

King: “I Have a Dream” Activities and Discussion Questions

Learning Goals

Students will demonstrate their understanding of:

- differences in rhetorical strategies between written and spoken texts;
- how to discern patterns in texts and determine the significance of them – how authors use parallel structures, anaphora, repetition effectively;
- the power of allusion;
- rhetorical appeals;
- using figurative, particularly metaphoric language effectively;
- how to divide texts into sections to analyze and ascertain the purpose of each section;
- how to analyze arrangement – how form is related to function;
- how authors consider audience when composing meaningful texts;
- how to transition effectively;
- how authors choose effective diction.

1. In the second paragraph, King employs a metaphor, “a great beacon light of hope.” To what is he referring?
2. Discern, define and explain the significance of the other metaphors in paragraph 2. Note the numerous metaphors throughout the speech. Why does King employ so many metaphors?
3. Recall that **anaphora** is the repetition of a word or clause at the beginning of consecutive sentences. What is the rhetorical effect of the **anaphora**, “one hundred years later,” in paragraph 2? Point out other uses of anaphora and explain the rhetorical purpose.
4. Do you feel that the first two paragraphs are an effective opening? Why or why not?
5. In paragraphs 3 and 4, King employs the check metaphor. Why is a “check” appropriate and effective?
6. Throughout the speech, King frequently appeals to pathos; however he uses all three of the Aristotelian appeals effectively. Note his appeals to pathos, ethos and logos.
7. The speech can be divided into 3 sections: paragraph 1-6; paragraphs 7-10; 11-end. Summarize and ascertain the purpose of each section.
8. As pointed out in question one, King refers to the Emancipation Proclamation. To what other relevant documents does he refer or allude? What is the effect?
9. Describe King’s primary audience.
10. Examine King’s syntax patterns – parallelism and repetition. What examples do you find most effective? Why does he employ them?