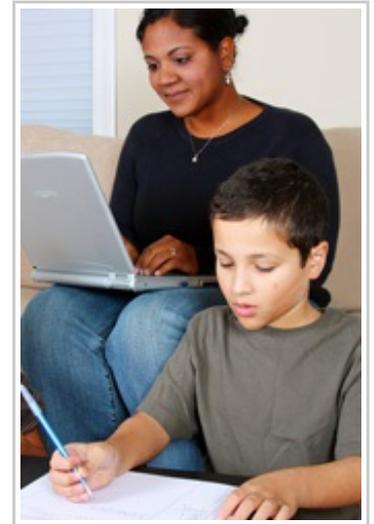


Write an "I Have a Dream" Speech!

Racial barriers were shaken with Supreme Court decisions like *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which ruled that separate schools for blacks and whites were "inherently unequal." Still, in the fifties and sixties, equality was far from a reality.

In August 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. helped organize the March on Washington. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, and his passionate words signaled the push for desegregation and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The civil rights leader proclaimed: "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." He also speaks of places: "snowcapped Rockies of Colorado," the "slopes of California," and the "mighty mountains of New York." He evokes sounds, too, like children singing of a "sweet land of liberty," and other senses, as when he speaks of Mississippi, a "state sweltering with the heat of injustice."



Ask what your child has learned at school about Martin Luther King Jr. Hopefully, she has learned that this speech was one of hope during a time of strife – and described what King envisioned for the world in which he lived.

Your child, too, most likely has a dream: a vision for a bright future. How does she picture the world, from the blocks of her neighborhood to the far reaches of the globe? In her eyes, what constitutes a "happy" and "free" society? First, she must unlock this imagery. Then, she can create her own speech.

What You Need:

- The text of King's "I Have a Dream" speech (found online through a search engine like Google)
- Several sheets of binder and/or drawing paper
- A pencil and markers

What You Do:

1. First, picture King's dream. Urge your child to close her eyes, and then read the speech aloud. The entire speech is preferred, but this may not be possible for a young or squirmy child. If not, begin at "I say to you today, my friends..."
2. Keeping her eyes shut, encourage her to create any pictures in her mind as you read.
3. When finished, divide a sheet of paper into categories: "sights," "smells," "sounds," "tastes," "textures," and "feelings." Leave spaces for notes in each section. Have her jot down words or phrases that came to mind, even doodles, from King's words. There are no right or wrong answers; the key is to ignite her imagination to freely associate the speech with her own sensory imagery.
4. Recite the speech again, or parts of it, if necessary. And don't forget to ask: "How did the speech make you feel?"
5. Next, she can write a speech. From the warm-up above, your child is processing what you've read with each of her senses. Instruct her to divide another sheet of paper into the same categories.
6. Ask new questions to unlock more abstract ideas: Do *you* have a dream? What do you wish or hope for? What makes you happy in this world? What upsets or makes you scared? How can your school, neighborhood, or world be better?

7. Have her record words, phrases, or pictures in the appropriate categories: “ice cream” under “tastes,” “my little brother’s laugh” under “sounds,” or a doodle of the family dog under “sights,” for instance. Encourage her to fill each blank space with as many words and scribbles as possible.
8. While she creates her collection of imagery, prepare a speech template on a piece of paper. Each line of her speech will begin with “I have a dream...” Repeat this phrase eight to 10 times – more if she likes to write – skipping two or three lines between each.
9. Using the sights, sounds, smells, and other senses in her notes, have her finish each sentence on the template: “I have a dream...where the world is always full of flowers,” or “I have a dream...that the future is full of plentiful food and clothing for all,” for example.
10. Read the speech aloud when completed!

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