

Publicist style

Oratory

“I Have a Dream...” speech

“I Have a Dream...”

Orator: Martin Luther King

Time: August 28, 1963

Site: the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC

Historical context: racial segregation; black people slavery, white people sense of guilt; civil rights movement

Speech duration: 16 min

Style, sub-style, genre: publicist, oratory, political (rally) speech

ANALYSE:

- ✓ Key message?
- ✓ Structure and composition?
- ✓ Stylistic effect?
 - Aims (exert a constant and deep influence on public opinion, convince by both logical argumentation and emotional appeal) and functions (pragmatic, informative, other)?
 - Argumentative character (arguments, specific examples, quotations, allusions)?
 - Affective character (imagery – metaphors, similes; repetitions, antithesis, rhythm)?
 - Key words (frequency)?
 - Voice and body language (powerful instrument of persuasion)?

- **Key message:**

An appeal to the nation's unity facing the challenges of the fight for civil rights; the way to Freedom lies in Unity of the like-minded;

[17] 'I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."' (*allusion to the US Declaration of Independence*)

Structure and composition

- **Introduction**
- **Part I** (exposition): a) describes America of racial injustice (the role of the Emancipation Proclamation, numerous facts of segregation, poverty, lack of civil rights); b) calls for action (the necessity to fight for freedom and democracy; peaceful, non-violent actions); c) appeals to be ready to face the difficulties; d) stresses the unity of all Americans, black and white
- **Part II** (climax): describes the dream of a better future, racial harmony/reconciliation
- **Conclusion** (denouement): 'Let freedom ring' – ode to Freedom, Goodness and Justice; spiritual/church hymn 'Free at last' - sermon

Stylistic effect

- **Aims and functions:** to convince and influence tie people's mind, will and feeling; informative, explanatory, persuasive, imperative (appeal to act)
- **Argumentative character:** quotations, allusions, specific examples

The Gettysburg Address, the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, concept "American Dream," patriotic song 'My country, 'tis of thee', the Negro Spiritual "Free at Last"

Geographical names (Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, etc.)

- **Affective character:**

Metaphor: seared in the flames of withering injustice; a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; the architects of our republic; the bank of justice is bankrupt; from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; an oasis of freedom and justice

Simile: (This momentous decree came) as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves; as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity; until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream

Periphrasis: a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today

Metonymy: in whose symbolic shadow we stand today; from Stone Mountain of Georgia; from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee

- **Anaphora**:

‘One hundred years later...’

‘Now is the time...’

‘We must...’

‘We can never be satisfied...’

‘Go back to...’

‘I have a dream...’

‘With this faith...’

‘Let freedom ring...’

- **Parallelism and antithesis**: every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners

- **Key words**

Freedom (20)

We (30), our (17)

Nation (10), America (5), American (4)

Justice (8), injustice (3)

Dream (11)

Key themes: justice/injustice, freedom, unity, dream, faith

Voice and body language

- **Eloquence**
- **Calmness/passion**
- **Body movements:** head and arms held high (determination, certainty and solid confidence); shaking his head (saying 'no' to injustice and discrimination); raising his arms (truth, assertiveness); his open posture (power, firmness, unity); eye contact (full connection)
- **Voice:** commanding, inspiring, well-practiced (Baptist preacher); rhythmical (through repetition and pauses)
- **Tempo:** dramatic change in intensity, speed, energy
- **Melody:** dramatic change from low to high