

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

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an important leader in the US Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. A Baptist minister most of his life, he was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929, and fatally shot on his hotel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968. This iconic text is the speech King gave on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. at the Civil Rights ‘March on Washington’ on August 28, 1963.

Vocabulary...

emancipation (n)	defaulted (v)	inextricably (adv)
decree (n)	hallowed (n)	devotees (n)
withering (adj)	invigorating (adj)	fatigue (n)
languished (v)	tranquility (n)	despair (v)
exile (n)	degenerate (v)	oasis (n)
promissory note (n)	militancy (n)	prodigious (adj)
unalienable/inalienable (adj)	engulfed (v)	

Reading Questions...

1. What is King’s purpose in giving this speech? What point is he trying to make?
2. Why does King use so much repetition in his speech? What purpose does it serve?

Discussion Questions...

1. Is it important to know that this text was originally a speech (meant to be heard) and not just an essay (meant to be read)? Why?
2. What is the metaphor King uses beginning in the 3rd paragraph? Why might he have chosen this particular metaphor? Do you think it is successful in illustrating King’s point?

Activities and Assignments...

1. King gave this speech back in 1963, over 50 years ago, but many people argue that it is still relevant to life in the US today. Pick out a few lines from the text that you believe could be relevant today and explain the connection.
2. Imagine King could see the US today—what would he think? What would he say? Do you think he would be satisfied with the progress made since his speech? Write a short essay detailing what his reaction might be.

