

Reading for Information

Martin Luther King Jr.: He Showed Us the Way

Essay

You have just read two civil rights leaders' positions on the use of force in political resistance. Now you will learn why César Chávez, a leader in the crusade for the fair treatment of migrant farm workers, advocated nonviolence to achieve his goals. Try to predict his arguments based on what you have read in the two previous selections. As you read his argument, bear in mind that later you will be asked to support your own opinion on this weapon for social change.

Standards Focus: Analyze an Argument

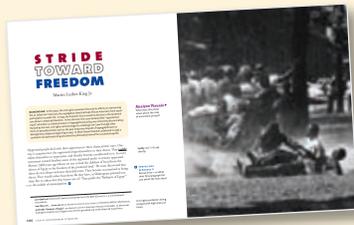
A well-formed argument typically contains a **claim**, the writer or speaker's position on a problem or issue; **support**, which consists of logical reasons and valid evidence that help to justify the claim; and a **counterargument**, brief arguments that refute or answer objections to any opposing claims. A strong argument is based on a **general principle** that clearly links the verifiable support to the claim. If you can't accept the general principle as a truth, then the entire argument falls apart.

Sometimes, though, writers and speakers use faulty reasoning, or **logical fallacies**, to support their claims. Some common logical fallacies include

- **circular logic:** supporting a statement by stating it in different words;
- **stereotyping:** broad statements about people on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, race, or political, social, professional, or religious group;
- **hasty generalization:** a conclusion drawn from too little evidence or from evidence that is biased;
- **non-sequitur:** a conclusion that does not follow logically from the "proof" offered to support it.

As you read, analyze the argument made by Chávez, completing a chart similar to the one below.

	Notes
Claim	Nonviolence is the "only weapon that Christians who struggle for social change can claim as their own."
General Principle	
Support	
Counterargument(s)	



Use with "Stride Toward Freedom" and "Necessary to Protect Ourselves," beginning on pages 1220 and 1224.

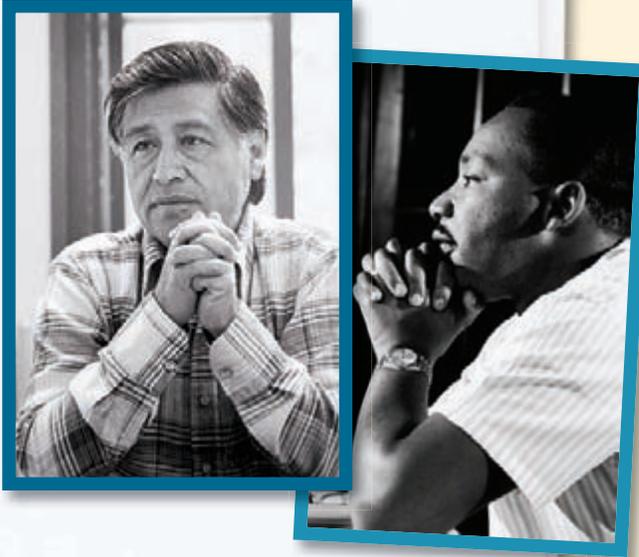


11.5c Generalize ideas from selections to make predictions about other texts. **11.5f** Identify false premises in persuasive writing. **11.5h** Generate and respond logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, synthesizing, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading texts. **11.6d** Clarify and defend position with precise and relevant evidence elaborating ideas clearly and accurately.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.:

He Showed Us the Way

César Chávez



In honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s memory we also acknowledge nonviolence as a truly powerful weapon to achieve equality and liberation—in fact, the only weapon that Christians who struggle for social change can claim as their own.

Dr. King's entire life was an example of power that nonviolence brings to bear in the real world. It is an example that inspired much of the philosophy and strategy of the farm workers' movement. This observance of Dr. King's death gives us the best possible opportunity to recall the principles with which our struggle has grown and matured. **A**

Our conviction is that human life is a very special possession given by God to man and that no one has the right to take it for any reason or for any cause, however just it may be. **B**

We are also convinced that nonviolence is more powerful than violence. Nonviolence supports you if you have a just and moral cause. Nonviolence provides the opportunity to stay on the offensive, and that is of crucial importance to win any contest.

If we resort to violence then one of two things will happen: either the violence will be escalated and there will be many injuries and perhaps deaths on both sides, or there will be total demoralization of the workers. **B**

Nonviolence has exactly the opposite effect. If, for every violent act committed against us, we respond with nonviolence, we attract people's support. We can gather the support of millions who have a conscience and would rather see a nonviolent resolution to problems. We are convinced that when people are faced with a direct appeal from the poor struggling nonviolently against great odds, they will react positively. The American people and people everywhere still yearn for justice. It is to that yearning that we appeal.

A ANALYZE AN ARGUMENT

Notice that Chávez states his **claim** in his opening sentence. Now reread lines 4–7 to identify his first piece of **support** for this claim. Note this on your chart.

B ANALYZE AN ARGUMENT

Reread lines 11–16. What reasons does Chávez give to support his conviction that “nonviolence is more powerful than violence”? Note these reasons as “support” in your chart.

Language Coach

Fixed Expressions “Work on the theory” is a **fixed expression**—a normal, often used combination of words—meaning “function under a certain belief.” Another verb used with *theory* is *advance*. Use a fixed expression with *advance* in a sentence of your own.

C ANALYZE AN ARGUMENT

In this paragraph, Chávez anticipates objection to his claim about the advantages of nonviolence. Identify these objections.

D ANALYZE AN ARGUMENT

What counterarguments does Chávez provide to refute the objections he just anticipated? Note these in your chart.

E ANALYZE AN ARGUMENT

What does Chávez say about those who espouse violence?

But if we are committed to nonviolence only as a strategy or tactic, then if it fails our only alternative is to turn to violence. So we must balance the strategy with a clear understanding of what we are doing. However important the struggle is and however much misery, poverty and exploitation exist, we know that it cannot be more important than one human life. We work on the theory that men and women who are truly concerned about people are nonviolent by nature. These people become violent when
30 the deep concern they have for people is frustrated and when they are faced with seemingly insurmountable odds.

We advocate militant nonviolence as our means of achieving justice for our people, but we are not blind to the feelings of frustration, impatience and anger which see the inside every farm worker. The burdens of generations of poverty and powerlessness lie heavy in the fields of America. If we fail, there are those who will see violence as the shortcut to change. **C**

It is precisely to overcome these frustrations that we have involved masses of people in their own struggle throughout the movement. Freedom is best experienced through participation and self-determination, and free men and women instinctively prefer
40 democratic change to any other means. Thus, demonstrations and marches, strikes and boycotts are not only weapons against the growers, but our way of avoiding the senseless violence that brings no honor to any class or community. The boycott, as Gandhi taught, is the most nearly perfect instrument of nonviolent change, allowing masses of people to participate actively in a cause.

When victory comes through violence, it is a victory with strings attached. If we beat the growers at the expense of violence, victory would come at the expense of injury and perhaps death. Such a thing would have a tremendous impact on us. We would lose regard for human beings. Then the struggle would become a mechanical thing. When you lose your sense of life and justice, you lose your strength. **D**

50 The greater the oppression, the more leverage nonviolence holds. Violence does not work in the long run and if it is temporarily successful, it replaces one violent form of power with another just as violent. People suffer from violence. Examine history. Who gets killed in the case of violent revolution? The poor, the workers. The people of the land are the ones who give their bodies and don't really gain that much for it. We believe it is too big a price to pay for not getting anything. Those who espouse violence exploit people. To call men to arms with many promises, to ask them to give up their lives for a cause and then not produce for them afterwards, is the most vicious type of oppression. **E**

We know that most likely we are not going to do anything else the rest of our lives
60 except build our union. For us there is nowhere else to go. Although we would like to see victory come soon, we are willing to wait. In this sense time is our ally. We learned many years ago that the rich may have money, but the poor have time.

It has been our experience that few men or women ever have the opportunity to know the true satisfaction that comes with giving one's life totally in the nonviolent struggle for justice. Martin Luther King Jr., was one of these unique servants and from him we learned many of the lessons that have guided us. For these lessons and for his sacrifice for the poor and oppressed, Dr. King's memory will be cherished in the hearts of the farm workers forever.

Comprehension

1. **Clarify** In addition to serving as weapons against growers, how do boycotts benefit the masses of people who participate in them?

Text Analysis

2. **Examine General Principle** What is Chávez's basic assumption about social change and just people? Might someone disagree with him? Explain.
3. **Analyze an Argument** Chávez acknowledges that nonviolent resistance has certain limitations. How does he answer each of the following objections?
 - People who have been oppressed may feel legitimately frustrated or impatient and turn to violence as a shortcut to change.
 - Violence does sometimes bring about victory.



Virginia Standards
of Learning

11.2c Evaluate sources including advertisements, editorials, blogs, Web sites, and other media for relationships between intent, factual content, and opinion. **11.5f** Identify false premises in persuasive writing. **11.5h** Generate and respond logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, synthesizing, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading texts. **11.6d** Clarify and defend position with precise and relevant evidence elaborating ideas clearly and accurately.

Read for Information: Analyze an Argument

WRITING PROMPT

Find an article in a newspaper (or an online editorial, blog, or Web site) that argues a position. Analyze the argument to determine if the writer clearly states his or her claim, includes strong supporting evidence, and addresses possible objections.

Use these questions to help you with the writing prompt:

1. What claim is the writer making? What general principle is the claim based on? Do you agree or disagree with the general principle?
2. What support does the writer give to uphold his or her claim? Does the writer cite specific facts, statistics, expert opinions, and true-life examples as evidence? Or does the writer include unfounded opinions as evidence?
3. Does the writer use any logical fallacies, such as hasty generalizations or stereotypes?
4. What counterarguments does the writer include? Are they valid arguments to objections that someone might raise?
5. Overall, how well do you think the writer argues his or her point?

