

Salient features of martin luther king jr's famous speech, "i have a dream"

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This essay describes the salient features of Martin Luther King Jr's famous speech, "I have a dream". It concentrates on reasons which contributed to making it so famous. This speech had many salient features which have made it so famous and acceptable to the audience. These are : Structure : The speech is very well structured. King first builds a base for his arguments, by saying that the demands that follow in his speech were guaranteed to the black Negroes long back.

He then alleges that the American government and the white people have not complied with these rights given to blacks. He then injects courage into the minds of the black audience, by using a special force known as 'repetition'. He repeats, "It is my dream that", many times, and actually succeeds in forcing the minds of black audience to 'see' that dream with him. Force : One more effective element in this speech is the invisible force behind it. The words are very strong, and the style is direct. A very direct attack is launched on the American government.

The miserable torture that the blacks were undergoing is reported in a very direct, face to fact style. Nothing is indirect or implied. This force is more evident when he paints the picture of his vision of life of the Negroes in future. There is no rhetoric, no sarcasm. This adds the necessary force in the speech, which captivates the audience. Continuity : This is the third impressive feature. The three main parts of the speech, namely, the violation of promise, present condition of Negroes and his future dream for the Negroes, are interwoven without any pause in between. The switch-over from one part to another part is very natural and automatic. This helps in binding the audience to the speech, till the end.

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Good use of linguistic tools : This speech uses tools offered by English language in a wonderful way. Many aspects are presented in a metaphoric way, to make the meaning very clear and leave no doubt in the minds of audience. The most distinct metaphor is comparing the failure of American government to keep its promise towards the black Negroes, to a check returned by a bank, citing insufficient funds as a reason. Another impressive metaphor is his comparing the present status of Mississippi as 'sweltering with the heat of injustice', while his dream compares the same Mississippi to an 'Oasis of freedom and justice'. His linguistic style is very picturesque, and that is what impresses the audience.

For example, "On the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together on the table of brotherhood". He communicates too many things in sentences which draw a picture in the minds of the audience. The sentences of this speech are seldom long, and never, very long. It is full of short, meaningful sentences. This is another example of excellent use of language. Nonviolence: Martin Luther King has strongly advocated non violence means as a tool for the fight towards freedom. Memories of the brutalities of world war II (world war II) and the success of non violence (Mahatma Gandhi) as a tool to bring political changes in India, were still afresh in the minds of people.

This concept was immediately embraced in America also. Inclusion of specific instruction to fight in a non violent way, made his speech more effective and more acceptable. National flavor : Martin Luther King talks of each and every corner of the nation, by naming it. This adds a national

dimension to his speech. There is hardly any region which he has not included in his speech. This helps in making a very wide, national impact.

The TV audience : The TV audience must have also been mesmerized by the huge number of people which had gathered at Lincoln Memorial grounds on that day. It compromised of whites also. Inclusion of white people must have made a positive impact in favor of King's demands, in the minds of TV audience. The erect posture of King, coupled with oozing self confidence must have boosted the spirits of all listeners and spectators. " I have a dream ", is a great speech even for all times in future !!