

“I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Writing About the Big Question



Is knowledge the same as understanding?

### Big Question Vocabulary

ambiguous	clarify	comprehend	concept	connection
fact	feeling	information	insight	instinct
interpret	research	senses/sensory	sources	statistics

**A.** Use one or more words from the list above to complete each sentence.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ helped Jill understand the civil rights movement.
2. King spoke with great \_\_\_\_\_ that helped people understand his message.
3. He made a powerful \_\_\_\_\_ with his audience as he gave them information on the injustices suffered by many people.
4. Andrew better understood King’s appeal when he read \_\_\_\_\_ about all the people who went to hear King speak.

**B.** Follow the directions in responding to each item below.

1. When have you heard a good speaker? Describe the occasion.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How did the speaker help you understand the topic? What techniques or methods did the speaker use? Use at least two of the Big Question vocabulary words.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C.** In “I Have a Dream,” Martin Luther King makes a logical and emotional speech to help listeners understand his dream of freedom and equality. Complete the sentence below. Then, write a short paragraph in which you connect this experience to the Big Question.

The concept of equality might be ambiguous to some people because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Literary Analysis: Persuasive Speech**

A **persuasive speech** is a speech that tries to convince listeners to think or act in a certain way. Persuasive speeches may appeal to reason or emotion or both. In order to engage the audience, speakers often include **rhetorical devices**, special patterns of words and ideas that create emphasis and stir emotion in the audience. Common rhetorical devices include the following:

- **Parallelism:** repeating a grammatical structure or arrangement of words to create a sense of rhythm and momentum
- **Restatement:** expressing the same idea in different words to clarify and stress key points
- **Repetition:** expressing different ideas using the same words or images in order to reinforce concepts and unify the speech

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each of the following passages from King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. On the lines provided, identify the rhetorical device or devices in each passage. (You may find more than one rhetorical device.) Then briefly explain your answer by citing the words and phrases that exemplify the device.

1. But one hundred 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. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.

**Rhetorical Device(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Explanation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men . . . would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**Rhetorical Device(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Explanation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked “insufficient funds.”

**Rhetorical Device(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Explanation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Reading: Analyze Persuasive Techniques**

**Persuasive techniques** are devices used to influence the audience in favor of the author's argument. In addition to presenting evidence in a persuasive speech, a speaker may use the following:

- emotionally charged language
- rhetorical devices, such as parallelism, restatement, and repetition

To analyze and evaluate persuasive techniques, **read aloud** to hear the effect. Notice the emotional impact of the sounds of certain words, as well as the rhythm and momentum created by the word patterns that the author uses. Consider both the purpose and effect of these persuasive techniques and evaluate the author's success in using them to make a convincing argument.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following excerpts from "I Have a Dream." Then, on the lines provided, answer the questions that follow.

1. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.
  - A. To which "great American" does King allude in this sentence? \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. What place does King refer to in saying "in whose symbolic shadow we stand"?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - C. What well-known speech in American history does King echo in saying "five score years ago"?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. 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.
  - A. How does this passage illustrate parallelism? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. What emotionally charged words or phrases does King use in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality.
  - A. What image dominates this passage? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. How does the passage illustrate parallelism? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Vocabulary Builder

### Word List

creed    defaulted    degenerate    hallowed    momentous    oppression

**A. DIRECTIONS:** In each item, think about the meaning of the underlined word and then answer the question.

1. If you think that a certain place is hallowed ground, would you consider it with respect or indifference? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is a creed something that most people take seriously?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If the condition of your house were to degenerate over the next few years, what might you do?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do people often take photographs during momentous occasions in their lives?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How would you feel if you loaned a friend some money and he defaulted on his promise to pay it back?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why do you think many people dislike living under oppression?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**B. WORD STUDY:** The Latin root *-cred-* means "to trust, to believe." Answer each of the following questions using one of these words containing *-cred-*: *credence* ("the act of believing"), *credible* ("believable"), *credulous* ("ready to believe").

1. Why isn't it wise to give credence to everything you hear on commercials?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do lawyers want credible witnesses to support their case?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What kind of trouble might someone who is too credulous get into?  
\_\_\_\_\_