

Eleven Days in the Life of Dr. King

Let Loose on the Jam



<i>Grades</i>	K & up (see below for lower grade adaptation)
<i>Core Content Area</i>	Language arts, performing arts, social studies
<i>Themes</i>	Personal beliefs, speaking your mind, speaking to a group
<i>Materials</i>	Paper and pencil; <i>Optional:</i> I Have a Dream Speech

Background

Dr. Martin Luther King had seven minutes to make a difference. That is how much time he was given to offer his message of hope to the many people who came to see him in Washington DC during the March on Washington. Dr. King was trying to tell a very big story about the history of Black people in the United States. In the middle of his speech Mahalia Jackson, the great gospel singer, felt like Dr. King needed to speak to people's hearts as well as their minds. She called out: "Tell them about the dream, Martin!" This is when Dr. King "let loose on the jam" spoke from his heart and finished one of the great speeches in American History.

Lesson Procedure

1.) Let Loose on Your Own Jam

Think of something you would like to change in the world. It should be something really important to you. Now look at the words below. These all come directly from Dr. King's speech during the March on Washington. **Circle the three you like the most.**

- | | | |
|------------|---------------|-----------|
| • dream | • shameful | • justice |
| • time | • magnificent | • alone |
| • hands | • brotherhood | • march |
| • struggle | • bitterness | • mighty |
| • freedom | • turn | • changed |
| • light | • stand | • action |
| • hope | • bright | |

2.) Write Your Speech

Now write a short speech and include those words and phrases you circled. Your teacher should allow some time for you to take turns reading your speech to another classmate.

- What's your favorite line in your speech?
- What is your favorite line in your partner's speech?

3.) Present Your Speeches

After revising, consider a way to share the speeches in print or through a spoken word session. Maybe create a display outside your classroom with the title "Our Dream Speeches" and place the speeches in a colored paper frame so people can see them as they walk by.

Lower Grade Adaptations

In place of a speech, consider exploring some of the words individually to come up with shared definitions. Have students illustrate the meanings of these words with pictures or short, written phrases. Compile the student work into a social justice word wall or a class book.