Changing the World: A Stylistic Imitation of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” Speech

WRITING PRODUCT: Persuasive Speech
RECOMMENDED TIME: Approximately 4 class sessions

OVERVIEW
This lesson guides students through activities that focus on analyzing the rhetorical devices used by Martin Luther King Jr. in his “I Have a Dream” speech. It culminates in the generation of a persuasive speech that addresses a topic students feels strongly about.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION
Lesson activities integrate reading standards for literary response and analysis—emphasizing identification and comprehension of rhetorical devices—with writing standards for persuasive speech.

OBJECTIVES
Students will do the following:
• analyze the rhetorical devices King uses in his speech
• write a persuasive speech in imitation of King’s style

READING FOR WRITING
Have students complete the following activities during and after reading to prepare for the writing assignment.

1. Review rhetorical devices
Purpose: to familiarize students with rhetorical devices.

Remind students that the following are examples of rhetorical devices:

• **Repetition** is the repeated use of a word or phrase.
• **Parallelism** is the repetition of a similar grammatical structure.
• An **analogy** is a point-by-point comparison of two subjects.

Both repetition and parallelism help to emphasize ideas while analogies help convey ideas that might be difficult to grasp. As students read King’s speech, they should note the ways he uses these rhetorical devices.

2. Identify devices
Purpose: to identify specific examples of rhetorical devices that King uses.

After students have finished reading King’s speech, have them fill out a Rhetorical Devices chart. Remind them that some of King’s passages might reflect the use of more than one type of rhetorical device, e.g., parallelism and repetition.
Rhetorical Devices chart for “I Have a Dream”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Type of rhetorical device</th>
<th>What it means/What effect it has</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.” (lines 43–44)</td>
<td>Analogy</td>
<td>It means there will be upheaval in the nation until African-American rights are recognized. The statement rallies the crowd to continue the fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.” (lines 57–58)</td>
<td>Repetition/Parallelism</td>
<td>By repeating “We cannot,” King is instructing the crowd to accept the help that white Americans offer and is emphasizing the idea that there is no alternative other than to continue the fight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Copy Master (CM) that is located at the end of this lesson plan contains an 8 1/2 x 11 copy of the chart to pass out to students.

3. Review allusions
Purpose: to familiarize students with allusions.

In addition to using rhetorical devices, King also peppers his speech with allusions. Remind students that an allusion is an indirect reference to something that the audience or reader is expected to know. For example, in the second paragraph, King alludes to Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address.” Have students consider what effect an allusion like this has on King’s speech.
READING THE PROMPT
Present the following writing prompt to students to focus their attention on the requirements of the writing task.

Writing Prompt

Writing Situation
“I Have a Dream” was delivered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963. Thousands of Americans marched that day to urge the passage of a civil rights bill. Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech was designed to invigorate the members of the crowd by appealing to their logic, emotions, and moral values.

Writing Directions
Write a persuasive speech about a topic you feel strongly about. Like King, use rhetorical devices such as repetition, parallelism, and analogies to persuade your audience to agree with you. You may also consider using allusions, as King does, that are relevant to the topic. Keep the following key traits in mind as you compose your speech:

Key Traits

Ideas
• Argues a position on a topic
• Supports key points with reasoning and evidence
• Uses analogies to help convey ideas and add interest
• Uses effective allusions when possible

Organization
• Contains an engaging introduction that establishes the claim being made
• Has a well-developed main body that logically advances the writer’s argument
• Concludes by leaving the audience with a lasting impression

Voice
• Writes authoritatively, with a tone that is suited to the purpose and audience
• Shows the writer’s investment in and commitment to his or her argument

Word Choice
• Uses descriptive language that enhances the use of rhetorical devices
• Repeats key words or phrases for emphasis

Sentence Fluency
• Uses parallelism to add emphasis

Conventions
• Contains correct spelling and punctuation

Note: The Copy Master (CM) that is located at the end of this lesson plan contains an 8 1/2 x 11 copy of the prompt to pass out to students.

Have students underline or highlight the writing type, the central idea of the prompt, and the most important elements under Key Traits.

PLANNING
After students have read the prompt, have them complete these activities to help them prepare their responses.

1. Brainstorm a topic
Purpose: to help students choose an appropriate topic.
Students should consider two or three topics they feel strongly about and create a cluster diagram for each topic. Here is an example:

![Cluster Diagram Example](image)

After creating the diagrams, students should decide which topic is best suited for their persuasive speech. Students should consider the appropriateness of the topic, the audience they will be presenting the speech to, and the amount of ideas they were able to collect in the cluster diagram.

### 2. Consider rhetorical devices

After deciding on a topic, students should consider how they might use rhetorical devices to enhance their speeches. Have them fill in a chart with examples that reflect the use of these devices. Then have them describe what meaning or effect the use of each example has.

**My Rhetorical Devices chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic: World Peace</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>What it means/What effect it has</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeat the word “imagine” throughout the speech.</td>
<td>It will get the audience into the mindset of visualizing world peace. Also, I can allude to the famous John Lennon song.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the analogy of fire to describe the move toward world peace.</td>
<td>Fire spreads, as the desire for world peace should. Also, it implies a “spark” that triggers something.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

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DRAFTING, SHARING, AND REVISING
These activities will take students through the rest of the writing process.

1. Microtheme
Purpose: to ensure that students have an idea for a hook, a logical organization for the speech, evidence to support their key points, and content and sentence structure that reflect the use of rhetorical devices.

To help students structure their speeches, have them fill out the Microtheme form that appears in the Copy Master at the end of this lesson plan.

2. Develop a rough draft
Purpose: to get ideas down on paper in an appropriate format.

Students will use their Microthemes as a point of departure to begin drafting their speeches.

3. Engage in share/respond activity
Purpose: to give and receive feedback on whether the first draft meets the requirements of the prompt.

Students should meet with a partner or a small group to get feedback on their drafts. Use small groups if you do not think students will receive adequate feedback from just one partner. Partners will be writing on both the draft itself and the Peer Response sheet that appears in the Copy Master.

4. Complete word choice and sentence fluency activity
Purpose: to help students write an essay that reflects their commitment to the subject.

Explain to students that they should vary sentence types in order to adequately express their emotions about the subject. For example, King repeats the exclamatory sentence “I have a dream today!” and uses the following imperative sentences to underscore and strengthen his message: “Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi. Go back to Alabama. Go back to South Carolina . . .”

Encourage students to look for places in their speech where they could vary their sentence types in order to inject emotion and strengthen their message.

5. Revise the draft
Purpose: to strengthen the clarity of ideas, organization, and language.

With their partners’ comments and their own plans for revision, students are now ready to revise their speeches. They can make changes directly on their first drafts or enter changes on a computer. In either case, they should produce a draft that is legible so that their peers can accurately assist them with editing.

EDITING

Proofread with a partner
Purpose: to focus on the technical correctness of the paper.
Students should check each other’s papers for proper spelling and punctuation. Writers should make corrections, as necessary.

**EVALUATION**

*Refer to the Student Writing and Teacher’s Assessment Criteria*

Purpose: to use as a guide for revision and as an assessment tool.

Give students the criteria for an exemplary speech, as shown on the Student Writing and Teacher’s Assessment Criteria form in the Copy Master. They may use this guide when revising their papers. Teachers can also adapt these criteria into a scoring rubric.
The Dream of Peace

I stand before you today as a citizen of the United States with the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I stand before you today as a citizen of the world—a world where not everyone has the same rights. The violence still boils and simmers between Arab and African, Sunni and Shiite, North and South, East and West. It is our turn, with the world's fate in our hands, to displace the hatred and intolerance and leave a world of peace and justice to our children, grandchildren, and future generations. For the first time in the history of mankind, we have the power to save our world, our friends, our loved ones. The crisis is now, and now is our time to “give peace a chance.”

In A.D. 632, the death of Mohammad ignited a bitter feud between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims. For centuries much blood has been spilled and countless numbers of lives lost over issues solely pertaining to religious beliefs. In 2007, the battle is alive and well, engulfing many souls in the cycle of hatred. The longstanding conflict is inherited by each new generation as children grow up learning to hate. What relevance does this outdated issue possess in the modern world?

In 1991, Mohammed Farah Adid and his union overthrew the government of Somalia, murdering thousands of Somalis and starving hundreds of thousands to death. Adid cut off food supplies to citizens, resulting in 500,000 Somali deaths. American intervention in Mogadishu eventually broke the chains of hatred and selfishness imposed by Mohammed Siad Barre and Adid, but not before the tragic and senseless deaths of many. There exists no greater evil in the world than the destruction of a nation and the murdering of its citizens. Each and every day in Darfur, innocent men, women, and children perish because of the color of their skin while the world watches.

As difficult as it is, we must forgive and work towards building a unified world. Until people reconcile their differences, the world will continue to destroy itself, eventually resulting in its own imminent demise.

I dream that the continent of Africa, a land festering with hatred, injustice, and tribal warfare, will be transformed into a sanctuary of peace. Imagine a continent without borders, a land that grants unlimited freedom to its citizens. I dream that Bosnia and Herzegovina will settle into a state of tolerance and compromise rather than fester with intolerance and fear. I dream that
Israelis and Palestinians will put down their arms and open their hearts to live in peace as neighbors. Imagine citizens being afforded the vital right to leave their homes without worrying about the safety of themselves or their children. Imagine a world of peace. We must lay the path for the future of the world.

A simple act of forgiveness and compromise could bury a millennia of hatred and eliminate feuds that rage throughout much of the world. It is with tolerance and pacifism that we must take a stand against hatred. Against intolerance. Against injustice.

Once we plunge into the depths of our cause, we must forge onward. There is no looking back.

I dream of a global society. I dream of a unified people living in peace and harmony with one another, coexisting as a single race, the human race. Children will be able to run free, breathing the air of peace, not the dark, dismal stench of hatred and persecution. The parents of these children will not live in a paranoid state of anxiety; they will know their children are safe from harm. Imagine a world in which people help people. A world that embraces security. A world at peace. One day, the citizens of our great nation and the entire world will lay down their arms and embrace one another in the spirit of inspiration and tolerance.

I dream that a ray of justice and security will illuminate the lives of the innocent young men and women who dwell within the thick walls of imprisonment and anxiety. Tolerance knows no discrimination. Nor does freedom. Every street corner will witness a rebirth, a collective fire ignited in each and every heart and soul. So let it blaze in the mind and body of every child, every father, every mother, every grandmother, every grandfather. Let it blaze in our nation and all the nations of the world. Let it rekindle the fire of freedom within.

This is my hope, my prayer, my fantasy. This is the faith I will carry within me until the day I am no longer. With this faith, one world will unite, hand in hand, brother and sister. With this vital faith, we will live together, grow up together, breathe together, and die together. One day, we will coexist and thrive in a continuous state of harmony and a consistent state of tolerance.

However, none of this will exist without people unifying for a single cause, peace. There is no hope of this magical and glorious day ever occurring unless we rise up against corrupt minds. So rise up to defeat the enemies, persecution and hatred. Rise up to break the chains of captivity and drown the fire of intolerance. Rise up to crumble the walls of injustice. “Imagine all the people living lives in peace. You can say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one. I hope
someday you’ll join us, and the world can live as one.” Hand-in-hand, one-by-one, we can save our world!
Copy Masters

(CM)
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# Microtheme

**Introduction:** To hook my reader, I could begin my paper one of the following ways . . .

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**Claim:** The claim I want to make and support in my speech is as follows:

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**Main Body:**

- **Main points I want to make:**
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- **Support and organization for my main points, including examples of rhetorical devices to use:**
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**Conclusion:** A feeling, impression, or message that I want to leave my reader with is . . .
**Peer Response Sheet**

**To the writer:** Give this sheet, along with your speech, to one or more members of your writing group. Be sure you get thorough responses that give you solid ideas about how to proceed with revision.

**To the reader:** Follow the directions below as you read and analyze your classmate’s speech. Precise, specific comments will help the writer craft effective revisions.

1. Read the speech silently to yourself. Record your first impression here. You might summarize what you see as the speech’s main point, comment on any insights that strike you, or note places that you find confusing.

2. Read the speech again and do the following:
   a. Underline repeated words or phrases.
   b. Circle examples of parallelism.
   c. Highlight analogies.
   d. After rereading, answer the following questions:

   • What claim does the writer make?

   • What are the strongest reasons given in support of this claim?

   • Which examples of rhetorical devices are especially effective?

   • Did you find anything confusing? How could the writer clarify these ideas?

   • Does the writer sound authoritative and invested in his or her claim? Why or why not?

   • Did the writer successfully persuade you to agree with him or her?
Student Writing and Teacher’s Assessment Criteria

An exemplary speech is superior in its insight, organization, and language. It has most or all of the following characteristics:

**Ideas**
- Successfully argues a position on a topic
- Supports key points with strong reasoning and evidence
- Uses insightful analogies to help convey ideas and add interest
- Uses effective allusions

**Organization**
- Introduces the claim with an especially effective “hook"
- Has a well-developed main body that logically advances the writer’s argument
- Concludes by leaving the audience with a strong impression

**Voice**
- Writes authoritatively, with a tone that is suited to the purpose and audience
- Shows the writer’s investment in and commitment to his or her argument

**Word Choice**
- Uses descriptive language that shows exceptional use of rhetorical devices
- Repeats key words or phrases for emphasis

**Sentence Fluency**
- Uses parallelism to add emphasis

**Conventions**
- Has few or no spelling and punctuation errors