

Name _____

Close Reading Spotlight – MLK’s “I Have a Dream”

Primary Source Excerpt

“I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.’ This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with.”

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., August 28, 1963



Part 1: Understanding Purpose

1. What is the main message Dr. King is communicating in this excerpt?
2. Why might King have chosen religious language in this part of his speech?

Part 2: Analyzing Tone

3. What emotions or feelings are evoked by the tone of this passage? Circle all that apply:

Anger Hope Urgency Despair Inspiration

4. Give one example of a phrase that helps create this tone and explain how it contributes.

Part 3: Evaluating Impact

5. Who was the intended audience of the “I Have a Dream” speech, and why is this passage especially powerful for them?
6. How do you think this excerpt helped shape public opinion or influence civil rights legislation?