

Lesson Name : 22

Lesson Title : I Have a Dream

Course Name : English 2 Part 1 [Honors]

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Essential Instruction

Please read Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech ["I Have a Dream."](#)



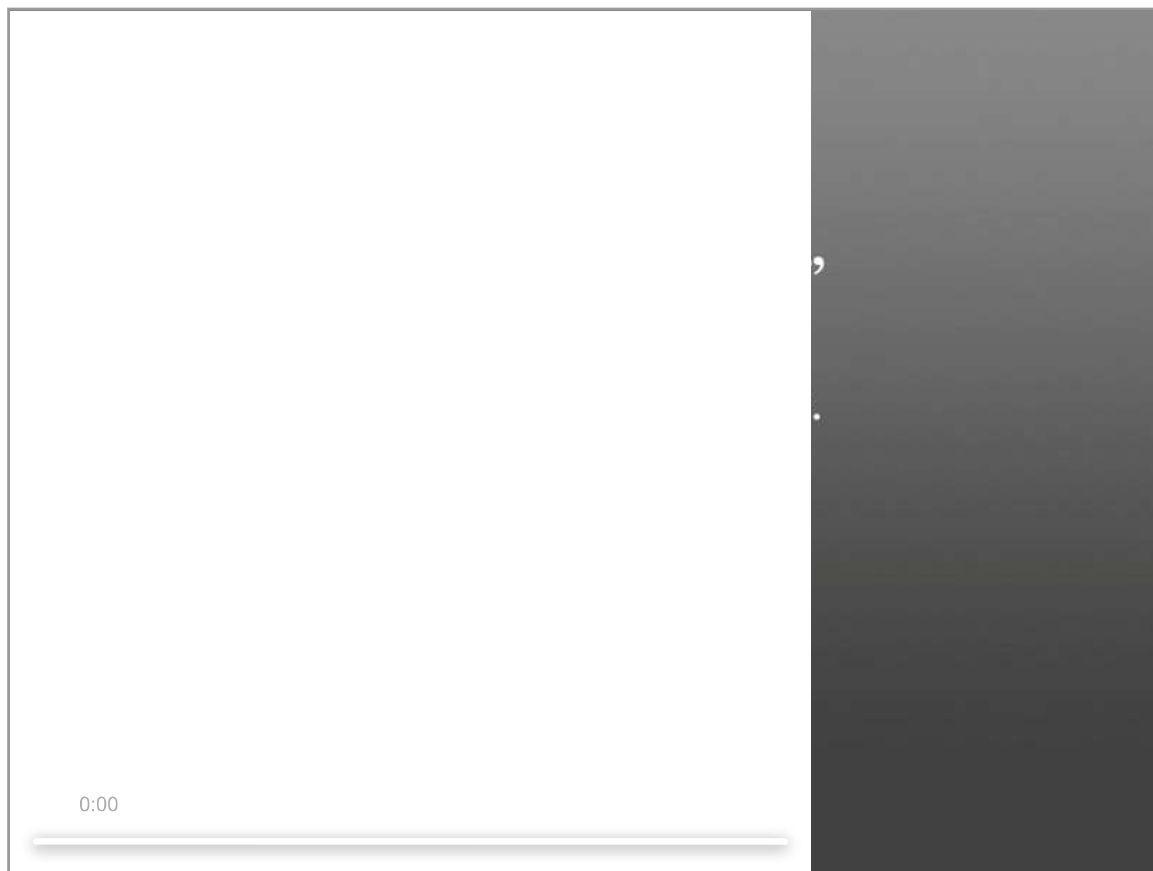
Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington in 1963. This march is pictured above.

In "I Have a Dream," Martin Luther King Jr. delivers a passionate speech about the fight for racial equality. There is a good chance that you have heard about – and maybe even recognize some lines from – this famous speech. But now you will take some time to really dig in and analyze what King said, why he said it, and how he said it.

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to answer these questions:

- What is the purpose of "I Have a Dream"?
- What evidence and reasoning does King use to support his purpose? Why does he use this evidence and reasoning? Is it effective?
- How does King use appeals to rhetoric to enhance his speech and to meet his purpose?

Begin by watching this video, which provides some background on the speech and King's presentation.



[Open Video in New Tab](#)



As you continue through the lesson, keep the information from the video in mind.

Author's Purpose

When someone writes, they most likely do so with a purpose, or reason, for doing so. Even simple things, such as sending a text or an e-mail, usually have a purpose: to entertain a friend by sending a funny meme; to get information, such as where or when you're meeting your friends; or even to convince your parents to let you stay out just a little later.

These everyday examples illustrate three common purposes of writing: to entertain the reader, to inform the reader, or to persuade the reader. Begin by reviewing these purposes. Draw a line to match each purpose to its definition.

to entertain

The purpose is to give information or to explain something to the reader.

to inform

The purpose is to amuse the reader.

to persuade

The purpose is to convince the reader to do something or to think a certain way.

When you are finished, check your answers.

Reveal Answer

Now think about Dr. King's speech. What was his purpose: to persuade, to entertain, or to inform?

To determine this, complete this activity. Answer the questions in the table that follows.

Question	Answer
Where and when did King deliver his speech?	
What are the main ideas in the speech?	
Ultimately, what do you think King wanted to accomplish by giving this speech?	
Based on these answers, is King's primary purpose to inform, to persuade, or to entertain?	

Were you able to come up with the answers? Check your work.

Question	Answer
Where and when did King deliver his speech?	King delivered this speech during the Civil Rights March on Washington in 1963.
What are the main ideas in the speech?	The main ideas are that the United States were founded on principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which should apply to all citizens, no matter the color of their skin. This justice and equality needs to happen in "the fierce urgency of now."

Ultimately, what do you think King wanted to accomplish by giving this speech?	King wanted to rally people to continue the hard work of fighting for equality. Through this speech, he might also convince other people to join this cause.
Based on these answers, is King's primary purpose to inform, to persuade, or to entertain?	King's primary purpose is to persuade. When a speaker wants to convince a group of people to do something, such as join or continue to fight for the cause of equal rights, they are trying to persuade the reader.

The speaker's purpose is the driving force behind their speech. What they say and how they say it is meant to help them accomplish this purpose. Because of this, it's important to keep King's purpose in mind as you continue to work through the lesson.

Reasoning and Evidence

When a speaker gives a persuasive speech, they provide reasoning and evidence to support their purpose and main ideas. Begin by identifying the reasoning and evidence that King uses in "I Have a Dream." Read each of the points from King's speech in the table that follows. For each one, explain what evidence or reasoning King gives to support that point. The first one has been completed for you as an example.

Point	Reasoning and Evidence
Black Americans face discrimination that prohibits their freedom and other rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.	King lists several examples of the types of discrimination Black Americans face: segregation, poverty, denying them the right to vote, police brutality, etc. These specific examples are evidence that help to support King's point.
Equality must begin now.	
The fight for equality must happen on "the high plane of dignity and discipline."	
The hard work of fighting for equality must continue until it is achieved.	

Now review the rest of the answers.

Point	Reasoning and Evidence
Black Americans face discrimination that prohibits their freedom and other rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.	King lists several examples of the types of discrimination Black Americans face: segregation, poverty, denying them the right to vote, police brutality, etc. These specific examples are evidence that help to support King's point.
Equality must begin now.	King feels that Black Americans have already been waiting too long for equal rights. Since the United States was founded, equality was promised in the Declaration of Independence. Because of this, equality is long overdue, and Black Americans "will not be satisfied" until it is achieved.

The fight for equality must happen on "the high plane of dignity and discipline."	King reasons that protests must remain nonviolent and must include white Americans as well. He argues that "their destiny is tied up with our destiny ... their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom." In other words, freedom and equality also depend on unity. No one is free until everyone is free.
The hard work of fighting for equality must continue until it is achieved.	King recognizes the exhausting battles that people have already fought but tells everyone they must keep fighting. To encourage this, he speaks about his dream of a future where there is equality throughout the United States.

Identifying the reasoning and evidence a speaker uses is an important part of analyzing a speech. However, it also needs to go further than that. Once you identify the evidence and reasoning, it is also important to evaluate it. When you evaluate reasoning and evidence, you need to ask yourself these questions:

- Does this reasoning make sense?
- Is this evidence accurate?
- Do the reasoning and evidence effectively support the point? Why or why not?

Sometimes, speakers may use fallacious reasoning or evidence. This means that it is misleading, faulty, or based on a mistaken belief. For instance, say you read an article that reported that one-third of kids in the United States do not like ice cream. However, when you look into that statistic, you realize that it was based on an interview of fifty children in one school. Because the sample is so small and focused, it is fallacious to apply it to the larger scale of the entire country.

Now take another look at King's evidence and reasoning and evaluate it, using the questions stated above. In your evaluation, explain whether or not the reasoning and evidence is sound and effective. The first one is completed as an example.

Point	Reasoning and Evidence	Is the reasoning and evidence sound and effective? Why or why not?
Black Americans face discrimination that prohibits their freedom and other rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.	King lists several examples of the types of discrimination Black Americans face: segregation, poverty, denying them the right to vote, police brutality, etc. These specific examples are evidence that help to support King's point.	This is strong evidence. The examples of discrimination King mentions are specific and well-documented. They strongly support King's point about discrimination.
Equality must begin now.	King feels that Black Americans have already been waiting too long for equal rights. Since the United States was founded, equality was promised in the Declaration of Independence. Because of this, equality is long overdue, and Black Americans "will not be satisfied" until it is achieved.	

The fight for equality must happen on "the high plane of dignity and discipline."	King reasons that protests must remain nonviolent and must include white Americans as well. He argues that "their destiny is tied up with our destiny ... their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom." In other words, freedom and equality also depend on unity. No one is free until everyone is free.	
The hard work of fighting for equality must continue until it is achieved.	King recognizes the exhausting battles that people have already fought but tells everyone they must keep fighting. To encourage this, he speaks about his dream of a future where there is equality throughout the United States.	

Now check out the rest of the answers.

Point	Reasoning and Evidence	Is the reasoning and evidence sound and effective? Why or why not?
Black Americans face discrimination that prohibits their freedom and other rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.	King lists several examples of the types of discrimination Black Americans face: segregation, poverty, denying them the right to vote, police brutality, etc. These specific examples are evidence that help to support King's point.	This is strong evidence. The examples of discrimination King mentions are specific and well-documented. They strongly support King's point about discrimination.
Equality must begin now.	King feels that Black Americans have already been waiting too long for equal rights. Since the United States was founded, equality was promised in the Declaration of Independence. Because of this, equality is long overdue, and Black Americans "will not be satisfied" until it is achieved.	This is another well-reasoned point. King cites the Declaration of Independence as stating that "all men are created equal." This document, written in 1776, was not applied to Black Americans, despite its use of the word "all." Additionally, from today's perspective, one can see the truth in King's words "we will not be satisfied" until equality is achieved, as the fight for equality continues through movements like Black Lives Matter.

The fight for equality must happen on "the high plane of dignity and discipline."	King reasons that protests must remain nonviolent and must include white Americans as well. He argues that "their destiny is tied up with our destiny ... their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom." In other words, freedom and equality also depend on unity. No one is free until everyone is free.	This reasoning is somewhat idealistic because it depends on the idea that nonviolent protest will ultimately work. People have made arguments to support both violent and nonviolent protests throughout history, and both have been successful and unsuccessful at various points in time. Therefore, this reasoning, which is effective in conveying hope and idealism, is not necessarily based in hard fact.
The hard work of fighting for equality must continue until it is achieved.	King recognizes the exhausting battles that people have already fought but tells everyone they must keep fighting. To encourage this, he speaks about his dream of a future where there is equality throughout the United States.	This is another example of reasoning based on hope and idealism. As a way of rallying people, it is very effective. You could also say it is sound reasoning, because it is the basis of what King is fighting for. It is logical to assume that the fight will be worth it if the dream is achieved.

As you can see, the reasoning and evidence that King uses to support his points is overall sound and effective.

Use of Pathos

Finally, you will look at how King uses the rhetorical device pathos in his speech. Have you heard the term *pathos* before? Simply put, **pathos** is an appeal to emotion. It is meant to create an emotional response for the listener or reader.

To create pathos, King uses word choice, figurative language, and allusions to create emotional reactions in the reader. For instance, check out some of these examples.

Example of Pathos	Why is it effective?
Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.	King gave this speech at the Lincoln Memorial. His use of the words <i>five score years ago</i> echoes the opening of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The Emancipation Proclamation was the document Lincoln signed to end slavery in America. These allusions to Lincoln and the role he played in freeing Black Americans are used to create an emotional response. Additionally, King uses charged language to contrast freedom and oppression: <i>beacon light of hope</i> and <i>joyous daybreak</i> versus <i>flames of withering injustice</i> and <i>long night of their captivity</i> . These strong words immediately set the tone of the speech: hope and positivity are associated with freedom; pain and anger are associated with oppression.

Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy; now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice; now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.	This is another section where King contrasts ideas to make a point and appeal to people's emotions. Words like <i>promises of democracy</i> , <i>sunlit path of racial justice</i> , <i>lift our nation</i> , and <i>solid rock of brotherhood</i> create a sense of hope, optimism, and unity. This is contrasted with the <i>dark and desolate valley of segregation</i> and <i>the quicksands of racial injustice</i> . Using figurative language and words with strong connotations helps King achieve this effect.
I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.	This is one of the most famous lines from the speech. King's description of his dream for his children creates an emotional response in the reader or listener. Children often represent hope for the future, and here King illustrates exactly how he hopes the future will be.

Now you try one. Find a line or lines from the speech and copy them into the table that follows. Then explain why it is an effective appeal to emotion.

Example	Why is it effective?

When you are finished, reveal one more sample answer. Keep in mind that yours may differ depending on which line you chose.

Reveal Answer

Cultural Significance

The cultural significance of this speech is monumental, as many viewed this as the uniting moment in the civil rights movement. King's dedication to this cause was one of the contributing factors that led to the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made racial discrimination in public places illegal.

This speech is viewed as one of the greatest rhetorical speeches of all time and is used in many speech classes as the basis for an effective presentation.