

Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream English Literature Essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Hala Jitan Professor Sharmeela Raja February 19, 2013 Martin Luther king once said " Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them." America is the most racially diverse country in the world where African-Americans are striving to live in peace and tolerance. Therefore, multiple civil rights activists appeared who tried to establish a better environment. The most liberal activist of them was Martin Luther King Jr. Throughout the 1960s, he engaged in multiple civil rights protests, helping African-Americans to gain their eventual victory. The " I Have a Dream" speech has a massive impact that illustrated racial discrimination of that time. Martin Luther king, an accomplished civil rights leader, used rhetorical techniques in order to convey the message of justice, equality and peace during the violent civil rights era. On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr presented the " I Have a Dream speech", one of the most rhetorically influential speeches ever delivered. The purpose of this speech was to make both sides of the discussion, white and African-Americans, accept change in a non-violent yet efficient manner. Moreover, the speech was intended to four types of audience; the African-Americans who are being discriminated against, the White- Americans who are against the Negroes, the militant African-Americans, and the White-Americans who argue that African-Americans are evil and the civil rights movement is violent. For African Americans, the speech delivered a message of hope with the promise of freedom and equality. While for White-Americans, it helped them understand that their freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of African-Americans. The genre of this speech is narrative and argumentative

since it conveys the personal thoughts of the author. Furthermore, the tone of the speech is descriptive, argumentative and informative. The " I Have a Dream" speech has very simple context since it is intended to a very broad audience so it needs to be easy to comprehend. The points that Martin Luther king discussed were clear - Americans broke their promises, African-Americans are still not free, and that Americans should spread the message that freedom is a right to every American citizen, including African-Americans. However, his main purpose was to end all the problems between the various races of the United States, especially Black versus White. Martin Luther King said in his speech " But 100 years later, the Negro is still not free". He is directly stating what the problem in the United States is in the quote. Martin Luther King felt the urge to deliver this inspirational speech because at his time, African-Americans were beaten, raped, and thrown in jail. He did not want people to endure any longer because he had a dream that one day White-Americans will not judge African-Americans on their color, but rather by the content of their personality. The structure of " I Have a Dream" plays an important role for its great success. Martin Luther king's structure was intended to make the audience sympathize with the African-Americans, hate racism, and give the Negroes hope for a better world. In order to achieve this, Martin Luther King used rhetorical strategies such as pathos, logos and ethos along with irony and metaphor to provoke the audience. An example of Pathos is shown when Martin Luther King says, " 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 paragraph emotionally stands out because it is very

heartfelt and inspiring. This quote makes the audience think of their own children. None of the parents in the audience want their children to go through the same horrible problems they went through regarding racial discrimination. This quote evoked the audience's feelings to put an end to racial discrimination. Moreover, ethos and logos, other rhetorical appeals, are shown in his speech when Martin Luther King goes back to when the Emancipation of Proclamation was signed. The Emancipation of Proclamation was supposed to free all slaves' and give them hope. Martin Luther King points out that after a hundred years, African-Americans still do not have the freedom that they were promised to have. Then, he points out how the Declaration of Independence stated that all American men should have equal rights. This is also considered ironical since America literally broke their promise to the Negroes and inequality still exists in America. Furthermore, Martin Luther King used metaphor in his speech by saying that racism is a "dark and desolate valley" while freedom is a "sunlit path". This made the audience realize that they live in a dreary environment and gave them hope to live in an improved and unified country where freedom is a right to every citizen. The American history has been stained by racial discrimination. However, there are some people who believe that racism is no longer a serious problem in today's American culture. It is defiantly true that racial discrimination in today's world is not as evident as it was in the past. Although many Americans deny it, unfortunately, racism still exists in the American culture. The United States, like any other country, would like to believe that they are a civilized society that lacks racial discrimination. Nevertheless, the evidence is obvious. African-Americans are more likely to

be unemployed, more likely to be pulled over or investigated by the police, more likely to be sent to prison, and are more likely to be viewed as violent by the media. America has made progress since the civil rights era, but it still has a long way to go. Overall, the " I Have a Dream" speech is loaded with rhetorical techniques. Martin Luther King proved that he is not only an accomplished civil rights leader, but also an accomplished writer. His speech inspired many African-Americans to never give up and made thousands of White-Americans ashamed of their actions, urging them to achieve an equal society. Other than Martin Luther King's emotional content, his speech's structure along with the rhetorical techniques he used made the " I Have a Dream" speech a masterpiece of rhetoric and managed to change the American society to unified culture.