

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 thusly, carrying our whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the Founding Fathers in the 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 is indicative of 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.

## Critical Reading

- 1. Respond:** What do you think is the most persuasive part of this letter? Why?
- 2. (a)** In the first paragraph, what reasons does King give for his confidence in the outcome of the struggle? **(b) Infer:** Why do you think he stresses his attitude about the outcome?
- 3. Distinguish:** What two points does King make about the means by which a just goal should be reached? Explain.



### How does literature shape or reflect society?

What do both of these documents suggest are the privileges and obligations of freedom? In your response, use at least two of these Essential Question words: *democracy*, *liberty*, *criticize*.