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# A Summary and Organizational Analysis of I Have a Dream Speech

Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist minister and activist who became one of the most visible and famous spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement from 1955 and it stayed that way until his assassination in 1968. Martin Luther King Jr. best known for advancing civil rights through nonviolent activism and civil disobedience. He learned these tactics through his Christian beliefs. One of his famous speeches was I have a dream in which he spoke in front of over 200,000 and even more through his national broadcast.

## Description of the Speaker

Who is the speaker? Martin Luther King Jr. This speech was important in several different ways. It brought a great amount of attention to the Civil Rights Movement, which has been going on for many years before this. MLK's speech was part of the March on Washington. It has a massive gathering of more than 250,000 people in the nation's capital. African Americans still were not treated as equals and marches like this one and ones earlier in Detroit and other cities called attention to it.

The speech was given by the Lincoln Memorial, the monument which honored President Abraham Lincoln, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed the slaves in the Southern states. By giving his speech there, MLK was calling attention to how things were so terrible a century before (during the Civil War) and how it seemed nothing had changed in the 100 years since.

It brought Martin Luther King and his message of non-violence to a nationwide audience. The speech was carried on radio and was reprinted in newspapers and magazines all over the United States. After this speech, the name Martin Luther King Jr. was a brand name to the civil rights movement and was more popular than it ever was before. This speech made Congress move faster in passing the Civil Rights Act. The set of laws passed the next year, in 1964. The bulk of the laws gave African Americans more equal treatment than they ever had before.

## Description of the Situation

The speech occurred on August 28, 1963. Before this speech there were many civil rights movements that gave Martin Luther King momentum. Leading up to the speech was the March on Washington that happened, the Summer of 1963 which was about jobs and freedom of African Americans and ended with MLK's speech.

## Audience Analysis

The intended audience of I have a dream speech are white Americans. The speech was meant to connect the white Americans with the African Americans that listened to his speech. MLK's audience, when he gave his speech were African Americans and white Americans. How did the speaker adapt the message to the audience? In the audience when MLK spoke there were

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250,000 Americans there black and white and since it was televised there were even more people watching. This speech was on a national platform. The main purpose was to drive the importance of equality to both African Americans and white Americans.

## **Brief Summary of Speech**

MLK speech begins by acknowledging where he is what it means. Standing before the Lincoln Memorial, he talks about President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, issued one century prior to his own. MLK says that, even though the great promise of the proclamation, African Americans are still not free and they still face discrimination and segregation. African Americans cannot fully participate in society and they still remain poorer than white Americans. MLK's speech, just like the March on Washington, draws attention to this inequality and oppression state they are in. He then says that the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, made promises to all Americans regarding their "unalienable rights," but that people of color have not been able to fully reap those rights. He then compares this situation to a bad check, because American institutions have been unable to give what they promised. MLK then talks on behalf of all the protestors that are there. They refuse to believe that there isn't enough justice to give equality for everybody. He believes it's possible to "cash the check".

I Have a Dream follows different organizational patterns such as problem - solution and topical pattern. It follows problem-solution pattern because he's trying to persuade his audience throughout the speech saying they will keep fighting until "freedom rings." This speech also touches and follows the topical pattern because in each point he speaks about is different but related to each other. The way MLK presented his speech and the way he organized it was very effective. He was able to persuade hundreds of thousands who heard his speech.