

I HAVE A DREAM

1 I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the
2 greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

3 Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand
4 today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came
5 as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been
6 seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to
7 end the long night of captivity.

8 But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years
9 later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of
10 segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the
11 Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of
12 material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in
13 the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. So
14 we have come here today to dramatize an shameful condition.

15 In a sense we've come to our nation's Capital to cash a cheque. When the
16 architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution
17 and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to
18 which every American was to fall heir.

19 This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men,
20 would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of
21 happiness.

22 It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar
23 as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of honouring this sacred
24 obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad cheque; a cheque
25 which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

26 But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to
27 believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of
28 this nation. So we have come to cash this cheque- a cheque that will give us
29 upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

I HAVE A DREAM

30 We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce ur-
31 gency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take
32 the tranquilising drug of gradualism.

33 Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time
34 to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of
35 racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial
36 injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a
37 reality for all of God's children.

38 It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This
39 sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until
40 there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three
41 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to
42 blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the
43 nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquillity
44 in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of
45 revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day
46 of justice emerges.

47 But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm
48 threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our
49 rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to sat-
50 isfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.
51 We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and
52 discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical
53 violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting
54 physical force with soul force.

55 The marvellous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must
56 not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as
57 evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their
58 destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realise that their
59 freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

60 And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We
61 cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights,
62 "When will you be satisfied?"

I HAVE A DREAM

- 63 We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the
64 unspeakable horrors of police brutality.
- 65 We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of
66 travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the
67 cities.
- 68 We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller
69 ghetto to a larger one.
- 70 We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their
71 selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "for whites only."
- 72 We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a
73 Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.
- 74 No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls
75 down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.
- 76 I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and
77 tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you
78 have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the
79 storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You
80 have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith
81 that unearned suffering is redemptive.
- 82 Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go
83 back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos
84 of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be
85 changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.
- 86 I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today
87 and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American
88 dream.
- 89 I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true
90 meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men
91 are created equal."

I HAVE A DREAM

- 92 I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former
93 slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at
94 the table of brotherhood.
- 95 I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state
96 sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression,
97 will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.
- 98 I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where
99 they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their
100 character.
- 101 I have a dream today.
- 102 I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its
103 governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and
104 nullification, that one day right down in Alabama little black boys and black
105 girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters
106 and brothers.
- 107 I have a dream today.
- 108 I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and
109 mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the
110 crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be
111 revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.
- 112 This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the South with. With this
113 faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.
114 With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation
115 into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.
- 116 With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle
117 together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that
118 we will be free one day.

I HAVE A DREAM

119 This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new
120 meaning, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land
121 where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside,
122 let freedom ring."

123 And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom
124 ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the
125 mighty mountains of New York.

126 Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let
127 freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring
128 from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that; let freedom ring
129 from the Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain
130 of Tennessee.

131 Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every
132 mountainside, let freedom ring.

133 And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring
134 from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will
135 be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white
136 men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands
137 and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last!
138 Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1

What writing technique is used in the phrase 'It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity' (line 6-7)?

- A alliteration
 - B simile
 - C metaphor
 - D onomatopoeia
-

2

How long has it been since slavery ended?

- A It hasn't ended
 - B Five years ago
 - C Twenty years ago
 - D One hundred years ago
-

3

What did the cheque (line 15) or note (line 17) promise to everyone?

- A Money
 - B Right to life, liberty and the pursuit to happiness
 - C Every American to fall heir
 - D Funds
-

4

Where was the promise for equal rights written?

- A The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence
 - B The Bank of America
 - C The Emancipation Proclamation
 - D They have not been written
-

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 5** Which of the following is true?
- A** America has no money
 - B** The bank won't give money to black people
 - C** The bank won't give freedom and justice to black people
 - D** America won't give freedom and justice to black people
-
- 6** Which of the following is a promise of democracy?
- A** the valley of segregation
 - B** the path of racial justice
 - C** the quicksands of racial injustice
 - D** the tranquillising drug of gradualism
-
- 7** When do the 'whirlwinds of revolt' (line 45) mentioned in the speech occur?
- A** In Summer, 1963
 - B** In Autumn, 1963
 - C** They end in Summer, 1963
 - D** They end in Autumn, 1963
-
- 8** How does Martin Luther King want to gain justice?
- A** By using the marvellous new militancy in the black community
 - B** With physical force and soul force
 - C** Without physical violence
 - D** By being bitter and hateful
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 9** Who came to listen to the speech?
- A** People of many skin colours, including white people
 - B** People of many skin colours, but no white people
 - C** No one, it was written down
 - D** It is not mentioned in the speech
-
- 10** Which of the following is not mentioned in the speech?
- A** Black people are assaulted by the police
 - B** Black people are not allowed to stay in motels and hotels
 - C** Black people can move out of the ghetto
 - D** There are many “For whites only” signs
-
- 11** Are black people allowed to vote in New York?
- A** Yes, but only some of them
 - B** Yes, but people don’t believe them
 - C** Yes, but there is nothing to vote for
 - D** No, they have nothing to vote for
-
- 12** Which state does Martin Luther King mention is especially racist?
- A** Pennsylvania
 - B** Georgia
 - C** New York
 - D** Mississippi
-

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

13 Why does Martin Luther King repeat the phrase 'I have a dream'?

- A** It is the title of his speech
 - B** People weren't listening to him
 - C** He had more than one dream
 - D** To show that it was important
-

What is Martin Luther King's dream?

- 14**
- A** To work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together
 - B** For every valley, hill, mountain, rough place and crooked place to be made flat
 - C** To make everyone sing at the same time
 - D** To free the black people from slavery
 - E** To ensure everyone has equal rights
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15 Which is closest in meaning to being 'free' (line 118)?

- A** costing no money
 - B** not being a slave
 - C** available
 - D** not being controlled by other people
-