition such as tone, repetition, call and response, slow delivery, and pauses.

Research one of these components and apply these terms to King’s speech. What does this say about the functions of rhetoric in cultures?

This question posits that King’s rhetoric is not only Western or African-American, but a combination of both traditions. Presenting them together allows the student to understand that people can inhabit several rhetorical traditions, and that the function of rhetoric is culturally situated.

Knowledge of multiple rhetorical dimensions can also provide a richer understanding of “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” While King’s immediate audience consisted of the clergymen

²⁸According to Jeffrey Lyn Woodyard, speakers in call and response make room for audience participation and the listeners determine the effectiveness of a speaker. The speaker’s call is dependent upon the listeners and the message does not become complete until the response comes forth (Woodyard 141).

who called the protests “unwise and untimely,” he also intended to “Letter” to be read by a wider audience in vastly different publications like *Ebony*, *Time*, or *Newsweek*. Thus, King was aware of the need to incorporate multiple rhetorical viewpoints. This awareness does not carry over into the textbooks. *A World of Ideas* posits that the structure of King’s letter is similar to Saint Paul’s prison letters to the Ephesians or the Corinthians. Plus, the Reader notes that Paul used letter writing to establish a “moral” position for the people who received his letters. This assertion has strong grounds for support, but what about new interpretations of the word “letter” in ancient Mediterranean culture? Ben Witherington notes that in the early days of Christianity, literary documents were read aloud in an assembly rather than in silence by an individual: “[...] letters were seen as surrogates for oral conversation, indeed as vehicles for carrying on such conversations. The living or spoken Word was primary; the written word secondary and often no more than a record of the oral” (97). Also, St. Paul arranged the letter in the Western tradition of *dispositio*,²⁹ which by Paul’s time consisted of six parts: *exordium* (introduction), *narratio* (statement of the case), *divisio* (outline of the major points of an argument), *confirmatio* (proof of the case), *confutatio* (refutation of possible opposing arguments), and *peroratio* (conclusion). In his letter, King covers all six points: he introduces the topic; explains why he is in Birmingham; outlines his argument; presents logical arguments such as why people should protest unjust laws; answers counterarguments about why the demonstrations are untimely; and concludes the letter by appealing to the Christian concept of brotherhood.

From the standpoint of African-American preaching, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” contains other elements including: asserting the centrality of the Bible; making examples from

²⁹*Dispositio*, or arrangement, is one of the five canons of Western classical rhetoric: *inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (arrangement), *elecutio* (style), *memoria* (memory), and *pronuntiatio* (delivery). Aristotle allowed that a speech consisted of the *prooemium* (introduction), the *prosthesis* (statement of the facts of the case), the *pistis* (proof), and the *epilogue* (summary and conclusion). Later, rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian expanded Aristotle’s four parts to the six mentioned in the paragraph.

the Bible that are easy for the audience to understand and remember; applying Biblical principles to everyday living; having the sermon relevant to the listener; recognizing the dependence on a power beyond the preacher's power; and using suspense followed by a "powerful and uplifting" conclusion that ends in a "joyous celebration" (Simmons and Thomas 7-8). Within this context, King applies all the concepts by linking his cause to St. Paul's Macedonian call for aid, recognizing that God is on the side of the oppressed; and concluding with a celebration of reconciliation. As with "I Have a Dream," both traditions work for discussing King's rhetoric in "Letter." Here is an example question:

In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King incorporates a Western and African-American rhetorical traditions. Both forms emphasize the use of words and community. Read King's letter aloud. How does King's word resemble both a letter from the time of St. Paul and an African-American sermon?

Both rhetorical traditions placed a value on the spoken word but are different in degree and kind. However, the context and purposes for this value is different because of the historical and cultural periods. Having students learn about both in this context allows them to learn the cultural underpinnings of rhetoric, which also recognizing the historical frameworks that shaped each culture's perspectives on the functions of rhetoric.

Another example of the cultural significance of rhetoric is King's use of climax in "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail." In Western rhetoric, a climax is an arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in order of increasing power. In "I Have a Dream," King begins his climax with, "I say to you today [...] even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream." Here, he visibly stops reading his text and begins to directly look at his audience. Popular lore has Mahalia Jackson shouting to King during the

speech, “Tell ‘em about the dream Martin!” (Sundquist 14). King had used the dream motif several times in his previous speeches, most notably during a June 1963 rally in Detroit. Later, King reflected on delivering “I Have a Dream” and stated:

I started out reading the speech, and read it down to a point. The audience’s response was wonderful that day, and all of a sudden this thing came to me. [...] I had used it many times before, and I just felt that I wanted to use it here. I don’t know why. I hadn’t thought about it before the speech. I used the phrase, and at that point I just turned aside from the manuscript altogether and didn’t come back to it. (Carson, *Autobiography*, 223)

The “thing” King described could be both a climax and an African-based rhetorical concept described as *Nommo*. According to Geneva Smitherman, *Nommo* is “[t]he force, responsibility, and commitment of the word, and the awareness that the word alone alters the world” (78). Scholars such as Richard L. Wright note that Western rhetoric views a word as representational (Wright 85). However, within African American rhetoric, the Word is presented as sacred, creating a life force that has power once the words are uttered and is exhibited in folk stories, street corners, and African-American sermons³⁰ (Smitherman 79). Placed within the framework

³⁰The word *Nommo* bears similarity with the word *nomos*, which Susan Jarrett describes as “a process of articulating codes, consciously designed by groups of people, opposed both to the monarchical tradition of handing down decrees and to the supposedly non-human force of divinely controlled ‘natural law’” (Jarrett 42). *Nommo* and *nomos*, along with the Latin root base *nomen* (name) shows some connection of how the cultures viewed words. For more discussion between the connection of *Nommo* and *nomos*, see especially Vorriss Nunley’s *Keepin’ it Hushed: The Barbershop and African American Hush Harbor Rhetoric* (Detroit: Wayne State U P, 2011).

Also, the most well-known proponent of *Nommo* is Molefi K. Asante. Born Arthur Smith, Asante earned his PhD in communications studies from the University of California—Los Angeles in 1968 and has become an important figure in African-American studies, African studies, and Communication Studies. His theory of Afrocentricity posits “placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” [Afro = African + centr = center + ity = pertaining to; literally, pertaining to the center of Africa] (2). However, Asante’s work has often been misinterpreted as Afrocentrism, which is an ideology that places African-based cultures in the center of discourse [Afro = African + centre = center + ism = belief in; literally, belief in Africa as the center]. For the purpose of my discussion, I use *Nommo* to illustrate how African-Americans incorporate the spoken word in their discourses. (For more discussion on Afrocentricity and its critics, consult Molefi Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea, Revised and Expanded Edition* [Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1998], *The Painful Demise of*

of King's speech, *Nommo* adds another dimension for analyzing "I Have a Dream" by allowing students to understand the importance and value of words within a culture, and how the words used in one culture carry a different weight or purpose in another culture.

Likewise, the power and vitality of words deepens a reading of "Letter from Birmingham Jail." King slowly begins the "Letter" with a rationale for why he and others are protesting segregation in Birmingham. By the middle of his "Letter," King loses the restraint he possessed earlier and releases a dam of emotions in a paragraph-long sentence:

Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you have seen the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son

Eurocentrism [Trenton, NJ: African World P, 2000], and Mark Lawrence McPhail's "The Politics of (In)visibility in African American Rhetorical Scholarship: A (Re)quest for an African Worldview," "The Word at Work: Ideological and Epistemological Dynamics in African American Rhetoric," and Ronald L. Jackson's "Afrocentricity as Metatheory: A Dialogic Exploration of Its Principles," all located in Ronald L. Jackson and Elaine Richardson's *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations* [New York: Routledge, 2003]).

who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. (qtd. In Carson, *Autobiography*, 192)

Many writing instructors would deem this sentence, a paragraph in length, grammatically incorrect. This would lead most writing teachers to say King “writes like he talks,” meaning that oral texts do not translate well onto the written page. King’s use of the periodic sentence prompts him to suspend the full meaning of a thought until the very end. A series of subordinating elements precede the sentence’s main clause. In King’s hands, however, the sentence becomes the climax of a long history of African-Americans. Reading this sentence aloud evokes the rhythm and cadences that comes from the repetition of “when you.” After he mentions the “degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness,’” King pauses with a dash, as if asking the reader to stop after hearing so many grievances and to think about the previous comments before returning full circle to his main point—the refusal to wait.

However, King's paragraph could also be read as *Nommo* coming alive on the written page. Where he previously responds to the personal attacks on him, he leads his readers into a series of event that serve as a collective series of traumas experienced by African Americans, which demonstrates that King uses his letter as a response to the clergymen, but also speaks to the needs and concerns of the black community, thereby reiterating the concept of African American rhetoric as based in community, resistance, and reaffirmation. This paragraph could provide a useful teaching moment in Readers for several reasons. First, it allows the teachers and students to examine the concept of good writing. Even though King breaks several rules of conventional grammar with such a long sentence, the sentence is appropriate within the context of King's "Letter" because it appeals to the emotions of the reader and captures very personal experiences. It teaches students that prescriptive rules for writing are not finite and can change depending on the context and content. Second, the paragraph examines the connection between language and culture, especially race. In the section where King describes the names whites called African Americans, students can investigate how racism manifests itself in several ways, including language. This would deepen students' understanding of racism as a system of ideas and practices that go beyond segregated drinking fountains or movie theaters. Further, it implies the psychological damage caused by racism and constructs the civil rights movement as a fight for human dignity as much as against desegregation. Finally, the paragraph allows students to understand the multiple rhetorical influences of King, a person who developed in the Southern African-American church, and also studied the major Western philosophers and merged these traditions in his speeches and writings. Reading the paragraph aloud allows one to hear the steady rhythm of a minister's voice and the inflections that ground King within the Black

rhetorical tradition, and that understands the Western rhetorical concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos effectively at work in King's document.

Studying the use of King in Readers from the historical-critical method revealed several aspects about how Readers incorporate King's works. One, they tend to use one source as the definitive text of King without examining the textual variants incorporated in other versions. Second, they use popular narratives of King and form a biography and context that reproduce common stories of King rather than producing a biography that challenges other narratives yet offers a more comprehensive perspective. Next, Readers include discussion questions that shape and form King's rhetoric into a Western discourse that ignores other rhetorical backgrounds. All of these aspects redact King into a much more sanitized figure that is simple for students to understand.

Conclusion

Scene Three

University of Kansas. Fall 2009. I began the course talking about rhetoric. Rather than calling my lecture "Rhetoric," I described it as "Rhetoric as a Reflection of Culture." For the first session, I discussed the Western rhetorical tradition beginning with the Greeks and described Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, the terms ethos, pathos, and logos. Then, I segued into the African American rhetorical tradition. I talked about *Nommo*, the value of the word in African American culture, and the tradition of call and response.

For the next class meeting, we began to read and discuss "I Have a Dream." We read the speech while listening to its audio version recording. In the succeeding analysis, students were able to recognize the appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos in King's speech, and found the

recording enjoyable. By the end of the class, one student asked, “What about the African-American parts of his speech? We didn’t discuss that.”

“We will,” I responded. “For the next class, we will review the speech again. This time, we will review it in another manner.”

For the next meeting, I brought in a video recording of King’s speech. The assignment was to watch the speech and analyze its African-American rhetorical dimensions. “Mainly,” I instructed, “examine when you think *Nommo* occurs in the speech. Can you tell there is call and response in the speech? How is the speech an example of community?”

I began the DVD and I watched the speech along with the class. In the beginning, we watch as King visibly reads from his speech, and we can hear the audible “Yes,” “My Lord,” and the moments when King pauses for applause. However, at the moment when King moves away from his text, students began to pay attention.

“Look! Look! It’s there,” one student shouted.

“Yes, I see it too!” another quipped.

I paused the tape and asked, “What happened?”

“That’s where you noticed *Nommo*. When he moves from the written text and starts looking directly out at the audience.”

“Yea, I noticed too,” added a student.

“Good,” I replied, happy that they were able to understand and apply the concepts they learned. “Let’s see how the rest of the speech changes after this moment.”

We watched the rest of the speech and began discussion. When I asked them about *Nommo*, call and response, and community, the students offered very good analysis.

“It seemed call and response came early in the speech. At some points, you couldn’t tell who was leading who. It’s almost like a dialogue.”

“I agree. Especially in the end, where it was almost like a church service.”

“And the way he phrases his words. Reading it felt like a document. But listening, and then watching it made me feel energized and I recognized the power within his words. The written text needs a better job of transcribing King’s words.”

“Good,” I responded.

After we finished discussing the African American rhetorical dimensions of King’s speech, I had a student ask me a final question.

“So what is one definition of rhetoric? In my other class, we were told it was persuasion. Is that wrong?”

“No,” I responded. “It’s all about context. Depending upon the culture, rhetoric can have many definitions. None of them are right or wrong. This lesson is to show you that there are many possible ways for analyzing a text. No form of rhetoric is the definitive version.” The students seemed to look as though they understood my point. Later, in my office, a student came by to thank me for the discussion.

“Why,” I asked.

“Cause, you brought into the discussion things that reflected my background,” the student remarked. “I always wondered that when teachers teach things by black folks that they always analyzed things from a white perspective. At least now you respected my background and my culture.”

“Thanks,” I responded as he shook my hand.

Scene Four

University of Kansas, Fall 2010. It's the end of the semester and we're in the last unit. It's about revision, and I wanted to students to learn that revision is a process and that it involves more than editing. Thinking about my previous experience with "I Have a Dream," I created a class assignment centering on the "Letter." The students were to download the first draft of "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and compare the first draft to the commonly used copy of the letter. In class, we compared both versions of the letter and examined the differences between the first and revised letter. In the discussions, students were interested in learning how and why King created two versions of the letter. One student noticed the long paragraph and asked, "Why?"

Hmmm, I thought. This can serve as a teachable moment.

"How about this," I began. "Why don't you read the sentence aloud?"

"Okay," the student nervously responded.

He began reading the speech and once he repeated the phrases "when you," his voice began to become more forceful, resembling a preacher.

"So," I asked, "what do you think was the purpose of arranging the paragraph that way?"

"It felt very powerful."

"Indeed. So do you think the paragraph served its purpose?"

"Yeah. It makes me think about the power of writing and words."

"Exactly. Sometimes, we may think that the rules we learn are set in stone. Not so. The rules are good to know, but not all writers may use them. However, one breaks the rules in order for the writing to become more effective. Also, taking into consideration the content and the

context of King's letter, you can see why he may have needed to discard some rules of grammar."

"I never thought of it in that way."

Recalling these scenes, I realized the importance of understanding the history and culture of a piece of writing. The Readers used for this study present King's words as fixed, as if he sat in prison and wrote a flawless piece of writing. Or, they present King's speech as a written text devoid of the interaction between King and his audience. The result is that the beauty, power, and intensity of King's message are lost to students. They will not fully immerse themselves in the events surrounding the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom or recognize the harsh conditions King wrote about in his letter. Instead, the speech and the letter become something distant to students, and King is still viewed as the perfect saint with no human traits. If the Readers truly want to create a more complex view of King and his works, they should pay careful attention to the historical time of "I Have a Dream" or "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and recognize the rich rhetorical traditions that make King worthy of his placement in a composition textbook, thereby allowing King's speeches and writings as a model in reviewing their own cultural, historical, and rhetorical backgrounds.

Chapter Four

Rereading Malcolm: The Construction of Malcolm X in Composition Readers

When I am dead [...] I want you to just watch and see if I'm not right in what I say: that the white man, in his press, is going to identify me with "hate." He will make use of me dead, as he has made use of me alive, as a convenient symbol of "hatred"...

—Malcolm X

Introduction

Scene One

University of Kansas, Fall 2005. I'm teaching ENGL 101, and the unit theme is personal conflicts. I assign "Hair," an excerpt from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The narrative describes how Malcolm X straightens, or "conks," his hair. According to our textbook, "Hair" helps students understand personal conflicts because Malcolm X straightens his hair as a form of peer pressure. On the day of our class meeting, I opened the discussion by asking students their opinions about the selection. Most students didn't understand the purpose of the story.

"All he did was straighten his hair. Big deal," deadpanned one student.

"Yeah," chimed in another student. "Everyone changes their hair. Why is this important? Plus, the reading is too simplistic."

"Explain what you mean by too simplistic," I asked.

"Well, the idea and writing is simple enough. He changes his hair to fit in."

“True,” I responded. “But, there is more to it than that. Remember, Malcolm X is recalling a situation in the 1940s and is reflecting on it in the 1960s. What is happening in the 1960s?”

“The civil rights movement.”

“Right. And with the civil rights movement comes the examination of a lot of things for African-Americans. Imagine if you grew up in a society that only showed damaging stereotypes of your group and there was not a sizable community available to refute those misperceptions? You risk internalizing the dominant culture’s values while hating yourself. This is what Malcolm X is discussing in this excerpt.”

I then move into a long discussion about Malcolm X and his beliefs during his lifetime,³¹ mainly his rhetoric of African-Americans embracing the African dimensions of their ancestry. By the end of my lecture, some of the students began to understand and appreciate his message. However, one student had another viewpoint.

“So basically, he was saying that all black people were trying to be white?”

“It’s not that simplistic,” I offered. “I think he was more concerned about blacks accepting themselves. “

“Essentially, what I said before,” she retorted. “Blacks wanted to be like whites.”

We came to a truce where we agreed to disagree on that point. But, long after the class was over, I keep repeating her statement in my mind.

³¹In promoting the significance of African features in blacks, Malcolm X also emphasized: the African dimension of the black American identity, believing that the decolonization of Africa was part of a worldwide revolution of dark-skinned people rebelling against racism and colonialism; the necessity of violence to achieve black liberation; and the demand for black manhood. Once black manhood was achieved, the black man would develop the intellectual tools and cultural capital necessary to cultivate and defend black survival (109).

Is that all that she got from the reading? After everything I said, that's all she took away from it. This is very hard. What could I do next time that would change the outcome of the discussion?

Scene Two

University of Kansas, Fall 2006. I'm teaching ENGL 102, and we've completed our first unit, Education and Literacy. I give them a writing assignment that required them to perform a rhetorical analysis on another textbook excerpt from Malcolm X's autobiography. Titled "Saved," Malcolm X recounts his experiences with reading while in prison. To help the class understand the reading, we watched an episode of *Eyes on the Prize II* centering on Malcolm X and then reviewed the excerpt. Though they disagreed with some of Malcolm X's statements, the class thought the reading was interesting. However, towards the end of our discussion, one student expressed doubts about Malcolm X and his beliefs.

"I personally found this offensive and Malcolm X to be a racist."

"Me too," agreed another student. "What if a white person said something like this?"

"I don't see it that way," responded a third student. "I don't see this as racist. I think he's responding to the racism he encountered during his lifetime."

"Good observation," I commented. "So then it raises a question: how are language and rhetoric connected to race?"

Crickets chirp. No one says anything for five minutes.

"I think," started a student, "it's a matter of dynamics. If one group has power and says things that demean other groups, it will be offensive because they have more power and privilege. But, if a group with less power says something about the dominant group, it's not considered offensive since it won't affect the standing of the dominant group."

“Good point,” I noted. “So, one can read this as a response to an institutionalized system that has historically demeaned another group.”

Some students agreed with my point, while others still held strong views against Malcolm X. So, we had to agree to disagree on that reading as well.

Since that time, I have incorporated the entire chapter of “Saved” rather than an excerpt, and the responses have always been mixed. Some students loved it and even bought the autobiography; some were uneasy, but they understood his point; and some vehemently disagreed with it, evaluating me as an “advocate of black supremacy.” While they appreciated Martin Luther King, Jr., for fighting racism, some students demonized Malcolm X’s ideas, even though some of King’s and Malcolm X’s ideas were similar.³² But, over forty-five years after his assassination, Malcolm X is still a controversial figure for students, especially those who are not familiar with the historical and cultural time period of his autobiography. This chapter explores the construction of Malcolm X in three Readers—*Patterns for College Writing*, *The Conscious Reader*, and *Rereading America*. As with the previous chapter, I apply elements of the historical-critical method (source, form, textual, and redaction criticisms) to examine how public narratives about Malcolm X influence the texts anthologized in Readers, the biographical headnotes, and the discussion questions.

The Historical versus Modern Malcolm X

The reaction of my students to Malcolm X reflects U.S. society’s image of him. While some Americans embrace Malcolm X as a significant historical figure (he now has his own postage stamp), others still view him as the ranting, racist demagogue. This dual image of

³² For instance, if one reads Malcolm X’s “Ballot or the Bullet” alongside King’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” their ideas almost parallel each other, especially regarding black economic development and self-determination.

Malcolm X existed during his lifetime, and increased after his assassination. During the early 1960s, Malcolm X was the spokesperson for Elijah Muhammad's Lost-Found Nation of Islam³³ and was a very visible figure in American society. He appeared on television more than any other African-American; was listed as one of the "Most Influential Negroes in America" by *Ebony* magazine; and ranked second to Barry Goldwater as one of the most requested university campus speakers ("America" 230; Goldman 111). Because the mainstream press viewed Malcolm X's black separatist rhetoric as extreme, they often juxtaposed him with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a person who the media deemed a more palatable alternative. As Richard Lentz observes, magazines at that time presented its readers with two choices: King, who represented a mild approach; or Malcolm X, a leader who gained popularity from the anger of African Americans (133).

By 1964, Malcolm X had split with the LFNOI and made a pilgrimage to Mecca.³⁴ His black separatist views changed and he began connecting the plight of African-Americans to other people of color throughout the world. He also planned to submit a petition to the world court of the United Nations documenting human rights violations and genocide against black Americans. Although Malcolm X revised his viewpoints, the media still labeled him as a racist firebrand, and he would have to constantly reiterate his new stance: "I am not a racist in any form whatsoever. I don't believe in any form of racism. I don't believe in any form of discrimination or

³³ The Lost-Found Nation of Islam was the original title of the organization, which was established in Detroit in 1930 by Wallace D. Fard, a door-to-door salesman. After Fard mysteriously disappeared in 1933, Muhammad became leader and chose Chicago as the Nation's headquarters. Because of their message of self-reliance, the Nation grew to include over 100 temples nationwide and Nation-owned businesses in black communities. Although members of the faith did not like the term, the concept of calling the LFNOI "Black Muslims" came from the title of C. Eric Lincoln's study *The Black Muslims in America*.

³⁴ Malcolm X was silenced by the Nation after his remarks about the Kennedy assassination as a case of "the chickens coming home to roost." After realizing that he would not be reinstated into the Nation of Islam, he left the organization. During this time, he embarked on his hajj to Mecca on April 13, 1964 and completed it on April 19, 1964. After seeing Muslims of different races treated as equals, Malcolm X felt that Islam could help people overcome racism.

segregation” (X, *Speaks*, 162). He even made an attempt to reach out to other civil rights organizations. In early 1965, at the request of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Malcolm X traveled to Selma to address an audience. While in a private meeting with Coretta Scott King (whose husband was in jail at the time) Malcolm X assured her, “I really did come thinking that I could make it easier. If the white people realize what the alternative is, perhaps they will be more willing to hear Dr. King” (qtd in Carson, *Encyclopedia*, 202). However, several gunshots silenced Malcolm X’s voice on February 21, 1965.

After his assassination, Malcolm X’s image experienced two resurrections. The first one occurred directly after his death, spurred by the posthumous publication of his autobiography. Approached by publisher Nelson Doubleday with a \$20,000 advance for his life story, Malcolm X began working with Alex Haley in 1963 on his autobiography (111). Because Malcolm X did not trust tape recorders, Haley sat at his typewriter while Malcolm X discussed with Haley episodes of his life (Branch, *Pillar*, 202). Although the autobiography was ready for publication by the time of his assassination, Doubleday withdrew it from printing, citing fears of “terror and retribution” for company employees by “inscrutable Black Muslim factions” (Branch, *At Canaan*, 373). After a dozen major publishing firms declined the autobiography, Grove Press published it in the fall amidst heightened security and “private trepidation” (373). However, once released towards the end of 1965—a year characterized by hope with the passage of the Voting Rights Act and the devastation of the Watts rebellion—*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* received universal praise from the press; *Newsweek* described the work as “a verbal kinescope” that explains “Malcolm’s tormented soul,” while *The New York Times* characterized it as a “brilliant, painful, important book” (“Satan” 130; qtd in Branch, *At Canaan* 373). With more than 800,000 copies sold by 1969, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* became a social commentary

for people trying to understand racial rebellions in American cities, and inspiration to a generation of blacks who began to redefine the Negro Revolution of the early 1960s to Black Power³⁵ (“St. Malcolm X” 27).

As Black Power gained more coverage in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Malcolm X became a folk hero for many African-Americans, especially the younger generation. For this generation of activists, Malcolm X represented a new direction in the Black Freedom Movement. Set against the long hot summers of the 1960s, Malcolm X as folk hero symbolized a new generation’s effort to define themselves on their own terms without outside assistance. Black Panther Party leader Huey P. Newton reflected the sentiments about Malcolm X at that time:

[Malcolm X’s] life and accomplishments galvanized a generation of young Black people; he helped us take a great stride forward with a new sense of ourselves and our destiny. But meaningful as his life was, his death had great significance, too. A new militant spirit was born when Malcolm died. It was born of outrage and a unified Black consciousness, out of a sense of a task left undone. (185)

However, as Black Power faded from America’s consciousness in the late-1970s, so too did the memories of Malcolm X begin to fade. While there were memorials and tributes to Malcolm X, his image slowly receded from popular consciousness. When a black psychologist showed pictures of Malcolm X in a suit to a class of teenaged street kids in Harlem, their response was, “Why the dude dress so funny?” (qtd in Goldman 435). While the students’ memory of Malcolm X may have dimmed, he was still discussed and honored in cities across black America. Also, a younger generation of black children who came of age during Reganomics and neoconservatives

³⁵Harvard Sitkoff notes that the Negro Revolution was characterized by increased black protest around 1963 after the Birmingham campaign. Sitkoff writes that in this period, “the age of Negro submissiveness ended” and the black struggle heightened (133). While the term Black Power became a catchall phrase (especially in the media), most agreed that the term focused on the psychological appreciation of being black, with their mantra made the word “black” synonymous with “beautiful” (202).

would revive Malcolm X to the point that he would achieve the mainstream respectability that eluded him during his lifetime.

Alienated by America's leanings toward conservatism, surrounded by urban blight accentuated by a growing crack epidemic, and witnessing a resurgence of racial hostility, a disenfranchised generation of young African-Americans of the 1980s and early 1990s grew more sentimental about the Black Freedom Movement of the 1960s. In reflecting on that era, this group known as the "hip-hop generation" wanted a leader who they felt articulated their frustrations.³⁶ Martin Luther King Jr., would not work because by the 1980s, mainstream America had sanitized and whitewashed King into a nonviolent dreamer. For those African-Americans who lost in the shuffle of the post-civil rights era, they wanted a leader who was not tainted by the mainstream and who represented them in their frustrations at being pushed aside by American society. According to a 1992 *Newsweek* cover story, young blacks who identified with Malcolm X more than King served as verification of the triumphs and disappointments of King's dream:

King's crusade for legal equality and greater opportunity has made life better for millions of blacks, allowing them to get better jobs, move to the suburbs and enjoy many of the same comforts that white Americans do. But that exodus has had the cruel effect of making those left behind—the kind of poor urban blacks who grew up like Malcolm—even worse off...[C. Eric Lincoln states] "For many

³⁶According to Bakari Kitwana, the hip-hop generation "was socialized on a steady diet of American democracy and the promise of the American dream. [Hip-hop generationers] grew up with televised sit-coms, film, and advertisements that portrayed [the American dream] as a reality. Lip service to equality, civil rights, freedom of movement, and integrated schools and neighborhoods created high expectations for [the hip-hop] generation—even if [this generation] didn't experience it firsthand" (41).

of the kids in the ghetto, we are right back where we were. The few advances that have been made have not reached them. So, if we didn't make it with King, what have we got to lose? We might as well make it with Malcolm. (Whitaker 71-72)

Thus began the second revival of Malcolm X. *Newsweek* attested, "Set against a backdrop of inner cities devastated by AIDS, crack, and crime, and a larger society that has grown impatient or indifferent to the cause of African-Americans, Malcolm's maxims on self-respect, self-reliance and economic empowerment seem acutely prescient" (Smith 68). He filled the vacancy of this community by becoming the image of the defiant black man who uncompromisingly addressed the injustices of black America. However, this generation would freeze Malcolm X as the angry black militant and immortalize Malcolm X with two famous photos: one photo has Malcolm X's hand balled into a fist, finger pointing in the air, lips curled in anger, while another photo has Malcolm X looking out a window with a shotgun in his hand. And, as Ella Collins—Malcolm X's half-sister—commented on Spike Lee's biopic of Malcolm X, the new image of Malcolm X was "a classic example" of "symbolism without substance," whose days as a street hustler and spokesperson in the Nation of Islam received more attention than his developing philosophy of anti-imperialism and Black Nationalism (qtd in Collins 204).

This image of Malcolm X in popular culture could explain why Readers began anthologizing Malcolm X with more frequency. When textbook publishers began producing Readers with a multicultural slant, the story of Malcolm X lifting himself from crime and ignorance would serve as a striking narrative for students.³⁷ Readers include truncated versions

³⁷ Although Malcolm X became more frequently anthologized in the 1990s, he did appear in earlier Readers like the *Harper and Row Reader* (1984) and *Autobiography* (1977). Also, it appears that composition programs included the autobiography as early as 1970. For instance, in its teaching manual to graduate teaching assistants, The Freshman-Sophomore English program at the University of Kansas required *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* for its English 1 course. Described by the manual as a "continuum of writing about the self," the autobiography was placed in a final unit on rhetorical modes, with the text used to teach the mode of cause and effect. There was no mention about

of the autobiography's early chapters, which focus on his hustler days and his stint in prison rather than the later chapters centering on his evolving viewpoints and his broadening world perspective.³⁸ Like King, Malcolm X is confined to discussing racial issues in Readers and is unable to speak about other topics. However, while King has been redacted as the peaceful civil rights leader, Malcolm X is redacted as the alternative of King's "dream." Although his narratives were written over forty years ago, his story has been adapted for an audience used to viewing the black man as the victim of American institutions, inadvertently creating him as an angry voice for African-Americans. Though Readers tend to place King in a Great Ideas Reader as a black philosopher, Malcolm X's placement is more varied in textbooks: he is included in Multicultural, Great Ideas, and Modal Readers. Using elements of form criticism, I now move my discussion to examining the headnotes and cultural contexts in the Readers.

Malcolm X and Biographical Headnotes

As mentioned in the previous chapter, form criticism examines the development of narratives over time and how they are adapted for an audience. The Readers in this study tend to adapt Malcolm X's narrative as an oppressed victim who overcomes hardship to acquire literacy. In the process of detailing this narrative, Readers tend to overstate Malcolm X's race. This overemphasis becomes very noticeable in the biographical headnotes. In their headnotes, Readers create Malcolm X's story as the ex-con who redeems himself while in prison, discovers the Nation of Islam, travels to Mecca, recants his earlier statements about whites, and dies. In

teaching the content of the work, though that may be implied since the publication was recent enough for the students.

³⁸ It's unfortunate that Readers tend to focus on the early years because later chapters would work well when discussing how student could "read" culture, especially the chapter called "Mecca," when Malcolm X write an ethnography of his pilgrimage and the cultural differences he encounters.

repeating the popular narratives about Malcolm X, Readers create a very simple biography that often tends to reiterate incorrect information about Malcolm X. Notice the two examples in

Patterns for College Writing:

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. As a young man, he had a number of run-ins with the law, and he wound up in prison on burglary charges before he was twenty-one. There he pursued his education and was influenced by the writings of Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Black Muslims (now known as the Nation of Islam), a black separatist organization. On his release from prison, Malcolm X became a highly visible member of this group and a disciple of its leader. He left the movement in 1963, later converting to orthodox Islam and founding a rival African-American political organization. He was assassinated in 1965. (282)

The biography is brief, removing any information that may be deemed too complex; and, like the biographical headnotes about King, the one found in the Readers don't give much context for the student to learn about Malcolm X. The leap from birth to prison does not explain all of the major events that shaped Malcolm X's life up to that point. For instance, his father dies under mysterious circumstances; his family is separated after his mother's nervous breakdown; and, he is placed in a foster home that uses derogatory racial terms about blacks in his presence.

Likewise, stating that Malcolm X pursued his education in prison omits the section describing his formal education before he entered prison. Moreover, while Muhammad's organization was a "black separatist organization," they did not call themselves the "Black Muslims" but the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, and the "Nation of Islam" described were not the same organization that

Malcolm X joined.³⁹The editors choose to describe Malcolm X's organization as a "rival" to Muhammad's organization. Rival connotes competition, an enemy trying to obtain the same status possessed by another person. Yet, Malcolm X never stated that his organization was in competition with the Nation of Islam. Overall, this biography appears to have been haphazardly written. It repeats popular narratives of Malcolm X, but did not take the time to actually verify information.

Rereading America repeats the same biography when reviewing Malcolm X's life.

Though it has more information about Malcolm X, it reiterates the same description of the street hustler who discovers Islam and devotes his life to the black cause:

Born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925, Malcolm X was one of the most articulate and powerful leaders of black America during the 1960s. A street hustler convicted of robbery in 1946, he spent seven years in prison, where he educated himself and became a disciple of Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam. In the days of the civil rights movement, Malcolm X emerged as the leading spokesman for black separatism, a philosophy that urged black Americans to cut political, social, and economic ties with the white community. After a pilgrimage to Mecca, the capital of the Muslim world, in 1964, he became an orthodox Muslim, adopted the Muslim name El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, and distanced himself from the teachings of the black Muslims. He was assassinated in 1965. In the following excerpt from his autobiography (1965), coauthored with

³⁹After Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, his son—Wallace Dean Muhammad— was named supreme minister. Under his leadership, Muhammad allowed whites to become members in the organization, and leaned more towards orthodox Sunni Islam. Shocked and alienated with the changes, members formed splinter alliances, and by 1978, nationwide spokesman Louis Farrakhan led a group that revived the original tenets of the Nation of Islam. Eventually, the organization Malcolm X joined was later absorbed into mainstream Islam.

Alex Haley and published the year of his death, Malcolm X describes his self-education. (210)

At the beginning of the headnotes, the editors describe Malcolm X as “one of the most articulate and powerful leaders of black America during the 1960s.” Placing “one” with two superlative adjectives connotes that Malcolm X was one of several people who managed to rise to the top of black leadership. The other noteworthy aspect about this phrase is the two adjectives used—articulate and powerful. Though “articulate” literally means one who can effectively speak in this racial context, the word connotes a person who is an exception to the stereotype of the inarticulate African American who cannot speak well. Also, the word “powerful” connotes someone who has influence among people. Though Malcolm X was well-received in some African-American communities and was very visible in the media, he was not *the* most influential African American during that time. Moreover, the narrative uses “black” four times as an attributive adjective: black America, black separatism, black Americans, and black Muslims. While Malcolm X’s cause was primarily for African Americans, this biography tends to place too much emphasis on Malcolm X and race, creating a very limited view of understanding him. Finally, when the narrative includes “the days of the civil rights movement,” it links Malcolm X to the cause of the civil rights movement. Though Malcolm X did work with some participants in the civil rights movement, he considered himself a *human rights advocater* rather than a *civil rights leader*. “Civil rights” are freedoms one obtains from living in a democracy where such freedoms are legally set forth. Leader is a person who has power over people. “Human rights” connote privileges that any person would have regardless of nationality, while “advocate” is one who speaks on behalf of others. By the end of his life, Malcolm X championed the cause of African-American freedom, but moved it beyond the confines of the

United States to a global perspective.⁴⁰ Therefore, the Readers appear more concerned with having a black person in their textbook than containing a meaningful dialogue about Malcolm X.

Instead of placing too much emphasis on his race, there should be more context as to why he became a champion for human rights causes. A more detailed biography of Malcolm would resemble this:

Malcolm X [El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz)

Malcolm X (1925-1965) was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska. His father was a Baptist preacher and follower of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, an organization dedicated to black self-reliance and black consciousness. The family soon relocated to Lansing, Michigan, where his father died under mysterious circumstances. Following the death of his father and his mother's declining mental health, Malcolm X entered foster care. Although he excelled in academics, Malcolm X withdrew from school in the eighth grade after his white teacher told him that his dream of being a lawyer was "no realistic goal for a nigger." After moving to Boston, and later New York, Malcolm engaged in illegal activities and became known as Detroit Red.

In 1947, he received an eight to ten year prison sentence for burglary. While serving his prison sentence, Malcolm X enrolled in correspondence courses in English and Latin, read in his spare time, and became a member of the prison's debate team. As he would later recall, "Language became an obsession with me. I began to realize the power of words." Also, he converted to the Lost-Found

⁴⁰ According to Phillip A. Gibb, Malcolm X felt African-Americans would receive a more receptive audience in a larger political arena if they voiced their concerns under the banner of human rights. He appealed to newly free African nations to present to the United Nations a resolution condemning the United States' treatment of African-Americans. Toward the end of his life, Malcolm X was preparing to deliver his resolution stating that the United States violated the United Nations Charter on Human Rights (283-84).

Nation of Islam (LFNOI)—a black separatist organization led by Elijah Muhammad—and adopted the letter X as his surname, representing the unknown name of his African ancestors. After his release from prison in 1952, Malcolm X became a minister in the LFNOI and eventually became the organization's chief spokesperson until 1963, when he was silenced after describing President Kennedy's assassination as "the chickens coming home to roost." After completing the hajj to Mecca in 1964, Malcolm X became a Sunni Muslim and adopted the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. He would recant the black separatist teachings of the LFNOI and became an advocate of Black Nationalism, which encouraged African-Americans to regain control of their communities. While addressing an audience on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated.

Though the headnote is fairly long, it represents the various components of Malcolm X's life. It also serves several other purposes. First, it attempts to explain how Malcolm X eventually became to be a member of the NOI and how his life situation made the organization attractive to someone like Malcolm X. As Malcolm X would note in his autobiography, "I think that an objective reader may see how when I heard 'The white man is the devil,' when I played back what had been my own experiences, it was inevitable that I would respond positively..." (X, *Autobiography*, 436). Giving more experiences from his life permits students to understand the evolution and the transformation of his identity, signified by his various names. The other function of this headnote is to show students the significance of language, especially with names. Like King, Malcolm X had different names throughout his life: Malcolm Little, Detroit Red, Malcolm X, and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Each name represents a significant point in his life—the young man, the hustler, the minister and public figure, and the transformed individual.

Towards the end of his life, Malcolm X interchangeably used El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and Malcolm X because “Malcolm X” was recognizable to the general public. El-Hajj signified the pilgrimage to Mecca, Malik meant *king* in Arabic, and Shabazz represented a family last name that identified his wife and children (Tryman 499-500). For Malcolm X, a name connoted pride, culture, history, and self-respect for African-Americans who were “a lost people” removed from their ancestral name (500). The name change represented not only a new religious identity as a Sunni Muslim, but a cultural one that endowed him with a newfound respect from whites and others. Though Malcolm X used the new name when checking into hotels, the public still knew him as Malcolm X, and he stated that he would not abandon the name Malcolm X until there were significant changes in America (500). Listing the various names Malcolm X used in his lifetime would show students another example of the significance of names, and how names have significant meanings for people. It also demonstrates how Malcolm X recognized the power of language. Throughout his autobiography and his speeches, Malcolm X expressed how much he loved languages and would examine the etymology and philology of words. Thus, narrating the importance of language in Malcolm X’s life would reveal to students the power of words, and how those words can influence certain groups, especially those that are marginalized by the dominant society.

Reading Hair: The Redacted Use of “My First Conk”

When students notice that the excerpts come from Malcolm X’s autobiography, they tend to focus on the word “autobiography.” In their minds, students generally believe that Malcolm X sat and wrote his work while Alex Haley assisted him with editorial comments. While there are accounts that Haley assisted with editorial matters, there is also the larger context that shaped the work. Malcolm X spoke to Haley about his life, and Haley typed the oral words and shaped

them into chapters. The end result is a form of work that recounts Malcolm X's life, but also contains several breaks in the narrative when he reflects on his earlier experiences as an adult man in the 1960s, while his later chapters would detail his new ideology once he left the Nation of Islam.⁴¹ Therefore, he relies on the Western tradition of autobiography as a recollection of one's life, and the African-American literacy tradition of using one's work as a representative of the community and as a model of instruction for members of that community.⁴² Yet, the majority of the Readers do not provide enough contexts in understanding the autobiography. The cultural background is gone and students would have a hard time understanding the text. Of the three Readers used in this study, only *Patterns for College Writing* offers any background for the reader. In discussing "My First Conk,"—the narrative about Malcolm X straightening his hair as a teenager—*Patterns for College Writing* presents the following background:

...The following excerpt from [*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*] describes the painful and painstaking process many African-American men once endured to achieve a style of straight hair called a "conk." [...] First popularized in the 1920s by black entertainers such as Cab Calloway, the style continued to be fashionable until the 1960s, when more natural styles, including, the Afro, became a symbol of black pride, and conked hair came to be seen as a self-loathing attempt to imitate whites. Ironically, perhaps, some contemporary

⁴¹ Originally, Malcolm X envisioned the autobiography as a testament to his loyalty to Elijah Muhammad. The initial ten chapters would cover Malcolm X's life while the last chapters—"The Negro," "The End of Christianity," and "Twenty Million Black Muslims"—were envisioned as a summation of Malcolm X's religious and political viewpoints (Marable 260-261). However, as Malcolm X changed his views in the last year of his life, the last chapters were changed to reflect this evolution, and other chapters were added. Though scholars have questioned the veracity of the autobiography, the work itself is similar to an ancient genre known as *bios*, where the biography was more about using one's life as moral instruction for its audience and recreating events into a constructed narrative (e.g. the Gospels found in the New Testament could fall into this category).

⁴² Elaine Richardson notes that a major aspect of the Black literacy tradition is "rewriting [...] Anglo European conceptions of Black people" and "chang[ing] negative social conditions" of African-Americans (38).

African Americans still distinguish between “good” (that is, naturally straight) and “bad” (that is, naturally curly) hair. Today, cosmetically straightened hair (a process that is no longer so arduous) is considered one fashion option among many, including shaved heads, closely cropped hair, braids, cornrows, and dreadlocks. (282)

Though the background on African American hairstyles offers student the opportunity to learn about African American hair, the risk with this excerpt is that students might read both the cultural background and “My First Conk,” as the desire of African Americans to imitate whites. This is further reiterated in the one of the discussion questions: “*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was published in 1964, when many African Americans regularly straightened their hair. Is the thesis of this excerpt from the book still relevant today?” According to the teacher’s manual to *Patterns for College Writing*, the main thesis is that “trying to look like a white man is degrading and that blacks should concentrate on their brains, not their appearances, to get ahead” and that the theme of black pride is still relevant today (86). While one of Malcolm X’s messages was that African Americans should have pride, *Patterns for College Writing* presents a simplistic view of the reading; it risks having the excerpt seen as an imitation of white values. The textbook does not consider the reason why anyone—black, white, etc—would change their hair, or that a person’s hairstyle may be based more on trends, fashion, or expression. For example, the background information states that the conk went out of fashion because it was viewed as an imitation of whites. However, it does not mention that variations of the conk—texturizers, Jheri curls, S-curly, etc.—were popular hairstyles for men from the 1960s up to the present day. Even the wave cap—known as the “doo rag”—is another variation of the conk in an attempt to straighten one’s hair. Plus, “good” hair can have various meanings other than “naturally

straight.” Wavy hair, for instance, is considered good hair, along with natural curly hair. “Bad hair” generally meant hair that was naturally tightly curled and hard to maintain.

Hairstyles in the black community represent a different meaning depending on one’s socioeconomic class. Manning Marable notes that in the 1940s, a majority of middle-class African-American men preferred wearing their hair in a short, natural style. The conk was a style representative of lower class African-Americans, “the emblem of the hippest, street-savvy black, the choice of hustlers, pimps, professional gamblers, and criminals” (45). Instead of overemphasizing the importance of black hair, *Patterns for College Writing* would do better to emphasize the historical and cultural message surrounding the excerpt. Here is one example:

Part of Malcolm X’s message was his strong emphasis on racial pride, which denounced color consciousness within the black community and praised the beauty of African-Americans, especially those with dark skin tones and prominent African features. For Malcolm X, African-Americans have consistently hated their African ancestry and they relied on a white culture that dehumanized African Americans with strong African features for models of beauty. However, once African-Americans began to appreciate themselves, they would gain control over their own destiny. The following excerpt comes from his autobiography. As you read the narrative, examine how he describes the process of conking and his reflection of the process as an adult. How do you think the 1960s—and his affiliation with the Nation of Islam—would influence his recollection of straightening his hair as a teenager?

The question recognizes that Malcolm X is speaking for two historical periods—the 1940s, the time when he was a teenager, and the 1960s, when he was a member of the Nation of Islam and a

man in his thirties. Because the narrative represents two time periods, it means that Malcolm X had time to reflect on the 1940s, but also imbue his narrative with the knowledge of a more mature person who has been changed by both the Nation and the emerging social movement of that time. Because he is reflecting on a period of his life that could serve as an instructional tool for African-Americans, Malcolm X could embellish the information to prove his position about why blacks straighten their hair. Students then could understand the importance of reflecting on the culture of the times, and how one's perspective can change based upon their experiences. It also represents how the body is a manifestation of a historical and cultural period. Instead of remembering history as only a series of dates, students would reflect on the cultural influences of the times.

Textual Variants In "Saved"

The most popular reading from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is the excerpt from the chapter "Saved." As with other parts of the autobiography, the chapter consists of several breaks, with Malcolm X reflecting on his choices as an adult and his developing political views. However, placed within the context of Readers, the selection is formatted as one cohesive essay. The excerpt appears awkward because there is no transition available between the breaks in the narrative, which could make students think that his writing is not a good model to emulate. *The Conscious Reader* and *Rereading America* rework "Saved" into other titles: "A Homemade Education" for *The Conscious Reader*, and "Learning to Read" for *Rereading America*. Changing the titles means that the student will receive a different meaning of the reading depending on the Reader. "Saved" connotes rescue or deliverance, a religious experience happening to a person after living a sinful life. It fits this chapter because Malcolm X describes his deliverance from a cultural illiteracy and his salvation through education and Elijah

Muhammad's teachings. Because of his deliverance, he is able to clearly talk about racism and connect it to world history. However, students will miss the original meanings and think that Malcolm X's purpose is only to educate himself. For instance, *The Conscious Reader* places more of an emphasis on Malcolm X's education by including the title and a discussion question that asks students to explain the significance of Malcolm X's "homemade education." The teacher's guide for *The Conscious Reader* provides the following answer:

In discussing Malcolm's term 'homemade education,' you might ask students to reflect on the word 'homemade.' Like a pie baked at home, what is done according to one's own taste and efforts may be most satisfying. Malcolm's 'home' during his adult education is a prison, where he can read widely and without the distractions that a real college involves. (200)

While "homemade" could suggest something more satisfying, it can also mean something that is crudely made or unrefined. In the beginning of the excerpt, Malcolm X states that he acquired "some kind of homemade education." "Some kind of" means "to some extent" or "resembling" but not the exact thing. The title appears that Malcolm X never had any formal training while in his "home" of prison. While he was in prison, Malcolm X enrolled in correspondence courses in English and Latin. This signifies that not all of his education was "homemade." Using "home" to describe Malcolm X's living conditions implies that he was living in a safe haven, privileging an institution like prison more than a "real college," as if college is not important to Malcolm X. Likewise, *Rereading America's* title of "Learning to Read" would mean that Malcolm X was illiterate when he began his "homemade education." With titles like these, students would be left thinking that the only purpose of the selection is literacy, but not the overall effects and purpose this new form of literacy had for Malcolm X.

Both Readers further misinterpret Malcolm X's purpose of reading with the construction of the excerpt. The excerpt begins with, "It was because of my letters that I acquired some kind of homemade education," and the last line of the excerpt is "Where else but in prison could I have attacked my ignorance by being able to study intensely sometimes as much as fifteen hours a day?" (35). This is misleading because it suggests that Malcolm X values his reading over that of a formal education. However in the last chapter of his autobiography, Malcolm X states that he would like to receive a formal education:

My greatest lack has been, I believe, that I don't have the kind of academic education I wish I had been able to get [...] You can believe me that if I had the time right now, I would not be one bit ashamed to go back into any New York City public school and start where I left off at the ninth grade, and go on through a degree. Because I don't begin to be academically equipped for so many of the interests that I have. (437)

Given the context, one could say that Malcolm X appreciated his experience in prison, but he also valued receiving a formal education that would help shape his ideas. But, if students read the current selection, they will read about a Black male who lived a life in crime and redeemed himself through a crude form of education. The other difficulty involves what is not included in the excerpt. After his rhetorical question, Malcolm X describes other philosophers he studied and his debating experiences in prison, which he elaborates on various topics. Listing the other philosophers and his prison debating skills would provide another dimension to Malcolm X's "homemade education." The problem could be that the content Malcolm X describes could still be considered controversial for students (e.g. the debate on whether Jesus is black), thereby

reiterating Malcolm X as the angry black man who manipulated his “homemade” education to attack whites.

Redacted Versions of “Saved”

Another challenge with the Readers is how they construct Malcolm X’s views on reading and literacy. The discussion questions take segments from his narrative and reinterpret them to fit into the context of these questions. Consider the following questions listed in *The Conscious Reader*’s “Suggestion for Discussion” section:

Discuss his observation that “the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.”

Comment on his assertion that his “alma mater was books.” (722)

These two items refer to a section towards the end of the excerpt when Malcolm X reflects on how reading affected his life. The first question, beginning with the quote “the ability to read” further reemphasizes the “homemade education” motif by insisting that he learned to read in prison, instead of mentioning how reading books helped him become more aware of world and black history. In the second question, Malcolm X was responding to a reporter who asked him the place of his alma mater. Yet, Malcolm X didn’t assert that his alma mater was books. Assert means to make a stance. Malcolm X was answering a question. The problem with answering both questions is that doing so runs the risk of equaling prison with the university, something Malcolm X never did. The emphasis on Malcolm X in prison reinforces the stereotype of the black male in prison. While education for many non-minority students takes place in the university, the black male, who is seen as a deviant in American society, has his education in an environment dedicated to rehabilitating people from a life of crime. This reinforces Sandra Jamieson’s point that some Readers ask students about “tone or style,” but never inquire about

the central theme of institutional racism that shapes the reading (161). While *The Conscious Reader* makes it a point to acknowledge that Malcolm X was a street hustler who served time in prison, it fails to mention that although Malcolm X was a first time offender and should have received a short sentence, he received the maximum penalty because of his association with white women. If the editors mentioned that part of Malcolm X's life, it would have broadened the discussion of racism and examined how institutional racism forced Malcolm X to acquire his "homemade education."

Rereading America attempts to connect Malcolm X's experience for students, but it creates an awkward question for students to answer. Considering that Malcolm X was in prison in the 1940s, his experience would not be the same as students who are attending college in the twenty-first century. For instance, in the following question, the reader is asked to compare Malcolm X's experience to that of the student's expectations: "Would it be possible for public schools to empower students in the way that Malcolm X's self-education empowered him? If so, how? If not, why not?" (251). Even though the editors may not have intended for this to happen, the question compares two dissimilar situations, historically and contextually. It links a twenty-first century student's experience in public school with that of a 1960s activist in prison. Logically, it doesn't work because it fails to consider the reasons one enters each institution. A revised question would be:

In recalling his experience with reading, Malcolm X recalls how his junior high teacher dismissed black history and made derogatory remarks about African-Americans. Later, he reads a series of works detailing African-American history in a more complex matter. In the process, Malcolm X feels empowered because he is able to process the information he read and apply it to his own environment.

Do you believe that public schools teach subjects in a manner that relates to the student's environment? If so, how? If not, why, and how could schools use education to empower students?

This question provides more background information to help create the context for the question. It would also suggest that the challenge is not where one receives an education, but the hidden cultural assumptions that surround an educational institution. In an earlier chapter of the autobiography, Malcolm X describes how he was one of the top students of his eighth grade class. However, his teachers and classmates talked despairingly about African-Americans in front of Malcolm X, did not encourage his ambitions, and dismissed his interests and abilities. The textbooks did not treat African-Americans with respect, creating an atmosphere for failure among black students. Malcolm X's teacher destroys his dream of becoming a lawyer. As Malcolm X would note, even though whites in his environment felt they knew him, they did not genuinely understand him or make an attempt to do so. *Rereading America* makes a genuine attempt to allow students to think about the ideology shaping American education; however, the editors would be in a better position to question how the racial dynamics play into the educational system.

When *Rereading America* tries to provide a question that deals with race, it inadvertently accuses Malcolm X and reinforces him as the angry militant without providing enough context. The last question under the "Engaging the Text" heading asks, "Some readers are offended by the strength of Malcolm X's accusations and by his grouping of all members of a given race into 'collectives.' Given the history of racial injustice he recounts here, do you feel he is justified in taking such a position?" (251). A question such as this is problematic because it reinforces the minority as the victim who has to seek validation for his or her views by the dominant society,

and it would encourage a non-minority student into thinking that Malcolm X was a racist whose views are unsubstantiated. Just as in the previous question, more context is needed so that the answer doesn't result in a yes or no statement. Here is one alternative:

According to Arthur Smith,⁴³ one rhetorical method of black revolution is objectification, when the rhetor attacks an "ill-defined" group as the source of a group's problems. How does Malcolm X use objectification in the reading, especially when describing other racial groups?

The question further situates the reading in its proper and historical time period. African-Americans who heard Malcolm X say "the white man," may not have thought he was talking about one white person. Instead, the reference might have been a conglomerate of people that they knew from their experiences. Malcolm X, who was knowledgeable about the uses of language, knew that the word "white" and "black" when describing race contained several connotations. As he once expressed about the connection to language and race

In Asia or the Arab world or in Africa, where the Muslims are, if you find one who says he's white, all he's doing is using an adjective to describe something that's incidental about him, one of his incidental characteristics; there is nothing else to it, he's just white.

But when you get the white man over here in America and he says he's white, he means something else. You can listen to the sound of his voice -- when he says he's white, he means he's boss. That's right. That's what white means in this language. (X, *Speaks*, 163)

⁴³ The other aspects of black revolution Smith describes are mythification (appealing to a higher power), legitimation (the cause is just), and vilification (maligning the opposition). Smith, now known as Molefi K. Asante, is a proponent of Afrocentricity, a metatheory that involves placing African ideas at the center of a study related to African culture and behavior (Asante 2).

Malcolm X understood the power of words and its capacity to shape one's reality. Describing "the white man" in such a general way made it possible for African-Americans to listen to him, and would have allowed Malcolm X an easier means to attract African-Americans, who had experience racism into the Nation. This could create a unique space in the classroom to describe how one group understands certain words, and how another group could define those words with entirely different meanings, thereby allowing students to grapple with the importance of language within a culture.

Although the textual variants between the Readers and the autobiography are not too different, the ones found in Readers present an awkward rendering of the text. The Readers present Malcolm X's writing as an alternative to the "serious" writings in the collection and gives students the impression of what not to do in academic writing without paying attention to the critical thinking outlined in his autobiography. The form of the biographical headnotes and cultural information repeat the same narratives about Malcolm X's life and the 1960s without presenting a more complex reading of the author or his time period while the discussion questions serves as an apology, a way to justify Malcolm X's ideology. Therefore, the student may risk reading the text as a "black" piece instead of a piece of writing from a particular time frame.

Conclusion

Scene Three

University of Kansas, Fall 2009. We're in the first unit discussing education and literacy. I assign students the complete chapter of "Saved." I give the students a brief biography of

Malcolm X so that they have some context for their reading. For the next session, we begin discussing “Saved.” I begin by asking students for their first impression of the reading.

“It was interesting,” a student said.

“Yeah,” agreed another student.

“Ok, why was it interesting?” I asked.

“Just his topics.”

“Alright. Any other comments?”

Silence

“Alright, then let’s start discussing the selection. What did you notice about Malcolm X’s use of language in this reading. How does he use certain type of words, especially when referring to races?”

Silence again. Crickets chirp in my head. The reception was so cold I could’ve hung meat in there.

“Ok, how about we look at the list of books he describes. Do you see a pattern with the books?”

More silence. *Damn, I think, what else can I do?* Then, one student—the only African-American in the class—began to talk.

“Honestly, with the people who are in here, you’re not going to get anyone to talk because it’s too uncomfortable for them. They don’t understand his experience, and they won’t even try to understand.”

That did it. With that one statement, a dam burst and a flood of emotions erupted.

“How dare you?”

“That was so racist. You’re no better than Malcolm X?”

“I get so sick of people talking about race all the time! They should just get over it!”

“If black people don’t like it here, they need to go somewhere else! Always complaining about everything!”

My one African-American student didn’t like that at all.

“Who the hell you’re talking to? You don’t know what I been through!”

Before it got even worse, I jumped into the conversation.

“Please! How about we call it a day and talk about this next time when we all are calmer?”

With that, everyone left and I sat at the desk for a few minutes. Well, I thought, I wanted them to talk, but I didn’t expect this to happen.

The next time we met, I opened the discussion.

“I know that some of you have strong issues on this topic, and I respect your right to feel a certain way about the reading. All I ask is that you make sure that you are respectful to your classmates and that we can have a civil conversation. Agreed?”

“Agreed,” they mumbled.

“Alright. Let’s look at the time period of when the chapter was written. We know it’s the civil rights movement and there were protests. However, the protests also resulted in African-Americans reviewing the psychological and institutional effects of racism in the United States. For example, let’s look at the way Malcolm X uses the word ‘white devil’ and ‘the white man.’ Could you say that there were some rhetorical strategies in using words like that?”

“Could you explain further?” a student asked.

“Sure. One theorist argues that during this time of the black freedom movement, the rhetor would incorporate strategies of vilification and objectification. Vilification refers to the

use of language to degrade a person, ideas, or actions. For example, the ‘devil’ that Malcolm X describes is personified and identified. Or, a rhetor using objectification is attacking a group that is not easily identifiable and channels all the frustration of one group to another. Note how Malcolm X uses ‘the white man.’ For someone reading that, it could be any white person because the word is very broad.”

“That is a good point,” commented a student. “But why does it have to be so harsh?”

“Maybe it’s the audience,” responded my African-American student. “The black folks who heard this at that time may have been subjected to many acts of racism. This could be a way for Malcolm X to build community among them.”

“True,” I offered. “And it’s a way to respond to the racism produced by the outside world. And also, remember that he does go after black Americans as well. He doesn’t exclude one group.”

I then go to a discussion about Malcolm X’s ethos as a human rights advocate and how that translates into the text, especially when he makes a distinction between human rights and civil rights. We move into a conversation about the choice of books he decided to list, especially his books about black culture. We also mention his choice of history and his world, rather than American viewpoint. The discussion still had an intense air in it, but at least it was civil.

We continued to go through the discussion of “Saved” and stopped ten minutes before class dismissed. At this point, I asked if there were any final thoughts or questions.

“I have a statement more than anything else,” stated a student, the one who earlier mentioned that Malcolm X was a racist. “I understand where Malcolm X is coming from and everything. It’s just that I feel that I don’t see why a book like this is being taught in a college classroom. Why don’t we read the classics?”

“So what exactly are the classics?” I asked.

“Something like *The Great Gatsby*, *Mice and Men*, *My Antonia*, or *As I Lay Dying*.”

“So let me ask you this,” I ventured. “In all of the books you mentioned, there is at least one instance of someone saying nigger, darky, or inferior. How are the characters saying those words any different from Malcolm X saying ‘white devil?’”

“That’s different. Those books were products of their times.”

“Exactly. So was Malcolm X’s autobiography. To understand it, one must read it from the historical and cultural time frame. Now, did you have a balance between white authors, and authors from other cultural groups in your English classes?”

She thought for a minute.

“No, I can’t remember if I did.”

“Do you think if you had a balance then reading Malcolm X wouldn’t have been a shock?”

Members of the class started nodding and murmuring in agreement.

“So now we’ve gotten to the heart of Malcolm X’s message in ‘Saved.’ Remember when he described how his junior high teacher talked despairingly about blacks during a discussion of black history? Imagine if every book you read did not reflect your group or called your race an ethnic slur? Not a good feeling. So, Malcolm X is not replacing one group’s history with another, but including how we can learn from various cultures in our educational careers. And in learning other cultures, we learn how they use language and gain meaning about the role of rhetoric in their culture.”

With that mini-lecture, I concluded the unit on literacy and education.

On December 3, 1964, Malcolm X participated in a debate at Oxford University. The proposition debated was “Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue,” a statement uttered by Barry Goldwater during his 1964 acceptance as the Republican Party presidential nominee. In his remarks, Malcolm X noted that people defined extremism according to their background and erroneously applied their definition to other cultures. According to Malcolm X:

When you're in a position of power for a long time, you get used to using your yardstick, and you take it for granted that because you've forced your yardstick upon others, that everyone is still using the same yardstick. So that your definition of extremism usually applies to everyone.

But nowadays times are changing, and the center of power is changing. People in the past who weren't in a position to have a yardstick, or use a yardstick of their own, are using their own yardstick now. And you use one and they use another. In the past, when the oppressor had one stick and the oppressed used that same stick, today the oppressed are sort of shaking the shackles and getting yardsticks of their own. So when they say extremism, they don't mean what you do. And when you say extremism, you don't mean what they do. There's entirely two different meanings. And when this is understood, I think you can better understand why those who are using methods of extremism are being driven to them. (“Speech at the Oxford Union”)

This same yardstick metaphor is applicable to Readers in their construction of Malcolm X. Readers strip excerpts from Malcolm X's autobiography and apply their own meaning to them. In the process, they fail to adequately address the complex racial dimensions in the

autobiography and mark the works as “different,” a selection haphazardly placed in an anthology for diversity, but is not considered a model piece of academic writing. Instead of using one yardstick to measure Malcolm X and his texts, Readers would benefit from using multiple yardsticks to analyze the works. Once they provide the text with multiple dimensions, Readers would not have to caution students about “weird” or “offensive,” texts, but present them as representations of complex issues about complex subjects.

Conclusion

Where Do We Go From Here?

Once you change your philosophy, you can change your thought pattern. Once you change your thought pattern, you change your attitude. Once you change your attitude, it changes your behavior pattern. And then you go into some action.

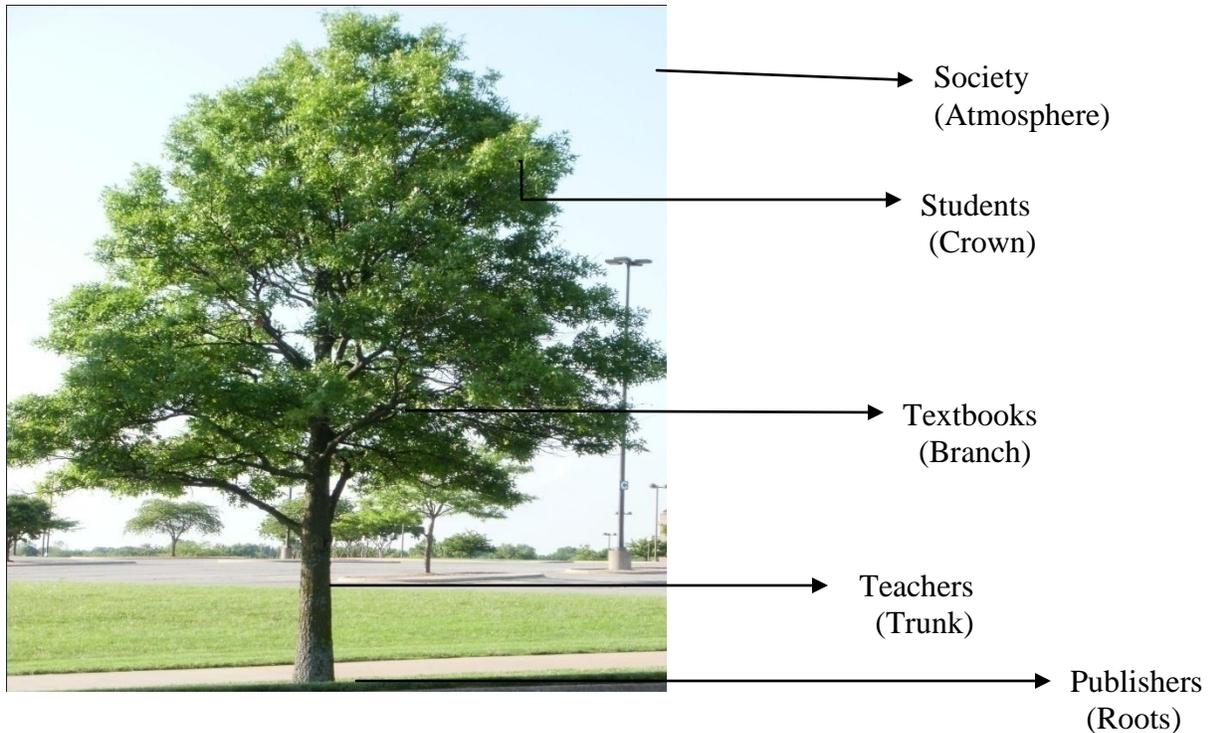
—Malcolm X

Introduction

Six years have elapsed since I started teaching at the University of Kansas. Teaching two sections per semester, I have instructed over 400 students about critical writing, reading, and rhetoric. Each semester, students have used a Reader containing excerpted writings or speeches by well-known public and historical figures. For many students, a Reader would be their introduction to the works of people like Martin Luther King, Jr., or Malcolm X. Depending on the Reader's objectives, students gain insight on how cultural and historical forces shape both rhetoric and "good writing." However, if Readers continue to privilege one version of rhetoric and good writing without understanding each terms' cultural and historical implications, students risk viewing writings by people of color as offensive or "different" texts that are not "serious" documents worthy of studying. Since this situation occurs frequently in Readers, the question remains: How can Readers stop being cemeteries of embalmed textbook selections and become living textbooks reflecting the historical and social situations that helped shape the anthologized works? Also, what parts of the educational system can assist in making this change possible? Finally, what are the implications of textbooks on society? This chapter will explore these questions in further detail.

The Educational System

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, textbooks serve a vital role in students' education. Along with providing educational instruction, they can either reinforce or challenge the dominant ideology of society. The figure below illustrates textbooks as branches of the larger educational system:



Textbooks are one part of a structure that consists of publishers, teachers, students, and ultimately culminates with society. All of these roles serve a function, and all of them are interconnected for their survival. Therefore, to fully understand the significance of a textbook, one should situate them within the hierarchy of publishers, teachers, students, and society.

Publishers

In a tree, the roots anchor the plant into the ground, absorbing and transporting water and minerals from the soil while storing food. Plus, the roots generally grow in the direction where the correct environment of air, nutrients, and water exists to fulfill the tree's needs. While the majority of the roots remain hidden underground, some are able to appear on the surface. The purposes of a plant's roots, then, are parallel to the functions of textbook publishers. Absorbing the needs of society, publishers gravitate towards a niche where they feel that their books will help the educational system. For instance, publishers specializing in composition have created Readers that speak to the demands of the field. They help sponsor the largest conference within composition studies (The Conference on College Composition and Communication); advertise their products at CCCC and in academic journals; survey teachers about educational products; and hire field representatives to market potential textbook adoptions for writing programs or individual instructors. Just like the tree with the roots growing above and below the ground, publishers have both a clandestine and visible presence in composition studies. While plenty of teachers may see their booths at CCCC, there are also teachers—as well as students—who may never interact with publishers at all. Therefore, publishers could be considered one of the most influential aspects of the educational system, even if society does not fully recognize their power. And, depending on their marketing strategies, publishers could, and do, promote textbooks that will have a lasting impact on the people who have to teach from it and the student who will have to read it.

One recent example attests to the importance of publishers. Though not a textbook in the classic sense, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a book widely used in classrooms, but is considered controversial because of its casual use of the word “nigger.” Because of this debate,

teachers are hesitant to teach the novel, libraries ban it, and school boards remove it from their curricula. Recognizing these dilemmas, one publisher developed a plan in response to the needs of teachers and society. On February 1, 2011, New South Books released Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* in one volume. What distinguishes this work from other versions of these two novels is that the word "nigger"—which appears in *Huck Finn* 219 times and 9 times in *Tom Sawyer*—is replaced with the word "slave" and "injun" is substituted with "Indian." During his conversations with teachers in Montgomery, Alabama, book editor Alan Gribben learned that teachers were hesitant to use *Huck Finn* because, "In the new classroom, it's not really acceptable." Based on these talks, Gribben decided to edit the novel as an alternative for both grade school classrooms and general readers who wanted to appreciate the novel within a twenty-first century context. New South Books' publisher Suzanne La Rosa agreed with Gribben, stating that the editor noticed "a market for a book in which the n-word was switched out for something less hurtful, less controversial."

While I recognize the well-meaning motives of both the editor and publisher, I also question if their method is more of a quick remedy rather than an investigation into the symptoms that will help cure the disease. Changing *Huck Finn* makes the teachers happy and raises fewer questions for the students; but, it prevents them from engaging in a more meaningful dialogue about race. For example, what were the historical and cultural situations that allowed Mark Twain to use that word so liberally in his novel? Did that word have the same connotation then as it does now, especially since the denotative meaning of the n-word is black? What happens if a student reads another book that contains that word? Will he or she dismiss it instead of interrogating its language? Why not have an apparatus at the beginning of the publication that discusses the history of the word and its context within the novel? Finally, if publishers are

responding to teachers' needs to find a Mark Twain book that deals with race, why not market *Pudd'nhead Wilson* along with *Huckleberry Finn* if teachers want an alternative? *Pudd'nhead Wilson* would work well because it presents race as not a fixed identity, but one built on social instruction.⁴⁴ Reading *Pudd'nhead Wilson* permits students to read another Twain work that centers around race; also, the works illustrates the arbitrary nature of classifying people according to their skin tone.

The situation with Twain is roughly analogous to publishers anthologizing the works of people like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X in Readers. In the textbooks I surveyed for this study, the most frequently anthologized works by King were "I Have a Dream" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail." For Malcolm X, both works came from his autobiography—the excerpt from "Homeboy" detailing the process of him straightening his hair, and the excerpt from "Saved" detailing his "homemade education" in prison. While there is nothing inherently wrong in anthologizing these works, the problem occurs when these selections become the *only* works that represent King or Malcolm X. When editors continuously use the same selections, teachers and students may risk identifying one work with a historical person and not understanding the full range of a person's life and works. Also, when editors present an altered version of a person's work, that selection serves as a distorted vision to the student about that person's ideology. As noted in previous chapters, the works of King and Malcolm X have been altered to make the selections less controversial and thus more palatable for the student.

Publishers and editors would offer a better service to teachers and students if they left works by King and Malcolm X intact and provide other selections by these two men, thereby creating a balance to existing anthologized works. Along with using "I Have a Dream" or

⁴⁴ In the novel, a slave switches her son with that of her master's so that he will have a better life. The rest of the novel revolves around whether racial characterizes are biological or societal.

“Letter from Birmingham Jail,” publishers could anthologize King’s later speeches such as “Beyond Vietnam”—which has King speaking out against the Vietnam War—or the “Mountaintop” speech. King’s last speech, “Mountaintop” presents King at his oratorical zenith by delivering a speech extemporaneously while moving beyond civil rights into the labor movement. Likewise, publishers should include other parts of Malcolm X’s autobiography like “Mecca”—a chapter that describes his *hajj*—or “El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz,” a travel narrative about his time in Middle Eastern and African nations. Printing the earlier works of both men freezes them in one historical moment. As currently seen in *Readers*, King is the nonviolent integrationist and Malcolm X is the angry black man who acquired a strident tone to voice to articulate his frustration against racism. Balancing the earlier works with the later ones provides a more comprehensive overview of both leaders’ ideas, and makes students aware that these men spoke about more than “black” issues.

Teachers

The trunk of the tree serves as a conduit for water and nutrients from one part of the tree to another. It takes minerals from the roots and provides it to the top of the tree, and takes nutrients from the top of the tree and delivers it to the roots. In the educational system, teachers serve as the trunk that relays information from the publishers and presents the information to the students. Publishers survey their opinions about teaching materials and solicit teachers to create textbooks. Teachers use the textbook to teach students and address the concerns of students; in response, publishers design better and newer editions. As in the example of *Huck Finn*, teachers dialogue with publishers about their concerns, and publishers respond to teachers’ needs.

However, as the situation of *Huck Finn* demonstrates, the relationship between publishers and teachers can be problematic. If publishers provided copies of *Huck Finn* in its original version,

teachers should have had enough training in working with controversial materials to teach the cultural and historical underpinnings of the novel. Instead, when presented with a book that has significant racial undertones to it, teachers had a hard time working with the material. The lack of teacher training raises the issues of how much does the textbook—which should be supplementary to teacher instruction—actually dominate classroom instruction.

This is a question that is still relevant to writing courses. When Readers were created over a century ago, the intended audiences who would use this kind of textbook were graduate teaching assistants, lecturers, and assistant professors—ironically, the same group that teaches first-year writing today. However, while the purpose for Readers over 100 years ago was to help instructors untrained in rhetorical instruction, current Readers appear to assist teachers who may not have the time or resources to learn about each selection's cultural and historical influences, especially in an era characterized by increasing class sizes, decreased funding for higher education, and increasing professional demands. The comments I heard while attending the 2011 CCCC seemed to echo those sentiments. While talking to various instructors who reflected a range of academic positions, a recurring theme surfaced: While there are teachers interested in incorporating writers and speakers from various cultural and historical backgrounds in their classrooms, they generally are hesitant because of other commitments, or are nervous about incorporating documents that may shut down class discussion:

I would like to teach something like King or Malcolm X, but I teach two classes, take my own classes, and then have to prepare for comps. I just like using a book that was part of my training and doesn't require me to do any extra work.

I have four classes to teach here and then I adjunct at another school. It's hard trying to test out new things when you have over 200 papers to grade.

I like Malcolm X, but I'd just be too uncomfortable about teaching that in my classroom. As a white person, I'm too scared of teaching that. How do I deal with his language?

I also encountered the same sentiments with my classmates at the University of Kansas. While serving as administrative intern for the First- and Second-Year Writing Program, I was responsible for heading a textbook selection committee to find a Reader for the English 102 course, which encourages students to examine critical reading and writing while reviewing multiple perspectives on a topic. One book that I located was *Reading the World: Ideas that Matter*. Although it describes writing through a Western rhetorical lens, *Reading the World* combines elements of both the “Great Ideas” and “Multicultural” subgenres of Readers to create a textbook that equally balances Western and non-Western readings. Although several teaching assistants liked the textbook, there was some hesitation in using the book for their class. According to one classmate, “While I like the fact that ‘The Art of War’ and Desmond Tutu are in the book, I would have a hard time talking about their rhetorical backgrounds. I wasn’t trained for that.” Now in its second edition, *Reading the World* still has a long journey before it will reach the sales ranks of *A World of Ideas* or *The Bedford Reader*. However, *Reading the World* shows that publishers are slowly trying to change selections included in textbooks, even though the most popular Readers still privilege a Western rhetorical tradition and contextualize each selection within that format. Because the most popular textbooks tend to privilege one rhetorical tradition void of meaningful historical and cultural contexts, and some teachers are

hesitant to incorporate diverse authors, students will be unable to learn about other cultures, their rhetorical traditions, and will still view Western authors as the model standard of good communication and ideas. The end result is that a writer who does not fit well into the Western standard runs the risk of being viewed by students as “strange” or “different.”

Students

The crown of a tree is the totality of a tree's parts. In the process of performing photosynthesis, the crown produces oxygen and forwards the movement of water into the atmosphere. Whatever activity that takes place in the crown is a result from the other parts of the tree. The crown is analogous to the student who receives an education through the educational system of publishers, teachers, and textbooks. Whatever the student learns from this system will affect the student and will potentially shape his or her perspectives on various cultural groups. They come into the classroom full of experiences, and the educational system produces even more experiences—sometimes challenging ones—to help mold the student into a contributing member of society. If the system does not adequately acknowledge those experiences, the student will feel alienated from the society to which he or she is expected to contribute.

Let's again review the case of *Huck Finn*. When I was an undergraduate student, I enrolled in American Literature, 1865-Present. One of our required textbooks included an anthology on American literature that contained the unabridged version of *Huck Finn*. When my professor discussed *Huck Finn*, he described how the book was a coming-of-age story about *Huck Finn*'s dilemma of doing what was morally right or conforming to society, especially when *Huck* decided to help the slave Jim. When I asked the instructor about the use of the n-word in the novel, he never fully answered the question; instead, he stated that Mark Twain was from

another time period when the word was commonly used. After his short response, he returned to his lecture without engaging in a dialogue about language or the history of the word.

Another same situation occurred when the class traveled to Natchez for the Literary and Film Festival. We read Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and attended a panel that was discussing the novel and the film adaptation. After watching the film, the panel discussed both the novel and the film. The main focus, though, was on how the work was a coming of age story regarding the children rather than a story centering upon the case of a black man erroneously on trial for raping a white woman. When I approached the subject, the panel provided a few words agreeing and then moved onto another subject. In both instances, the instructor, the textbook, and the panel members failed to recognize the student's experience as a black man reading novels that dealt with race. Because of those situations, I felt that the education I received refused to value anyone that was a person of color. Instead of participating in class, I spoke less and felt alienated from the class reading materials. I did not feel comfortable discussing race with people, and believed that only certain groups have the privilege to talk about race.

My experiences relate to John Dewey's theory of experience. According to Dewey, both the short- and long-term qualities of an educational experience matter; therefore, educators are responsible for providing experiences that are both immediately valuable to students and that will better enable them to make future contributions to society. Dewey's theory of experience acknowledges the backgrounds of students and allows educators to design and conduct curriculum that would benefit students for both the present and future. Educators will then provide experiences which would allow the student to open up—rather than shut down—their access to future growth experiences, thereby increasing their contributions to society. Although written over seventy years ago, Dewey's theory of experience still resonates with composition

classes. Teachers instruct students with various experiences, and publishers provide educational materials for students. The content provided in the materials will affect both the manner in which students learn about writing, and the pedagogy teachers use to approach the materials will determine how students shape an experience that is either rewarding or detrimental to their future societal contributions. These are the students who will become the future teachers, principals, CEOs, and policymakers of society. If educators fail to teach materials that value and recognize various experiences, students will reinforce dominant ideologies rather than develop significant changes to society.

Society

Previously, I provided a diagram of one tree and how the individual tree represented one educational system. As one tree—and one educational system—it appears that the tree is autonomous. It provides everything to the area surrounding it, but it does not go beyond a certain boundary. However, imagine how that single tree would look surrounded by other trees:



Surrounded by other trees, that single tree develops into a multilayered forest. Each tree becomes connected to other trees. Some trees are large while others are small; however, their roots and branches eventually become intertwined with each other, providing each other

minerals, nutrients and other forms of life-giving sustenance.. Soon, organisms began to thrive because of how these trees began to work together, and the forest becomes a sustainable, vibrant habitat for the environment. However, if one tree becomes infected or destroyed by blight, disease, or environmental change, other trees may likely follow the same fate. What was once a pulsating and active environment now becomes dead and uninhabitable. Nothing will grow from this destroyed environment, and the rest of the ecosystem will suffer because of it. The example of the trees is analogous to the educational system. In American society, there are, at once, several educational systems. Some are large, while others are small. However, each of these systems is connected in their desire to educate American students. If one educational system is infected with incorrect or outdated material, then other educational systems will become infected and reproduce the same material. The end result is that publishers, teachers, and textbooks will continue to duplicate information that does not benefit students, and students from certain backgrounds will not feel as though they have a stake in education. These students will enter society feeling as though the dominant group does not want to understand them, and they will think that society is hostile to anyone who does not reflect the governing ideology.

Currently, the American educational system is suffering from what I term an “ideological infection.” Because there are a few groups who want to maintain an ideology that is not inclusive of various groups, students receive educational materials that contain distorted and prejudicial views about American society. Consider these examples:

May 2010—In two 9-5 votes, The Texas State Board of Education adopts a revised social studies and history curriculum that changes the teaching of the civil rights movement, religious freedom, and hundreds of other items. Among the changes are: (1) using the traditional B.C. and A.D. to classify historical time

periods rather than B.C.E. and C.E.; (2) blurring the separation between church and state; (3) renaming the slave trade to the Atlantic triangular trade; (4) requiring students to learn about the negative aspects of Title IX, affirmative action, and The Great Society; and (5) having students learn about conservatives such as Phyllis Schlafly, The Heritage Foundation; and The Moral Majority

May 2010—Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signs a bill stating that schools will lose funding if they provide courses that “promote the overthrow of the U.S. government, promote resentment of a particular race or class of people, are designed primarily for students of a particular ethnic group or advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.” Citing the Tucson Unified School District’s popular Mexican-American studies department as an example, the state superintendent charges that the program promotes “ethnic chauvinism.” Also, the Arizona State Board of Education bans teachers with “heavy” or “ungrammatical accents” from teaching English classes.

November 2010—Dr. Nancy Rudner Lugo, a former professor at the University of Central Florida, files a lawsuit against the school. Lugo, a nursing professor, alleges that she was fired after refusing to use the textbook *Guide to Culturally Competent Health Care* in her community health nursing class. According to Lugo, the book “contains antiquated and offensive racial, ethnic and other stereotypes.” Among the concerns Lugo had were passages stating that: (1) the black community views obesity as “positive,” emphasizing that “It is important to

have meat on one's bones to be able to afford weight loss during times of sickness"; African-Americans are "loud, 'high keyed, animated, confrontational and interpersonal,'" who include "voodoo doctors" in a list of common "folk" healthcare practitioners in African-American culture; Italian American families "recognize the father's authority as absolute; nothing is purchased, and decisions are not made without his approval"; and Japanese wives "care for husbands to a great extent. Japanese men are presumed not to be capable of managing day-to-day matters." One of the textbook authors—Larry D. Purnell, a faculty member of the University of Delaware's nursing department—developed the "Purnell Model" of cultural competence, which the American Academy of Colleges of Nursing cites in their Tool Kit of Resources for Cultural Competent Education for Baccalaureate Nurses.

January 2011—Tea Party organizations in Tennessee create a list of "demands" for the state's educational curriculum to the state legislature. Hal Rounds, a spokesman for the coalition, wants teachers in Tennessee to focus on the "truth" about the Founding Fathers and argue that "no portrayal of minority experience in the history which actually occurred shall obscure the experience or contributions of the Founding Fathers, or the majority of citizens, including those who reached positions of leadership." Rounds argues that education should focus more on how the Founding Fathers "were revolutionaries who brought liberty into a world where it hadn't existed [...] and it is their progress that we need to look at."

Each of these examples details how various ideologies shape educational materials and textbooks. While some use their ideology to create awareness of other cultures, others use it to further an agenda that distorts facts, privileges one culture, or discourage critical thinking about society. However, there are some instances where there is an attempt by educational instances to be more inclusive:

April 2011—The California State Senate approves a bill mandating that students learn about the contributions of gays and lesbians in social science classes and textbooks. Opponents of the bill expressed that the bill sanctions “a lifestyle that many people are opposed to” and that it “waters down” the curriculum.

Moreover, activists such as Carolyn Laub—director of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network—notes that students will see the gay rights movement in relation to other social movements: “It has absolutely nothing to do with sex; it’s about entire communities that are left out.”

The inclusion of communities that have been traditionally excluded is one reason why the cultural influences in textbooks and education. According to preliminary Census figures, the United States will have a nonwhite majority by 2050. This increase of various cultural groups in the U.S. means that the educational system must create curricula that reflect these changing demographics and realize that there are multiple ways of viewing issues imbued in a cultural perspective. If composition classrooms are to remain viable in the twenty-first century, they should strive to understand and fully incorporate various forms of cultural communication instead of presenting one culture as the default standard.

Conclusion

In studying the history of textbooks, one can reason that they are a reflection of American society. Created during an era characterized by rapid industrialization and massive waves of European immigration, Readers reflected the importance of teaching these new immigrants about American (i.e., white) values and norms through the inclusion of all white writers in these textbooks. However, during the mid-20th century, as non-whites began demanding their rights and began entering mainstream universities in mass numbers, publishers slowly began to include a token number of writers of color in Readers and even published Readers specifically about non-European culture. By the end of the twentieth century, which is characterized by increasing sensitivity to the cultural diversity that constitutes the American people, Readers began moving past tokenism to offer more of a variety of nonwhite and female writers. However, even though authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Maya Angelou were anthologized alongside Thomas Jefferson and George Orwell, Readers still did not view the new writers as seriously as they did the canonical writers. Even though new writers were sometimes included *with* canonical writers, they were not assumed to possess the same esteem, meaning that they were there more for diversity's sake rather than as selections worthy of serious study. They were rendered one-dimensional, texts framed within a Western discourse or included only as representatives of their racial or ethnic groups. Now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, characterized by the election of the first African-American president, immigration debates, the digital age, and the declaration of the post-racial society, Readers—as are other textbooks in the American educational system—are at a crossroads in American society.

Although people consider textbooks as neutral books used for instruction, they are far from it. Depending on the politics of a city school board, a composition program at a university,

or even an individual teacher, the type of textbooks used for a course will influence the way a student reads about society and how they shape that student's reality. Therefore, there is considerable value in studying the nature of textbooks, and how they may contribute to our efforts to build a better, more just future for all than what we have had in the past. Just as the editors of the Christian Bible provided Old and New Testaments as a covenant between God and the believers, textbooks are a covenant among the publishers and editors who create them, the teachers who have to use them, the students who learn from them, and the society that benefits from all of these parts of the educational system. If the educational system does not fully investigate the power of the textbook, then it fails in its covenant to the student and society.

Life Writing	1997	√									
The Little Brown Reader, 11thed	2009	√								√	
The Macmillan Reader	1987					√	√				
Major Themes for Modern Writers	2008		√								
Making Sense, 2nded	2005	√									
The Millennium Reader, 5thed	2009		√								
The McGraw-Hill Reader	1982			√							
Models for Writers, 10thed	2010		√		√						
Negotiating Difference	1996							√			
The Norton Reader, 3rded	1973	√									
Fields of Writing, 4thed	1994										√
Forty Model Essays	2005		√								
Global Exchange	2005	√									
Great Interdisciplinary Ideas	2008	√									
The Harper & Row Reader	1984	√									
Inquiry	2004	√									
Interactions	2006		√								
Language Awareness	2000		√								
Life Writing	1997	√									
The Little Brown Reader, 11thed	2009	√								√	
The Macmillan Reader	1987					√	√				
Major Themes for Modern Writers	2008		√								
Making Sense, 2nded	2005	√									
The Millennium Reader, 5thed	2009		√								
The McGraw-Hill Reader	1982			√							
Models for Writers, 10thed	2010		√		√						
Negotiating	1996							√			

Difference											
The Norton Reader, 3rded	1973	√									
Writing about the World, 3rded	2005	√									
The Written World	1989		√								

Legend:

Vietnam	Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam (1967)
Dream	I Have a Dream
Letter	Letter from Birmingham Jail
Resistance	Nonviolent Resistance
Pilgrim	Pilgrimage to Nonviolence
Speech	Speech at Hot Street Baptist Church, Dec. 3, 1955
Three	The Three Types of Resistance to Oppression
Ways	The Ways of Meeting Oppression
Where	Where Do We Go from Here
World	The World House

Appendix B

Anthologized Versions of Malcolm X's "Saved"

Title	Date	Homemade	Freedom	Self	Awareness	Books	Prison	Literacy	Learning	Saved!
The Conscious Reader, 10 th ed	2006	√								
The Harper & Row Reader	1984		√							
Heritage	1997			√						
Language Awareness, 8 th ed	2000				√					
Life Writing	1997					√				
Major Themes for Modern Writers	2008						√			
Making Sense. 2 nd ed	2005						√			
The Norton Field Guide, 2 nd ed	2009							√		
The Prose Reader, 8 th ed	2008								√	
The Reader	2009	√								
Rereading America. 4 th ed	1998								√	
The Written World	1989									√

Legend:

Books	Books Are My Alma Mater
Awareness	Coming to an Awareness of Language
Freedom	Freedom through Learning to Read
Homemade	A Homemade Education
Learning	Learning to Read
Literacy	Learning to Read
Self	My Self Education
Prison	Prison Studies

Appendix C

Other Texts by Malcolm X Featured in Composition Readers

Variations of the chapter “Homeboy”

Title	Year	Hair	My First Conk
Patterns for College Writing, 11 th ed	2010		√
Reading Our Histories, Understanding Our Cultures, 2 nd ed	2003	√	
Rhetorical Choices, 2 nd ed	2007		√
The Sundance Reader, 5 th ed	2009		√

Other Texts by Malcolm X in the Sample Composition Readers

Text	Date	The Ballot or the Bullet	Message to the Grassroots	Mecca	Harlemite
American Dreams	2009	√			
Autobiography	1977				√
Get It Together	2003			√	
Great Interdisciplinary Ideas	2008	√			
Revelations	1993		√		

Appendix D

“I Have a Dream”

Transcription in *The Bedford Reader* and *The Conscious Reader*

(Note: Changes in *The Conscious Reader*'s version are noted)

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we've come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of *now*. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drugs of gradualism. *Now* is the time to make real the promises of Democracy. *Now* is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. *Now* is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. *Now* is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality; 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest

nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi desert a state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning

[Italics begin in *The Conscious Reader*]

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrim's pride,
From every mountainside
Let freedom ring.

[Italics end]

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

[Following section is added to the previous paragraph]

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

[End of paragraph]

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia! [period]

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

Appendix E

“I Have a Dream”

Transcript from *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. [Applause]

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. [Audience:] (My Lord) One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later (My Lord) [Applause], the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence (Yeah), they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." [Sustained applause]

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. (My Lord) [Laughter] (Sure enough) We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check (Yes), a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom (Yes) and the security of justice. [Applause]

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time (My Lord) to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. [Applause] Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. (My Lord) Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time [Applause] to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time [Applause] to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope

that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. [Applause] And there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. (*My Lord*) [Applause] We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. [Applause] And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" (*Never*)

We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied [Applause] as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. [Applause] We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "for whites only." [Applause] We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. (*Yes*) [Applause] No, no, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. [Applause]

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. (*My Lord*) Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest -- quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution (*Yes*) and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi (*Yes*), go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. (*Yes*) Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends. [Applause], so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. (*Yes*) It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day (*Yes*) this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." (*Yes*) [Applause]

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice (*Well*), sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream (*Well*) [*Applause*] that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. (*My Lord*)
I have a dream today! [*Applause*]

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" (*Yes*), one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today. [*Applause*]

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted (*Yes*), and every hill and mountain shall be made low; the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight (*Yes*); and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. (*Yes*)

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. (*Yes*) With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. (*Yes*) With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. (*Talk about it*) With this faith (*My Lord*) we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. [*Applause*] This will be the day [*Applause continues*], this will be the day when all of God's children (*Yes*) will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country 'tis of thee (*Yes*), sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride (*Yes*),

From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring (*Yes*) from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. (*Yes, That's right*)

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. (*Well*)

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. (*Yes*)

But not only that: Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. (*Yes*)

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. (*Yes*)

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. (*Yes*)

From every mountainside, let freedom ring. [*Applause*]

And when this happens [*Applause continues*], when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city (*Yes*), we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! (*Yes*) Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last! [*Applause*]

Appendix F

The Clergymen's Letter

April 12, 1963

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense, in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

Signed by:

C.C.J. Carpenter, D.D., LL.D., Bishop of Alabama

Joseph A. Durick, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Mobile-Birmingham

Rabbi Milton L. Grafman, Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama

Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the Methodist Church

Bishop Nolan B. Harmon, Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church

George M. Murray, D.D., LL.D., Bishop Coadjutor, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

Edward V. Ramage, Moderator, Synod of the Alabama Presbyterian Church

Earl Stallings, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama (qtd in Bass 235-236)

Appendix G

Letter from Birmingham Jail

Version originally published in *Why We Can't Wait* and published in *Patterns for College Writing* and *A World of Ideas*

LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL⁴⁵

April 16, 1963

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to

⁴⁵ *AUTHOR'S NOTE: This response to a published statement by eight fellow clergymen from Alabama (Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter, Bishop Joseph A. Durick, Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman, Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Holan B. Harmon, the Reverend George M. Murray, the Reverend Edward V. Ramage and the Reverend Earl Stallings) was composed under somewhat constricting circumstance. Begun on the margins of the newspaper in which the statement appeared while I was in jail, the letter was continued on scraps of writing paper supplied by a friendly Negro trusty, and concluded on a pad my attorneys were eventually permitted to leave me. Although the text remains in substance unaltered, I have indulged in the author's prerogative of polishing it for publication.

carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

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 of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants --- for example, to remove the stores humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoralty election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run-off we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run-off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct-action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling, for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. 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 to so dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with

piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we stiff creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dark of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you go forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may want to ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all"

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of

inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and awful. Paul Tillich said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression 'of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give another explanation. 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? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to ace the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would

have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fan in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with an its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude

stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely rational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this 'hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best-known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. Nourished by the Negro's frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do-nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble-rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black-nationalist ideologies a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community,

one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides--and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist.

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ..." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime---the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some---such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle---have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger lovers." Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to

your worship service on a non segregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of Rio shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leader; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, on Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious-education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great-grandson of

preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests.

Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often even vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ecclesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross

injustice and shameful humiliation-and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handing the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. There will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. There will be the old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feet is tired, but my soul is at rest." There will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience' sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a

comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Appendix H

“Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Original Version Published by American Friends Service Committee

Bishop C.C.J, Carpenter
Bishop Joseph A. Durick
Rabbi Milton L. Grafman
Bishop Paul Hardin
Bishop Nolan B. Harmon
The Rev. George M. Murray
The Rev. Edward V. Ramage
The Rev. Earl Stallings

My dear Fellow Clergymen,

While confined here in the Birmingham City Jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all of the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would be engaged in little else in the course of the day and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine goodwill and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should give the reason for my being in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the argument of "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every Southern state with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliate organizations all across the South—one being the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Whenever necessary and possible we share staff, educational, and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago our local affiliate here in Birmingham invited us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented and when the hour came we lived up to our promises. So I am here, along with several members of my staff, because we were invited here. I am here because I have basic organizational ties here. Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eight century prophets left their little villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home town, and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Greco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can

we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.

You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being. I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial social analyst who looks merely at effects, and does not grapple with underlying causes. I would not hesitate to say that it is unfortunate that so-called demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham at this time, but I would say in more emphatic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: (1) collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive; (2) negotiation; (3) self-purification; and (4) direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal, and unbelievable facts. On the basis of these conditions Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions certain promises were made by the merchants—such as the promise to remove the humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on any type of demonstrations. As the weeks and months unfolded we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. As in so many experiences of the past we were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. We were not unmindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through a process of self-purification. We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?"

We decided to schedule our direct action program around the Easter season, realizing that with the exception of Christmas, this was the largest shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this was the best time to bring pressure on the merchants for the needed changes. Then it occurred to us that the March election was ahead, and so we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Mr. Connor was in the run-off, we decided again to postpone action so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. At this time we agreed to begin our nonviolent witness the day after the run-off.

This reveals that we did not move irresponsibly into direct action. We too wanted to see Mr. Connor defeated; so we went through postponement after postponement to aid in this community need. After this we felt that direct action could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask, "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct actions seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that 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. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So the purpose of the direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We, therefore, concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that our acts are untimely. Some have asked, "Why didn't you give the new administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this inquiry is that the new administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one before it acts. We will be sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Mr. Boutwell will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is much more articulate and gentle than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists dedicated to the task of maintaining the status quo. The hope I see in Mr. Boutwell is that he will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly I have yet engaged in a direct action movement that was "well timed," according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost always meant "never." It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter.

I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dark of segregation to say wait. But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an air-tight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking in agonizing pathos: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger" and your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tip-toe stance never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you go forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness";— then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, it is rather strange and paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: There are *just* laws and there are *unjust* laws. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all"

Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. To use the words of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an "I-it" relationship for the "I-thou" relationship, and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. So segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Isn't segregation an existential

expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? So I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court because it is morally right, and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong.

Let us turn to a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a majority inflicts on a minority that is not binding on itself. This is *difference* made legal. On the other hand a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is *sameness* made legal.

Let me give another explanation. An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because they did not have the unhampered right to vote. Who can say the legislature of Alabama which set up the segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout the state of Alabama all types of conniving methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters and there are some counties without a single Negro registered to vote despite the fact that the Negro constitutes a majority of the population. Can any law set up in such a state be considered democratically structured?

These are just a few examples of unjust and just laws. There are some instances when a law is just on its face but unjust in its application. For instance, I was arrested Friday on charge of parading without a permit. Now there is nothing wrong with an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade, but when the ordinance is used to preserve segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and peaceful protest, then it becomes unjust.

I hope you can see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as the rabid segregationist would do. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do it *openly, lovingly* (not hatefully as the white mothers did in New Orleans when they were seen on television screaming "nigger, nigger, nigger") and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.

Of course there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was seen sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar because a higher moral law was involved. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks, before submitting to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.

We can never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that, if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal. If I lived in a communist country today where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I believe I would openly advocate disobeying these antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negroes' great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens' "Counciler" or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the time-table for another man's freedom; who lives by a myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice, and that when they fail to do this they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is merely a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, where the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substance-filled positive peace, where all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must likewise be exposed, with all of the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But can this assertion be logically made? Isn't this like condemning the robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical delvings precipitated the misguided popular mind to make him drink the hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to His will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as federal courts have consistently affirmed, that it is immoral to urge an individual to withdraw his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth of time. I received a letter this morning from a white brother in Texas which said: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but is it possible that you are in too great of a religious hurry? It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." All that is said here grows out of a tragic misconception of time. It is the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively. I am coming to feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation

not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.

We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy, and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I started thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation, and of a few Negroes in the middle class who, because of a degree of academic and economic security, and because at points they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable "devil." I have tried to stand between these two forces saying that we need not follow the "do-nothingism" of the complacent or the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. There is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with floods of blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss us as "rabble-rousers" and "outside agitators"—those of us who are working through the channels of nonviolent direct action—and refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes, out of frustration and despair, will seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies, a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; and something without has reminded him that he can gain it. Consciously and unconsciously, he has been swept in by what the Germans call the *Zeitgeist*, and with his black brothers of Africa, and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, he is moving with a sense of cosmic urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. Recognizing this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand public demonstrations. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations. He has to get them out. So let him march sometime; let him have his prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; understand why he must have sit-ins and freedom rides. If his repressed emotions do not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous

expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of history. So I have not said to my people, "Get rid of your discontent." But I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled through the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. Now this approach is being dismissed as extremist. I must admit that I was initially disappointed in being so categorized.

But as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love? "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice— "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ—"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist—"Here I stand; I can do none other so help me God." Was not John Bunyan an extremist—"I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist— "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist— "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice—or will we be extremists for the cause of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime—the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth, and goodness, and thereby rose above His environment. So, after all, maybe the South, the nation, and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this. Maybe I was too optimistic. Maybe I expected too much. I guess I should have realized that few members of a race that has oppressed another race can understand or appreciate the deep groans and passionate yearnings of those that have been oppressed, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent, and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still too few in quantity. Some like Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, and James Dabbs have written about our struggle in eloquent, prophetic, and understanding terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who see them as "dirty nigger lovers." They, unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me rush on to mention my other disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white Church and its leadership. Of course there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a non-segregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Springhill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the Church. I do not say that as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say it as a minister of the gospel, who loves the Church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago that we would have the support of the white Church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say, "Those are social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular.

So here we are moving toward the exit of the twentieth century with a religious community largely adjusted to the status quo, standing as a tail light behind other community agencies rather than a headlight leading men to higher levels of justice.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi, and all the other Southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at her beautiful churches with their spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlay of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over again I have found myself asking: "Who worships here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave the clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when tired, bruised, and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment, I have wept over the laxity of the Church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the Church; I love her sacred walls. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson, and

the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the Church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and fear of being nonconformist.

There was a time when the Church was very powerful. It was during that period when the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the Church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Wherever the early Christians entered a town the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven" and had to obey God rather than man. They were small in number but big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests.

Things are different now. The contemporary Church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch-supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the Church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the Church's silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the Church as never before. If the Church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early Church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I am meeting young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

Maybe again I have been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Maybe I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual Church, the church within the church, as the true *ecclesia* and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been kicked out of their churches and lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have gone with the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. These men have been the leaven in the lump of the race. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the Gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment.

I hope the Church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the Church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are presently misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. For more than two centuries our foreparents labored in this country without wages; they made cotton "king"; they built the homes of their masters in

the midst of brutal injustice and shameful humiliation—and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

I must close now. But before closing I am impelled to mention one other point in your statement that troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I don't believe you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its angry violent dogs literally biting six unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I don't believe you would so quickly commend the policemen if you would observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you would see them slap and kick old Negro men and young Negro boys; if you will observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I'm sorry that I can't join you in your praise for the police department.

It is true that they have been rather disciplined in their public handling of the demonstrators. In this sense they have been rather publicly "nonviolent." But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the last few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. So I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or even moreso, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Maybe Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather publicly nonviolent, as was Chief Pritchett was in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of flagrant racial injustice. T. S. Eliot has said that there is no greater treason than to do the right deed for the wrong reason.

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of the most inhuman provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. There will be the James Merediths, courageously and with a majestic sense of purpose, facing jeering and hostile mobs and the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. There will be the old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two year old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride the segregated buses, and responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity: "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." There will be the young high school and college students, young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, and thus carrying our whole nation back to great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written a letter this long (or should I say a book?). I'm afraid that it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I

had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else is there to do when you are alone for days in the dull monotony of a narrow jail cell other than write long letters, think strange thoughts, and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that is an overstatement of the truth and is indicative of an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything in this letter that is an understatement of the truth and indicative my having a patience that makes me patient with anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Appendix I

“My First Conk”

Excerpt from “Homeboy” in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

Shorty soon decided that my hair was finally long enough to be conked. He had promised to school me in how to beat the barber shops’ three- and four-dollar price by making up congolene, and then conking ourselves.

I took the little list of ingredients he had printed out for me, and went to a grocery store, where I got a can of Red Devil lye, two eggs, and two medium-sized white potatoes. Then at a drugstore near the poolroom, I asked for a large jar of vaseline, a large bar of soap, a large-tooted comb and a fine-toothed comb, one of those rubber hoses with a metal sprayhead, a rubber apron, and a pair of gloves.

“Going to lay on that first conk?” the drugstore man asked me. I proudly told him, grinning, “Right!”

Shorty paid six dollars a week for a room in his cousin’s shabby apartment. His cousin wasn’t at home. “It’s like the pad’s mine, he spends so much time with his woman,” Shorty said. “Now, you watch me—”

He peeled the potatoes and thin-sliced them into a quart-sized Mason fruit jar, then started stirring them with a wooden spoon as he gradually poured in a little over half the can of lye. “Never use a metal spoon; the lye will turn it black,” he told me.

A jelly-like, starchy-looking glop resulted from the lye and potatoes, and Shorty broke in the two eggs, stirring real fast—his own conk and dark face bent down close. The congolene turned pale-yellowish. “Feel the jar,” Shorty said. I cupped my hand against the outside, and snatched it away. “Damn right, it’s hot, that’s the lye,” he said. “So you know it’s going to burn when I comb it in—it burns bad. But the longer you can stand it, the straighter the hair.”

He made me sit down, and he tied the string of the new rubber apron tightly around my neck, and combed up my bush of hair. Then, from the big vaseline jar, he took a handful and massaged it hard all through my hair and into the scalp. He also thickly vaselined my neck, ears and forehead. “When I get to washing out your head, be sure to tell me anywhere you feel any little stinging,” Shorty warned me, washing his hands, then pulling on the rubber gloves, and tying on his own rubber apron. “You always got to remember that any congolene left in burns a sore into your head.”

The congolene just felt warm when Shorty started combing it in. But then my head caught fire.

I gritted my teeth and tried to pull the sides of the kitchen table together. The comb felt as if it was raking my skin off.

My eyes watered, my nose was running. I couldn’t stand it any longer; I bolted to the washbasin. I was cursing Shorty with every name I could think of when he got the spray going and started soap-lathering my head.

He lathered and spray-rinsed, lathered and spray-rinsed, maybe ten or twelve times, each time gradually closing the hotwater faucet, until the rinse was cold, and that helped some.

“You feel any stinging spots?”

“No,” I managed to say. My knees were trembling.

"Sit back down, then. I think we got it all out okay."

The flame came back as Shorty, with a thick towel, started drying my head, rubbing hard. "*Easy, man, easy!*" I kept shouting.

"The first time's always worst. You get used to it better before long. You took it real good, homeboy. You got a good conk."

When Shorty let me stand up and see in the mirror, my hair hung down in limp, damp strings. My scalp still flamed, but not as badly; I could bear it. He draped the towel around my shoulders, over my rubber apron, and began again vaselining my hair.

I could feel him combing, straight back, first the big comb, then the fine-tooth one.

Then, he was using a razor, very delicately, on the back of my neck. Then, finally, shaping the sideburns.

My first view in the mirror blotted out the hurting. I'd seen some pretty conks, but when it's the first time, on your *own* head, the transformation, after the lifetime of kinks, is staggering.

The mirror reflected Shorty behind me. We both were grinning and sweating. And on top of my head was this thick, smooth sheen of shining red hair—real red—as straight as any white man's.

How ridiculous I was! Stupid enough to stand there simply lost in admiration of my hair now looking "white," reflected in the mirror in Shorty's room. I vowed that I'd never again be without a conk, and I never was for many years.

This was my first really big step toward self-degradation: when I endured all of that pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. I had joined that multitude of Negro men and women in America who are brainwashed into believing that the black people are "inferior"—and white people "superior"—that they will even violate and mutilate their God-created bodies to try to look "pretty" by white standards.

Look around today, in every small town and big city, from two-bit catfish and soda-pop joints into the "integrated" lobby of the Waldorf-Astoria, and you'll see conks on black men. And you'll see black women wearing these green and pink and purple and red and platinum-blond wigs. They're all more ridiculous than a slapstick comedy. It makes you wonder if the Negro has completely lost his sense of identity, lost touch with himself.

You'll see the conk worn by many, many so-called "upperclass" Negroes, and, as much as I hate to say it about them, on all too many Negro entertainers. One of the reasons that I've especially admired some of them, like Lionel Hampton and Sidney Poitier, among others, is that they have kept their natural hair and fought to the top. I admire any Negro man who has never had himself conked, or who has had the sense to get rid of it—as I finally did.

I don't know which kind of self-defacing conk is the greater shame—the one you'll see on the heads of the black so-called "middle class" and "upper class," who ought to know better, or the one you'll see on the heads of the poorest, most downtrodden, ignorant black men. I mean the legal-minimum-wage ghetto-dwelling kind of Negro, as I was when I got my first one. It's generally among these poor fools that you'll see a black kerchief over the man's head, like Aunt Jemima; he's trying to make his conk last longer, between trips to the barbershop. Only for special occasions is this kerchief-protected conk exposed—to show off how "sharp" and "hip" its owner is. The ironic thing is that I have never heard any woman, white or black, express any admiration for a conk. Of course, any white woman with a black man isn't thinking about his hair. But I don't see how on earth a black woman with any race pride could walk down the street with any black man wearing a conk—the emblem of his shame that he is black.

To my own shame, when I say all of this I'm talking first of all about myself—because you can't show me any Negro who ever conked more faithfully than I did. I'm speaking from personal experience when I say of any black man who conks today, or any white-wigged black woman, that if they gave the brains in their heads just half as much attention as they do their hair, they would be a thousand times better off.

Appendix J

“Saved”

Version used in *The Conscious Reader* and *Rereading America*

It was because of my letters that I happened to stumble upon starting to acquire some kind of a homemade education.

I became increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote, especially those to Mr. Elijah Muhammad. In the street, I had been the most articulate hustler out there -- I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn't articulate, I wasn't even functional. How would I sound writing in slang, the way I would say it, something such as "Look, daddy, let me pull your coat about a cat, Elijah Muhammad—"

Many who today hear me somewhere in person, or on television, or those who read something I've said, will think I went to school far beyond the eighth grade. This impression is due entirely to my prison studies.

It had really begun back in the Charlestown Prison, when Bimbi first made me feel envy of his stock of knowledge. Bimbi had always taken charge of any conversation he was in, and I had tried to emulate him. But every book I picked up had few sentences which didn't contain anywhere from one to nearly all of the words that might as well have been in Chinese. When I just skipped those words, of course, I really ended up with little idea of what the book said. So I had come to the Norfolk Prison Colony still going through only book-reading motions. Pretty soon, I would have quit even these motions, unless I had received the motivation that I did.

I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary -- to study, to learn some words. I was lucky enough to reason also that I should try to improve my penmanship. It was sad. I couldn't even write in a straight line. It was both ideas together that moved me to request a dictionary along with some tablets and pencils from the Norfolk Prison Colony school.

I spent two days just riffling uncertainly through the dictionary's pages. I'd never realized so many words existed! I didn't know which words I needed to learn. Finally, just to start some kind of action, I began copying.

In my slow, painstaking, ragged handwriting, I copied into my tablet everything printed on that first page, down to the punctuation marks.

I believe it took me a day. Then, aloud, I read back, to myself, everything I'd written on the tablet. Over and over, aloud, to myself, I read my own handwriting.

I woke up the next morning, thinking about those words—immensely proud to realize that not only had I written so much at one time, but I'd written words that I never knew were in the world. Moreover, with a little effort, I also could remember what many of these words meant. I reviewed the words whose meanings I didn't remember. Funny thing, from the dictionary first page right now, that "armadillo" springs to my mind. The dictionary had a picture of it, a long-tailed, long-eared, burrowing African mammal, which lives off termites caught by sticking out its tongue as an anteater does for ants.

I was so fascinated that I went on—I copied the dictionary's next page. And the same experience came when I studied that. With every succeeding page, I also learned of people and places and events from history. Actually the dictionary is like a miniature encyclopedia. Finally

the dictionary's A section had filled a whole tablet—and I went on into the B's. That was the way I started copying what eventually became the entire dictionary. It went a lot faster after so much practice helped me to pick up handwriting speed. Between what I wrote in my tablet, and writing letters, during the rest of my time in prison I would guess I wrote a million words.

I suppose it was inevitable that as my word-base broadened, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the book was saying. Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened. Let me tell you something: from then until I left that prison, in every free moment I had, if I was not reading in the library, I was reading on my bunk. You couldn't have gotten me out of books with a wedge. Between Mr. Muhammad's teachings, my correspondence, my visitors—usually Ella and Reginald—and my reading of books, months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I never had been so truly free in my life.

The Norfolk Prison Colony's library was in the school building. A variety of classes was taught there by instructors who came from such places as Harvard and Boston universities. The weekly debates between inmate teams were also held in the school building. You would be astonished to know how worked up convict debaters and audiences would get over subjects like "Should Babies Be Fed Milk?"

Available on the prison library's shelves were books on just about every general subject. Much of the big private collection that Parkhurst had willed to the prison was still in crates and boxes in the back of the library—thousands of old books. Some of them looked ancient: covers faded, old-time parchment-looking binding. Parkhurst, I've mentioned, seemed to have been principally interested in history and religion. He had the money and the special interest to have a lot of books that you wouldn't have in general circulation. Any college library would have been lucky to get that collection.

As you can imagine, especially in a prison where there was heavy emphasis on rehabilitation, an inmate was smiled upon if he demonstrated an unusually intense interest in books. There was a sizable number of well-read inmates, especially the popular debaters. Some were said by many to be practically walking encyclopedias. They were almost celebrities. No university would ask any student to devour literature as I did when this new world opened to me, of being able to read and understand.

I read more in my room than in the library itself. An inmate who was known to read a lot could check out more than the permitted maximum number of books. I preferred reading in the total isolation of my own room.

When I had progressed to really serious reading, every night at about ten P.M. I would be outraged with the "lights out." It always seemed to catch me right in the middle of something engrossing.

Fortunately, right outside my door was a corridor light that cast a glow into my room. The glow was enough to read by, once my eyes adjusted to it. So when "lights out" came, I would sit on the floor where I could continue reading in that glow.

At one-hour intervals the night guards paced past every room. Each time I heard the approaching footsteps, I jumped into bed and feigned sleep. And as soon as the guard passed, I got back out of bed onto the floor area of that light-glow, where I would read for another fifty-eight minutes -- until the guard approached again. That went on until three or four every morning. Three or four hours of sleep a night was enough for me. Often in the years in the streets I had slept less than that.

The teachings of Mr. Muhammad stressed how history had been "whitened"—when white men had written history books, the black man simply had been left out. Mr. Muhammad couldn't have said anything that would have struck me much harder. I had never forgotten how when my class, me and all of those whites, had studied seventh-grade United States history back in Mason, the history of the Negro had been covered in one paragraph, and the teacher had gotten a big laugh with his joke, "Negroes' feet are so big that when they walk, they leave a hole in the ground."

This is one reason why Mr. Muhammad's teachings spread so swiftly all over the United States, among all Negroes, whether or not they became followers of Mr. Muhammad. The teachings ring true—to every Negro. You can hardly show me a black adult in America—or a white one, for that matter -- who knows from the history books anything like the truth about the black man's role. In my own case, once I heard of the "glorious history of the black man," I took special pains to hunt in the library for books that would inform me on details about black history.

I can remember accurately the very first set of books that really impressed me. I have since bought that set of books and have it at home for my children to read as they grow up. It's called *Wonders of the World*. It's full of pictures of archeological finds, statues that depict, usually, non-European people.

I found books like Will Durant's *Story of Civilization*. I read H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*. *Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois gave me a glimpse into the black people's history before they came to this country. Carter G. Woodson's *Negro History* opened my eyes about black empires before the black slave was brought to the United States, and the early Negro struggles for freedom.

J. A. Rogers' three volumes of *Sex and Race* told about race-mixing before Christ's time; about Aesop being a black man who told fables; about Egypt's Pharaohs; about the great Coptic Christian Empires; about Ethiopia, the earth's oldest continuous black civilization, as China is the oldest continuous civilization.

Mr. Muhammad's teaching about how the white man had been created led me to *Findings in Genetics* by Gregor Mendel. (The dictionary's G section was where I had learned what "genetics" meant.) I really studied this book by the Austrian monk. Reading it over and over, especially certain sections, helped me to understand that if you started with a black man, a white man could be produced; but starting with a white man, you never could produce a black man—because the white gene is recessive. And since no one disputes that there was but one Original Man, the conclusion is clear.

During the last year or so, in the New York Times, Arnold Toynbee used the word "bleached" in describing the white man. (His words were: "White (i.e. bleached) human beings of North European origin. . . .") Toynbee also referred to the European geographic area as only a peninsula of Asia. He said there is no such thing as Europe. And if you look at the globe, you will see for yourself that America is only an extension of Asia. (But at the same time Toynbee is among those who have helped to bleach history. He has written that Africa was the only continent that produced no history. He won't write that again. Every day now, the truth is coming to light.)

I never will forget how shocked I was when I began reading about slavery's total horror. It made such an impact upon me that it later became one of my favorite subjects when I became a minister of Mr. Muhammad's. The world's most monstrous crime, the sin and the blood on the white man's hands, are almost impossible to believe. Books like the one by Frederick Olmstead opened my eyes to the horrors suffered when the slave was landed in the United States. The

European woman, Fannie Kimball, who had married a Southern white slaveowner, described how human beings were degraded. Of course I read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In fact, I believe that's the only novel I have ever read since I started serious reading.

Parkhurst's collection also contained some bound pamphlets of the Abolitionist Anti-Slavery Society of New England. I read descriptions of atrocities, saw those illustrations of black slave women tied up and flogged with whips; of black mothers watching their babies being dragged off, never to be seen by their mothers again; of dogs after slaves, and of the fugitive slave catchers, evil white men with whips and clubs and chains and guns. I read about the slave preacher Nat Turner, who put the fear of God into the white slavemaster. Nat Turner wasn't going around preaching pie-in-the-sky and "non-violent" freedom for the black man. There in Virginia one night in 1831, Nat and seven other slaves started out at his master's home and through the night they went from one plantation "big house" to the next, killing, until by the next morning fifty-seven white people were dead and Nat had about seventy slaves following him. White people, terrified for their lives, fled from their homes, locked themselves up in public buildings, hid in the woods, and some even left the state. A small army of soldiers took two months to catch and hang Nat Turner. Somewhere I have read where Nat Turner's example is said to have inspired John Brown to invade Virginia and attack Harper's Ferry nearly thirty years later, with thirteen white men and five Negroes.

I read Herodotus, "the father of History," or, rather, I read about him. And I read the histories of various nations, which opened my eyes gradually, then wider and wider, to how the whole world's white men had indeed acted like devils, pillaging and raping and bleeding and draining the whole world's non-white people. I remember, for instance, books such as Will Durant's story of Oriental civilization, and Mahatma Gandhi's accounts of the struggle to drive the British out of India.

Book after book showed me how the white man had brought upon the world's black, brown, red, and yellow peoples every variety of the sufferings of exploitation. I saw how since the sixteenth century, the so-called "Christian trader" white man began to ply the seas in his lust for Asian and African empires, and plunder, and power. I read, I saw, how the white man never has gone among the non-white peoples bearing the Cross in the true manner and spirit of Christ's teachings—meek, humble, and Christ-like.

I perceived, as I read, how the collective white man had been actually nothing but a piratical opportunist who used Faustian machinations to make his own Christianity his initial wedge in criminal conquests. First, always "religiously," he branded "heathen" and "pagan" labels upon ancient non-white cultures and civilizations. The stage thus set, he then turned upon his non-white victims his weapons of war.

I read how, entering India—half a billion deeply religious brown people -- the British white man, by 1759, through promises, trickery and manipulations, controlled much of India through Great Britain's East India Company. The parasitical British administration kept tentacling out to half of the subcontinent. In 1857, some of the desperate people of India finally mutinied -- and, excepting the African slave trade, nowhere has history recorded any more unnecessary bestial and ruthless human carnage than the British suppression of the non-white Indian people.

Over 115 million African blacks—close to the 1930's population of the United States—were murdered or enslaved during the slave trade. And I read how when the slave market was glutted, the cannibalistic white powers of Europe next carved up, as their colonies, the richest

areas of the black continent. And Europe's chancelleries for the next century played a chess game of naked exploitation and power from Cape Horn to Cairo.

Ten guards and the warden couldn't have torn me out of those books. Not even Elijah Muhammad could have been more eloquent than those books were in providing indisputable proof that the collective white man had acted like a devil in virtually every contact he had with the world's collective non-white man. I listen today to the radio, and watch television, and read the headlines about the collective white man's fear and tension concerning China. When the white man professes ignorance about why the Chinese hate him so, my mind can't help flashing back to what I read, there in prison, about how the blood forebears of this same white man raped China at a time when China was trusting and helpless. Those original white "Christian traders" sent into China millions of pounds of opium. By 1839, so many of the Chinese were addicts that China's desperate government destroyed twenty thousand chests of opium. The first Opium War was promptly declared by the white man. Imagine! Declaring war upon someone who objects to being narcotized! The Chinese were severely beaten, with Chinese-invented gunpowder.

The Treaty of Nanking made China pay the British white man for the destroyed opium; forced open China's major ports to British trade; forced China to abandon Hong Kong; fixed China's import tariffs so low that cheap British articles soon flooded in, maiming China's industrial development.

After a second Opium War, the Tientsin Treaties legalized the ravaging opium trade, legalized a British-French-American control of China's customs. China tried delaying that Treaty's ratification; Peking was looted and burned.

"Kill the foreign white devils!" was the 1901 Chinese war cry in the Boxer Rebellion. Losing again, this time the Chinese were driven from Peking's choicest areas. The vicious, arrogant white man put up the famous signs, "Chinese and dogs not allowed."

Red China after World War II closed its doors to the Western white world. Massive Chinese agricultural, scientific, and industrial efforts are described in a book that *Life* magazine recently published. Some observers inside Red China have reported that the world never has known such a hate-white campaign as is now going on in this non-white country where, present birthrates continuing, in fifty more years Chinese will be half the earth's population. And it seems that some Chinese chickens will soon come home to roost, with China's recent successful nuclear tests.

Let us face reality. We can see in the United Nations a new world order being shaped, along color lines—an alliance among the non-white nations. America's U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson complained not long ago that in the United Nations "a skin game" was being played. He was right. He was facing reality. A "skin game" is being played. But Ambassador Stevenson sounded like Jesse James accusing the marshal of carrying a gun. Because who in the world's history ever has played a worse "skin game" than the white man?

Mr. Muhammad, to whom I was writing daily, had no idea of what a new world had opened up to me through my efforts to document his teachings in books.

When I discovered philosophy, I tried to touch all the landmarks of philosophical development. Gradually, I read most of the old philosophers, Occidental and Oriental. The Oriental philosophers were the ones I came to prefer; finally, my impression was that most Occidental philosophy had largely been borrowed from the Oriental thinkers. Socrates, for instance, traveled in Egypt. Some sources even say that Socrates was initiated into some of the Egyptian mysteries. Obviously Socrates got some of his wisdom among the East's wise men.

I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive. I certainly wasn't seeking any degree, the way a college confers a status symbol upon its students. My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America. Not long ago, an English writer telephoned me from London, asking questions. One was, "What's your alma mater?" I told him, "Books." You will never catch me with a free fifteen minutes in which I'm not studying something I feel might be able to help the black man.

Yesterday I spoke in London, and both ways on the plane across the Atlantic I was studying a document about how the United Nations proposes to insure the human rights of the oppressed minorities of the world. The American black man is the world's most shameful case of minority oppression. What makes the black man think of himself as only an internal United States issue is just a catch-phrase, two words, "civil rights." How is the black man going to get "civil rights" before first he wins his human rights? If the American black man will start thinking about his human rights, and then start thinking of himself as part of one of the world's great peoples, he will see he has a case for the United Nations.

I can't think of a better case! Four hundred years of black blood and sweat invested here in America, and the white man still has the black man begging for what every immigrant fresh off the ship can take for granted the minute he walks down the gangplank.

But I'm digressing. I told the Englishman that my alma mater was books, a good library. Every time I catch a plane, I have with me a book that I want to read—and that's a lot of books these days. If I weren't out here every day battling the white man, I could spend the rest of my life reading, just satisfying my curiosity—because you can hardly mention anything I'm not curious about. I don't think anybody ever got more out of going to prison than I did. In fact, prison enabled me to study far more intensively than I would have if my life had gone differently and I had attended some college. I imagine that one of the biggest troubles with colleges is there are too many distractions, too much panty-raiding, fraternities, and boola-boola and all of that. Where else but in a prison could I have attacked my ignorance by being able to study intensely sometimes as much as fifteen hours a day?

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