

"i have a dream"
conveying all the
successful
components of a
historical speech

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Martin Luther King Jr. is a well-known person in history. He is known for his work in civil rights, and is known for his I Have a Dream Speech. King's speech not only changed history for the black community it gave hope to black people throughout the world. King's speech was so successful because he was able to arouse his audience to their feet and get them mad at society. In his speech, he uses different types of language. One type is from Burke and Burke called charging of language. This is using strong powerful words to influence a listener's opinion. Another type of language he uses is called glittering generalities, which is the use of words to make a listener agree with what the speaker has said. Finally, King uses argumentum ad populum, which is to tell an audience what they want to hear. King's speech uses all of these types of language to tell his fellow Negro's how they have been promised things and not received them, and the life they live should be better because of this.

Martin Luther King Jr. opened his I Have a Dream speech by mentioning the Emancipation Proclamation. He tries to set the stage that Negro's have been lied to, and the lives they live were promised to be better than what they are. When referring to the Emancipation Proclamation he states, " this decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice." Yet, after one hundred years later, the Negro is still not free. The lives of Negro's are still tortured by today's society. He goes on to say how all the Negro's, because of the Declaration of Independence, were promised " life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Again, the Negro was lied to by society. King then says to his listeners, " America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which

has come back marked insufficient funds.” King says to the Negro’s that this bad check needs to be cashed, and they should demand that it be cashed. King uses charged language in the beginning to fire up his listeners. He wants them to see that the Negro has been pushed away by society. King wants to have his listeners angry and upset toward the American people in order that they will rise up and defend their race and go get what they have been promised.

King’s next appeal to his listeners is by the use of glittering generalities. He tells his fellow Negro’s that now is the time to rise form the dark, now is the time to make justice a reality, and now is the time to lift racial injustices. He tells them, “ There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights.” He explains they are victims of police brutality, and the Negro’s shouldn’t be satisfied. He says, “ We can never be satisfied as long as we can not gain lodging at a motel, we can not be satisfied when a Negro’s basic mobility is from a small ghetto to a large one.” He expresses, “ the Negro has nothing to be satisfied about until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Because of all this, King goes on to say, “ we must not be guilty of wrong deeds.” King’s use of glittering generalities is used to rowel up the crowd and get their attitude to not accept what has happened to the Negro. This use of language is very important, because with out it the crowd would just listen passively and do nothing about it.

In King’s final statements to the listening Negro’s he uses argumentum ad populum which means “ argument to the people” or telling them what they

want to hear. After King has explained to his fellow Negro's that they have been robbed of life, and they shouldn't be satisfied with what they have, He tells them that he has a dream, and this dream is a dream that they all want, and some day it will happen. He states, " I have a dream that one day sons of former slaves and sons of former slave owners will sit down together at the table in brotherhood." He also says, " The creed of this nation will be lived out: we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." He then says to the crowd, " in my dream my 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 is our hope, knowing that we will be free one day." King finally concludes this monumental speech with the words from an old Negro spiritual. He claims that one-day God's children will be able to hold hands and sing the words of, " Free at last Free at last Thank God Almighty we are Free at last!"

Martin Luther King Jr. is able to effectively give a speech to an audience and get them to see his viewpoints by using certain types of language. He uses charged language to get them mad and angry. This use of charged language is successful because the crowd now feels as though they are cheated and should not just lay around but get up and do something about it. He then uses glittering generalities to excite the crowd and get them to say this isn't fair we need to stop this and we will not be satisfied until we have gotten what we wanted. Finally he uses argumentum ad populum to tell his audience that his dream is like all of theirs and that some day they will be free. The usage of this language effectively gets King's point across and when he is done not only has he given his fellow Negro's will power to stand

up for themselves, he has given them hope that someday they will be free from society.