

**Aim:**

*How did Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech differ from the one he had prepared? Why did he change his prepared speech?*

**Instructional Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1. explain how King's "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington differed from the one he prepared;
2. formulate reasoned opinions on why King would change his prepared speech as he delivered it;
3. identify rhetorical devices King employed in his "I Have a Dream" speech;
4. develop their own understanding on why strong preparation is a powerful aid to successful improvisation.

**Grade level:** Secondary, especially Grades 11 and 12.

**Common Core Standards**

**Reading: Informational Text**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6](#) Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7](#) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.8](#) Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).

**Overarching Understanding:**

Dr. King was a great and powerful speaker. He enhanced his gift for oratory with serious and thorough preparation that made it possible to improvise powerfully and to take full advantage of the moment. We must follow his example in preparing thoroughly if we are to be able to take advantage of the moments available to us.

**Length:**

This may take either two 45 minute class periods, but could be a single class period where more time is available.

**Seating:**

Students are seated in groups not to exceed 4. Students are in mixed readiness (preparation for the lesson and English literacy skills) groups.

**Resource Materials:**

- Drew D. Hansen, *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003. (Pages 71-85 provide a side-by-side comparison of King's prepared speech and the speech he delivered:  
<http://www.shankerinstitute.org/images/HANSEN-SIDE-BY-SIDE-COMPARISON-OF-I-HAVE-A-DREAM.pdf>; pp. 85-87 provide explanation of King's control of speech:  
<http://www.shankerinstitute.org/images/KINGS-CONTROL-OF-SPEECH-VERSIONS3.pdf>.)
- [History Channel clip](#) on 1963 March on Washington

**About The Lesson:**

This lesson requires students to have certain background information. In some areas, students may well have the background to be able to jump into this lesson without additional support. However, as I teach intermediate and advanced English Language Learners, I tend to add supports and scaffolds that may not be necessary for all students.

While I would insert this lesson into an English Language Arts unit I call "Rhetoric, Civil Rights and Ourselves," it could also support a U.S. History unit on the "Civil Rights Movement" or on the "1963 March on Washington."

Prior to this lesson, students have been introduced to several rhetorical devices including rhetorical questions, use of figurative language, allusion, and strategic use of repetition. In the full unit, they begin with Sojourner Truth's "[Ain't I a Woman](#)" speech before reading Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech; the unit culminates with then Senator Barack Obama's [address](#) to the National Convention of the NAACP in 2008. I let my students experience the speech first. They frequently have little background in the Civil Rights Movement, and are very curious about the array of figures standing behind Dr. King, which can provide an easy segue into a discussion of the objectives and alliances involved in the march. Students have already read the speech **as given** and have annotated and discussed it.

This unit culminates in two assessments – one a paper based on an analysis of multiple sources but grounded in a core civil rights question, such as "Does social and economic justice begin in the classroom?" The second assessment is a speech on a topic students feel passionately about. They work on developing a speech and infusing two of the rhetorical devices studied. It culminates in a performance to invited guests. This lesson would help them consider some of the issues they face with this assignment.

**Write Now:** Think about Dr. King's speech. Do you think he wrote it out carefully, and gave the speech he prepared? Or did he 'wing it' with the passionate ideas he had inside him? What evidence do you have for your opinion either way?

**Procedure:** The teacher segues through the write now activity either using a think/write/pair/share protocol or as a whole class, inviting responses from several students. Today you are going to become history detectives. First, you will examine the speeches and come up with hypotheses, then you will look for supporting evidence to prove your hypothesis.

The teacher then shows the following 3-minute History Channel clip on the March on Washington for Jobs and Justice. <http://www.history.com/topics/march-on-washington/videos#martin-luther-king-jr-leads-the-march-on-washington>

Groups discuss:

1. information they have read or heard about why the march was held;
2. information they have read or heard about what happened at the event;
3. information they have read or heard about Dr. King's speech;
4. (suggested) an outcome of the speech and event. (There is a graphic organizer that could be utilized to assist in note-taking). Each group member could be asked to take primary responsibility for taking notes in response to one of these questions, although each student must complete each section of the organizer.

After sharing out, the teacher hones in on the reference to the speech made by the narrator of the video clip. If students did not catch the reference as to how the speech was changed on the day, the teacher may want to replay the brief segment relating to the speech itself. (This is most easily done if the video has been downloaded and saved to a flash drive using keepvid.com or similar program.)

How does this answer the question posed by our write now activity? (Students may jump on the "prepared text," while others may point out that he "put it aside and shared his vision").

How can we know whether what we are being told here is true? "Part way through, he put aside his prepared text and shared his vision..." We have been studying the role of rhetoric in civil rights. Today we are going to hone in on the aspect of delivery that relates to audience and context, and when we need to step away from the speech as written. (10 minutes)

Here the teacher needs to make a fundamental decision about how to proceed with the analysis of the side texts based on time available to commit to the topic. This could be completed:

- a. as a [jigsaw](#) with each group taking one 'chunk' of the speech, or
- b. as a [jigsaw](#) with each group taking the entire side-by-side speech (Hansen, *Dream*. pp. 71-85.) and focusing in on the points where the text as delivered varied from the text as prepared, or
- c. it could be undertaken as a [jigsaw](#) within a group, or
- d. as a [carousel](#).

Instruction to students:

1. Highlight the text for prepared words and lines that were not used.
2. Highlight text using a different color for words and lines that were not planned, but were used anyway.
3. For each highlighted passage, imagine WHY Dr. King may have made that change, grounding your comments, as much as possible, in evidence that references the text directly.

Regardless of which way the activity is undertaken, it may well be advantageous to model the activity before letting the groups go with it. This could be done with a SMART board or Promethean board if either is available. The interactive white boards could be particularly helpful in options (a) through (c) for this lesson, allowing for the group annotation to be added to the relevant screens with the side-by-side text on the board. For options (a) or (b), one line of text may be used as a 'think aloud' example and a second example elicited from volunteers, before leaving the remainder to the groups. For options (c) or (d) the modeling may need to look a little different, with the teacher placing the first response to a line of added or deleted text, inviting students to add their thoughts to his or her original question or comment.

Option (c) would require numbering each (doubled) page of the text (8 ½ by 11 pages if using the side-by-side speech comparison in Hansen's *Dream*, (p.71-85). Each student would begin with two pages and would highlight and then annotate with their questions, comments or insights. After a prescribed period of time, the group would then pass their two sheets to the person sitting to their right. This would continue through the final students in the group, allowing each individual to be part of a conversation about each part of the text.

Option (d) turns this into a class annotation project by using a poster-maker to enlarge each sheet of text, placing them up (sequentially) around the room and then completing the assignment as a carousel. Students undertake the highlighting just for the first page(s) they arrive at, then annotate the text and when prompted by the teacher, moving to the next section. This approach would allow for a larger conversation to take place on the text. Each group using a different color pen would give the teacher an insight, at a glance, into how different groups were processing the textual changes.

At this point, students may be asked to summarize their findings. This could be requested on demand from the class as a summary/exit ticket activity. It could also be a brief final sharing/elaboration on ideas that could be followed up with a written assignment for homework, if time constraints suggest that this is a good break point in the lesson.

If this is used as a break point in the lesson, the summary exit tickets may be used to assess any gaps in student understanding. The opening of the lesson the next day could begin with a recap and clarification, as needed.

The teacher would then distribute the passage from Hansen's *Dream*, p.85 - 87, "As his performance...final improvements to his prepared speech." Students can read this text independently (other than ELL students or special needs students whose IEPs indicate

additional supports). Add any new understandings: that there were others involved in the drafting of the speech, King's maintenance of control, King's consciously considered effective use of rhetorical devices, worked, reworked endlessly and STILL changed in the moment.

Finally, return to the original clip. Invite whole class discussion in response to the following questions:

What would you now add to what was said here?

What are its limitations?

What did you learn additionally through a close reading of the side-by-side texts, and then what was added through the commentary?

**Students Reflect (either as an exit ticket or a homework assignment):**

How did what you learned in these two lessons alter or change your understanding of the "I have a Dream" speech? How did the study add to your understanding of how powerful speeches are written and delivered?