

Visions of Equality: An Artistic Exploration of Dr. King's 'I Have a Dream' Speech

Estimated Time: 45-60 minutes

Grade Level: 8-14

Learning Objectives:

1. **Understand the historical context of the Civil Rights Movement:** Students will explore the significance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and its role in advancing the Civil Rights Movement.
2. **Analyze the content of the speech:** Students will identify and reflect on key phrases or lines in Dr. King's speech and discuss their meaning, power, and impact.
3. **Express understanding through visual art:** Students will create an illustration or visual representation that reflects the meaning of a selected phrase or line from the speech.
4. **Develop critical thinking and creativity:** Students will analyze the speech's imagery and symbolism, applying these ideas creatively in their drawings or designs.
5. **Collaborate and communicate effectively:** Students will present their visual artwork and explain the reasoning behind their choices, fostering discussion and collaboration.
6. **Enhance technological literacy:** Students will be encouraged to incorporate technology or digital tools into their artwork, supporting the integration of modern learning methods.

Introduction

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech on August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.. Students will examine why the speech was a defining moment in the Civil Rights Movement and explain their analysis through a visual drawing or illustration.

Warm-up Activity

Watch on History's Vimeo channel: ["Bet You Didn't Know — March on Washington" \(2:33\)](#). Give students the "I HAVE A DREAM" FACT PAGE (included in the appendix below) to gauge their knowledge about the speech. Once they have finished answering the questions, go back and read the correct answers from the ANSWER KEY (included in the appendix below) .

Main Activity: "I Have a Dream" Speech

Hand out the transcript (included below) and play the [video of the "I HAVE A DREAM" speech](#). This is a condensed version of the speech and the transcript provided is also for the shortened

version. (There is an option to use the full version if time permits and source the transcript to handout to students.)

As they listen to Martin Luther King Jr. give his famous speech:

- Ask them to start trying to picture the rich imagery from his words in their head.
- Ask them to start thinking about what parts or statements within the speech stand out to them since they will need to select a phrase within the speech for the activity.
 - Encourage them to write on the transcript and highlight parts that inspire them

After the speech, give students the following assignment:

Your Task:

- Select your favorite phrase or line as your title...THEN illustrate it!
- Use color, creativity, design—try to express what that phrase means or why it is so powerful or important.
- Use of technology and digital work are encouraged.
- Be prepared to explain it to your teacher or classmates.

“I Have a Dream” Speech Fact Page

Read the following statements and decide whether they are true or false.

1. This was the first time Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had ever made an “I Have a Dream” speech. T F
2. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had not planned on speaking about his Dream that day; it was impromptu. T F
3. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was honoured at the March by letting him go last to give the keynote address to the marchers. T F
4. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech was immediately recognized as a defining moment in civil rights history. T F
5. The actual name of the March was “The March on Washington for Freedom.” T F
6. 2,000 marshals were planted in the crowd by the United States’ Government to keep the peace. T F

Fact Sheet Answer Key:

1. False – King had used similar phrases in earlier speeches.
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. False – The full name was “The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.”
6. True

Source: “Two Score Years Ago: The Making of a Memorable Address” by Fern Shen, Washington Post

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr: I Have a Dream Speech Transcript (Condensed)

I have the pleasure to present to you Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I'm happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. 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 but 100 years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. 100 years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its Creed: we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day, even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream, 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. I have a dream today! I have a dream that one day down in Alabama with its vicious racists with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day – this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning my country tis of thee. Sweet land of liberty of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims pride. From every mountainside let freedom ring and if America's to be a great nation, this must become true so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California but not on to that, let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.