



Is it plagiarism? Exercises for practice

The following passage is from Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail":

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.

Read over these student responses to the passage and discuss whether they use appropriate citation. If they don't, what would you do to correct the response?

1. Martin Luther King was certain that nobody would want to be contented with a superficial social analysis that concerns itself only with effects and doesn't deal with underlying causes.
2. In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King writes to fellow clergy saying that although "you deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham, your statement fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations," (pg. 1856).
3. Martin Luther King notes that the city of Birmingham's white power structure left African-Americans there no alternative but to demonstrate ("Letter from Birmingham Jail").
4. In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King suggests that although his fellow clergy "deplore the demonstration taking place," they lack "a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations," (pg. 1856).

Sample MLA Style Citation:

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997. 1854 – 66.

Sample APA Style Citation:

Letter from Birmingham Jail. (n.d). The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University. Retrieved 06 July 2009 from http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/.

**note: citations would vary depending on what source was used – in this case, a Norton anthology was cited for MLA and an online encyclopedia for APA style.*