



Module 1, Unit 2, Lesson Plan 3

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom – “I Have a Dream” (Grades 6-12)

Learning Targets/Objectives:

- Analyze Dr. King’s “Promissory Note” speech, otherwise known as his “I Have a Dream” speech.
- Discuss A. Philip Randolph’s role in organizing the March for Jobs and Freedom
- Determine the impact of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on Jim Crow policy
- Analyze a primary source for reading comprehension

Success Criteria:

- Retain details about the 1963 March on Washington

Anchor Text:

- King, Martin Luther, Jr. “I Have a Dream.” August 28, 1963. Yale Law University. Retrieved from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp

Supplemental Resources:

- National Archives. “Pamphlet for the final plans of the March on Washington for jobs and freedom, August 28, 1963. Retrieved from <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/march-on-washington/pamphlet.html>
- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. “Randolph, A. Philip.” Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/randolph-philip>

Lesson Content Overview:

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr., the SCLC, and many other civic and civil rights organizations, including the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, and the Urban League, peacefully took to the streets and structures of the nation’s capital. Over 250,000 people gathered on the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. to signify the need for federal government intervention and protection of minority rights. Originally scheduled to deliver his speech earlier in the day, King graciously allowed others to go before him. When he addressed the crowd, King delivered his “Promissory Note” speech, better known as his “I Have a Dream” speech, expressing the reasons why a quarter of a million people arrived in the District of Columbia to “dramatize a shameful condition. . . . to cash a check.” The first part of King’s partially handwritten speech directly tied the movement to the ideals of natural rights: the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness expressed in the Declaration of Independence; of freedom, democracy, and equality championed in the American US Constitution. Additionally, King addressed how the country failed to protect its Black population

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was the promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned.¹

Although King spoke about his “Dream” for several years prior to the March on Washington, the significance and timing of his passionate and heartfelt expression could not have been more perfect. It is important to remember that the demonstration was a consolidated effort to pressure the government to secure and protect the basic rights of American citizens. The fact that these rights were not available to African Americans made the expression of King’s “Dream” a valuable asset in securing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and, subsequently, the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The following day, a *New York Times* columnist wrote that King was an “anguished echo” from each American visionary. “Roger Williams calling for religious liberty, Sam Adams for political liberty, old man Thoreau denouncing coercion, William Lloyd Garrison demanding emancipation, and Eugene Debs crying for economic equality – King echoed them all.”²

Instructional Sequence:

Opener, 3-2-1 activity:

After giving students the [March on Washington Pamphlet](#) to read, have students write down three organizations involved in the planning of the march, two civil rights leaders (other than King), and one objective of the march.

- o **SEL Connection:** During his “Promissory Note” speech, Dr. King spoke about being judged by one’s character instead of the color of one’s skin. What character qualities are important to you, and what qualities do you look for in a leader?

Class Discussion:

The teacher will facilitate a discussion about the March on Washington, by placing an emphasis on the leadership of A. Philip Randolph. Students may read, as a class or individually, the King Research and Education Institute’s biographical profile of [Randolph](#).

Independent Read, Close Reading Analysis:

- Students will read and complete a close reading analysis of King’s “I Have a Dream” [speech](#).
- Class Discussion: Teacher will discuss the implications of the March on Washington by highlighting events occurring in the wake of the event: bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the passage of the 24th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the beginning of the Freedom Summer.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream.” August 28, 1963. Yale Law School, The Avalon Project Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. Retrieved from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp

² James Reston. “Martin Luther King Brings His Audience Alive.” *New York Times*. August 29, 1963. 9C.

(Answer: SNNC, AFL-CIO, CORE, National Urban League, NAACP, American Jewish Congress, SCLC)

- o In his “I Have a Dream” speech, Dr. King referenced three important American documents. Which of the following is not mentioned?
 - a. Emancipation Proclamation
 - b. Constitution
 - c. Articles of Confederation
 - d. Declaration of Independence

(Answer: C, the Articles of Confederation)

- True/False: After the March on Washington, Dr. King and other civil rights leaders met with President Richard Nixon to discuss passing civil rights legislation.

(Answer: False)

Adaptations for Student Needs

IEP:

- Sizes of student groups range
- Students team up with a peer partner, while others would prefer to work individually.
- There is a variety of small-group work
- Chunking information
- Visual cues and wait time
- Visual supports (maps, images, PowerPoint slides, handouts)
- Assessments will be modified, and students given extra time

ELD

- Modified/simplified reading material
- Content-related lists/handouts of key terms
- Text is supported by visuals and connected to real-life experiences