Letter from Birmingham Jail Seminar

Absent: Himes, Zimmerman, Williams

Eble presented an outline for arrangement.

Bruns: What exactly is the thesis of this piece? Explicit? Read from paragraph 49. About forgiveness from ministers, but mostly forgiveness from God.

* Mark: Qualifier…
* Verrilli: Response qualifying what they’re saying… showing their wrong, explaining his actions
* Nick: Not untimely…
* Bruns: Thesis = whole thing…
* Fritz: Extremism, unjust / just laws… white supremacists… different thesis for each issue. Whenever he circles back…
* Schlueter: He builds towards one thesis…
* Fritz: Implicit thesis, with many claims…
* Eble: What is the claim?
  + Evan: Perfect time to act; we must do so…
  + Schlueter: We need our freedom…
  + Fritz: Touches on many subjects…more general…
  + Bruns: The time is now…another point = not an outsider…peaceful demonstrations… white church is not helping…
  + Tory: Disappointment…loved it for all of the ethos / pathos / logos. Could easily identify… Begins with a summary…his story… then, he gets there…is disappointed in society… favorite part…
  + Eble: Let’s look at it…
  + Tory: I like how he attacked it…
  + Verrilli: White moderate—reminded me of Thoreau’s claim against voting.
  + Bugada: moral obligation to act against laws.
  + Fritz: Never mentioned Thoreau…
  + Eble: Who did he mention, then?
  + Tory: Hitler, St. Paul, guys from Sumer…
  + Eble: Allusions / Ethos …
    - Bugada: Shows that he’s educated…
    - Bruns: Clergymen… Biblical references—common history! Working towards a common ground. Builds on that with the White Church.
    - Verrilli: This hit me—he was in a jail… not looking through a textbook.
    - Eble: Yeah… he has a command of these allusions.
    - Fritz: Would be amazing if I could write this… for King, this was his job, his life! He gave talks on this every day. This is a summation…
    - Eble: He’s a minister…
    - Fritz: Allusions—not just writing to the ministers… to everyone! To get respect from white people…
    - Eble: Respect from white folk?
    - Bugada: Government view… FBI… much of what the public knows. Bias against teachings…
    - Eble: Straw Man / Ad Hominem
  + Bugada: Use of “we” – who is “we?”
    - Schlueter: Not trying to create division… us versus you… but didn’t…
    - Fritz: Found a website—cited paragraph 14… <http://faculty.deanza.fhda.edu/schultzmary/stories/storyReader$884>
    - Bruns: Civil Rights…
    - Eble: Let’s go to paragraph 14… metaphor… sentence
      * Tory: Imagery—words = descriptive… visualize in head…pick up on the pathos… “wandering on tiptoe stance”
      * Verrilli: Favorite part = little girl. “Clouds…in her mental sky”
      * Bugada: Hits all levels…
      * Verrilli: Song by Bob Dylan… connected to growing up thinking that people are awful.
      * Eble: Yes! Effects all
      * Rieger: Long and drawn out… going on for so long…
      * Bugada: Climax
      * Schlueter: Ranting in a purposeful, controlled way. He could have kept going…
      * Eble: Clause at the end… periodic sentence… *so good*. King takes you through his experiences.
      * Fritz: Takes you through the injustice in the south.
      * Bruns: Ominous clouds of inferiority… mental sky… what’s a “John?”

Fritz: Horse / Buggy pace… Fritz emailed about the other ones… What are these?

 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.

Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?

Eble read; proof

* Tory: Logical…I liked it!
* Fritz: Just / Unjust laws… Bohne…
* Tory: Pronouns…?
* Fritz: Read paragraph 31…
  + Schlueter: Favorite paragraph… very relatable… allusions! Used it in the “I Have a Dream” speech… able to use Biblical references… Jesus = not complacent…
  + Eble: Yes! Antithesis…rhetorical question, claim of fact / value
  + Bruns: White spectrum… religious, historical…
  + Fritz: Shows roots…American and preacher…
  + Schlueter: Imagery of Calvary… throwing out contrast of Jesus and criminals… can be an extremist for segregation like Bull Connor, or one who is loving, and gets crucified…

Eble: Introduction / Conclusion?

* Verrilli: T.S. Eliot allusion…then, four steps… watching self to be sure that you don’t kill 1,000 to save 1,000,000… Eliot’s play about St. Thomas a Beckett
* Eble clarified…
* Fritz: Not here…results?
* Eble: I don’t know…letter to start a stand-in / sit-in

Listened to an NPR story about the 50th anniversary of the letter. (<http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=177468615&m=177468604>; transcript at <http://www.npr.org/2013/04/16/177468615/letter-from-birmingham-jail-50-years-later>)

Fritz: Are Americans on the right side of history?

Bugada: Great leader for the civil rights movement…great speaker…

Schlueter: Rogerian in some aspects… but… he’s not willing to compromise on acting now… explained opening paragraph…

* Bruns: Compromise = completely blank… no capitulation… he couldn’t just half-heartedly…
* Eble: Venn Diagram…
* Verrilli: Compromise… commend the community as a whole… reacting how they are reacting…
* Schlueter: “You aren’t black…”
* Eble: Something…
* Bruns: No compromise!

Ended on question of whether or not King compromises…