

Enthymemes in King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" / **Answers**

Based on our class discussions of syllogisms and enthymemes, unpack the following enthymemes by constructing (quasi) deductive syllogisms. For the correct distribution of terms, oftentimes you'll have to paraphrase, which is fine. Also, if you get stuck, reread the relevant sections from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Contextual clues help a great deal.

1. "But since I feel that you are men of genuine goodwill 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."

Paragraph #1 of "Letter"

MP: Men of genuine goodwill deserve a patient and reasonable answer. **(Implied)**

mp: You are men of genuine goodwill. **(Stated)**

C: You are men who deserve a patient and reasonable answer. **(Implied)**

2. "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."

Paragraph #1 of "Letter"

MP: Criticisms that are sincerely set forth deserve a patient and reasonable answer. **(Implied)**

mp: Your criticisms are sincerely set forth. **(Stated)**

C: Your criticisms deserve a patient and reasonable answer. **(Implied)**

3. "... you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence."

Paragraph #23 of "Letter"

MP: Actions that precipitate violence, even peaceful ones, must be condemned.

mp: Our actions, though peaceful, precipitate violence.

C: Our actions, though peaceful, must be condemned.

4. “Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily.”

Paragraph #10 of “Letter”

MP: Privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily.

mp: You are members of a privileged group. / Whites are members of a privileged group.

C: You are not likely (seldom) give up your privileges voluntarily. / Whites are not likely to . . .

5. “All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality.”

Paragraph #14 of “Letter”

MP: Things that distort the soul and damage the personality are unjust.

mp: All segregation statutes distort the soul and damage the personality.

C: All segregation statutes are unjust.

6. “I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment . . . is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.”

Paragraph #18 of “Letter”

MP: An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment . . . is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

mp: I am an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment.

C: I am in reality expressing the highest respect for law.