

Critical thinking on martin luther kings i have a dream critical analysis

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



In Martin Luther King Jr.'s seminal 1963 speech "I Have a Dream," King uses a number of critical thinking processes in order to present his argument. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, King delivered a speech that is remembered now as one of the most significant pieces of oratory in the 20th century. His call was for blacks and whites to come together, for blacks to be granted greater freedoms and for America to become a nation of equals. Not only was the speech thought-provoking and emotional, but King's points were excellently handled and deftly conveyed through his use of language and literary thinking.

In the first part of his speech, King includes everyone who listens in a grateful, yet unified, proclamation that identifies him with his audience; "I am 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" (lines 1-3). In this way, and throughout the speech, King offers very little egocentric thinking; this speech is not about him, and he refers to himself in the singular very little - this is reserved for the eventual utterance and repetition of "I have a dream," which is followed by his hopes and aspirations for the future of race relations. This repetition allows for greater visualization, and to create the metaphor of better race relations as a desirable hope ("dream") for the future. This dream imagery is meant to offer a positive reinforcement of his goals - bringing about racial equality would make his dreams come true. At the same time, his earlier unwillingness to self-identify implies that the dream is not just his - it is ours.

Another fantastic element to King's speech is that he cites well-respected and historical documents in the history of the country. The Emancipation Proclamation, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution - all are referenced in the speech, as a way to provide scholarly and historical support for his arguments, while also emotionally tying them to the history of this country. In this way, King lays a groundwork that implies that, if you disagree with civil rights, you disagree with the way our nation was founded. Placing that onus on the listener is a strong motivator to get them to change their opinion.

King is extremely emotive in his speech, and uses incredibly descriptive and poetic phrasing to demonstrate the eloquence of his argument. His use of words like " Now" and " today" imply a great need for immediate action regarding civil rights; the fact that he is so well-spoken is intentionally utilized in the speech to lend credence to his words. Given the stereotype at the time that blacks were unintelligent and uneducated, King's responsibility to show the capabilities of black rhetoric was great. King, as a religious man, brings spirituality into the speech itself, but not in a self-aggrandizing way; he merely states that racial justice should be done as it is according to God's will.

King's use of repetition (anaphora) is one of his greatest strengths in the speech; apart from the aforementioned " I have a dream," he also finishes his speech with the repetitive device to " let freedom ring" in various locations around the country. This particular device influences because of its catchy repetition, as well as its identifier of disparate locations that are still,

undeniably America. This also hammers home the metaphor that we, as a nation, consist of wildly different peoples that comprise one whole. By asking for unification of these different areas, King also asks for all colors and creeds to unite. King's final proclamation, in which he furthers his theme of repetition by combining pairs of opposites ("black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles,") under the blanket "all of God's children", and finally uniting them by saying "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

King's speech uses incredibly relevant, emotional appeals to deal with the problem of race relations; while very emotional, he also uses incredible logic to address the issues that minorities face (and that whites face when showing an unwillingness to accept their black brothers as equal). At the same time, it does not exactly delve into the complexities of race relations in order to provide sufficient solutions for the sticky social problems that equality would raise; that is not its point. King's primary appeal is emotional, and it is quite compelling; his goal is to provide reasoned but emotive statements and proclamations to create an ideal that America should strive for. King's hope was that we would figure out the social complexities of the issue later; the point is that God called for us to be a united nation of all races, and thus that standard should be set.

References

Bloom, Harold. (1973). *The Anxiety of Influence*.

King, Martin Luther. (1963). "I Have a Dream."