ENG220
Weekly Reading and Writing #6

Monday
Do some research into Langston Hughes’ life and work. Read packet:
Langston Hughes, *Negro Speaks of Rivers*, *Harlem*, *The Weary Blues*,
and excerpts from *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, *The Harlem
Renaissance*, and *Critics on Langston Hughes*.

Wednesday
Martin Luther King *Letter From the Birmingham Jail*
Barack Obama *Speech on Race*

WRITE: Due Wednesday
Choose one or any combination of the following:

- Listen (link on our class website) to Hughes read “*The Negro Speaks of Rivers*.” What
  in particular moves you about this poem? What details would you choose if you were
  writing this poem about your own culture, your own heritage?
- Would you like to write that poem? Compose a poem of your own using Hughes’
  framework. For example: *The Ojibwa speaks of plains*. After you have composed your
  own poem, write a prose explanation about the importance of *heritage* in his poem and
  in yours.
- Listen (find the link on our class website) to Hughes read “*The Weary Blues*” (handout).
  Consider the following quotes and write about the ways in which jazz and the blues
  make his poetry possible, the ways in which his poem is jazz. Please use details from
  his poem to describe your thinking.
  - “Like the waves of the sea coming one after another, always one after another,
    like the earth moving around the sun – night, day, night, day, night, day –
    forever, so is the soul of black music with its rhythm that never betrays you, its
    strength like the beat of the human heart, its humor and its rooted power.”
  - “Jazz – the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul.”
  - “They don’t care whether they are like white folks. Their joy runs, Bang! Into
    ecstasy.”

- Would you like to participate in the *Letter From the Birmingham Jail* contest? Write
  that essay for weekly writing credit, then submit the essay to the competition.
- Obama on *Race*: Do you think Obama is following King’s rhetorical tradition? If so, in
  what specific ways? In what specific ways does this essay describe the world we live in?