

Martin Luther King
“I Have a Dream” Discussion Questions

Part 1: Answer using complete sentences.

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 repetition is the repeating of a word or clause at the beginning of consecutive sentences. What is the rhetorical effect of the repetition, “one hundred years later,” in paragraph 2?
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 rhetorical effect?
6. The speech can be divided into 3 sections: paragraphs 1-6, paragraphs 7-10 and paragraphs 11-end. Summarize and explain the purpose of each section.
7. As pointed out in question 1, King refers to the Emancipation Proclamation. To what other relevant documents does he refer or allude? What is the effect?
8. Describe King’s primary audience.
9. Examine King’s syntax patterns - parallelism and repetition. What examples do you find most effective and why? Why do you think he uses these syntax patterns?

MLK "I Have a Dream" Speech Rhetorical Triangle

Directions: Complete the Rhetorical Triangle using details from the speech.

