**Sample Close Reading Lesson**

**I Have a Dream – Excerpt (1963)**

**By Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**1** Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

**2** But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

**3** 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 the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a 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, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

**4** But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

**5** We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

**6** It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. And there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

**Sample Lesson Plan – Close Reading**

**Common Core State Standards**

**Reading Anchor Standards**

* **RI-1:** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
* **RI-2:** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
* **RI-3:** Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
* **RI-4:** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

**Writing Anchor Standards**

* **W2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
* **W4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
* **W9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
* **W10:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**Demonstration Lesson: A Close Read of *I Have a Dream***

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| **Guiding Question**: *What is the purpose of this speech? In it Martin Luther King, Jr. states “Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning.” Based on evidence from this text, what is he hoping will begin? How does he convince the audience that it is time for this new beginning?* | |
| English Language Arts and Literacy Standards | Notes |
| **Setting the Stage** – 10 minutes   * Overview * Goals  1. Practice “close reading” when reading informational text 2. Focus on a word phrase to grow academic vocabulary and deep understanding | This lesson is based on the attributes of a Close Reading lesson and the use of text-dependent questioning.  This lesson follows “a carefully developed set of steps that assist students in increasing their familiarity and understanding” of complex, informational text.  This particular unit uses the speech *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King, Jr. as the content. |
| **Learning Activity**: 35 - 45 minutes (Whole group and small group)   * First reading and paraphrasing complex text (5-10 minutes). * Rereading with text dependent questions to self-assess one’s close reading and understanding (5-10 minutes) * Growing vocabularies – tracing the accumulated meaning of the word “justice” through the text and appreciating how the careful study of a crucial word contributes to understanding the whole (5-10 minutes) * Synthesizing Conversation – How did King compare 1969 to one hundred years earlier? What was he asking the crowd to do? How did King’s use of figurative language in this speech create a sense of urgency for action? (15) | * Remind students what it means to paraphrase and then have them complete *paraphrasing* sections on recording sheet. Engage students in discourse. * Have students read listed text dependent questions and use them to facilitate close reading. * After reading, engage students multiple times in discourse. * Record the contextual meaning of the word “*justice”* each time it appears in the text and discuss with a partner * Independently, write a thesis statement that addresses the prompt and note the supporting evidence * In a small group, discuss your thesis statements and the appropriate evidence that supports your analysis |
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**Student Recording Form**

**Read:** *I Have a Dream*

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**Paraphrase paragraph 1**

**Paraphrase paragraph 2**

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**Reread the text and use the text dependent questions below to self-assess your close reading and understanding of the text:**

* Why does the author say the Emancipation Proclamation “came as a great beacon light of hope?” in the first paragraph?
* What was King referring to when he said, “the long night of their captivity” in paragraph one?
* Why does the author choose the words “manacles of segregation and chains of discrimination” in paragraph 2? What imagery is he evoking?
* Martin Luther King, Jr. describes life one hundred years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in paragraph 2. What specific examples does he state?
* In the third and fourth paragraphs, King uses banking metaphors to describe the impact of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence on all citizens of America. What is the meaning of this figurative language?
* King repeats the phrase “Now is the time to…” in the fifth paragraph. What is he asking the audience to consider and act upon? What is he asking people to do?

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* What specific words did the author choose to create a sense of urgency for action in paragraphs five and six?
* What examples were provided of the rude awakening that could be expected?

**Growing vocabularies:**

1. **Record the contextual meaning of *“justice”* as it is used in each instance and discuss your meanings with a partner.**

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| --- | --- |
| injustice, paragraph 1 - line 3 |  |
| justice,  paragraph 4 - line 1 |  |
| justice,  paragraph 4 - line 3 |  |
| justice,  paragraph 5 - line 4 |  |
| injustice, paragraph 5 - line 4 |  |
| justice,  paragraph 5 - line 5 |  |
| justice,  paragraph 6 - line 6 |  |

**Vocabulary response:**

In paragraph form trace the accumulated meaning of the word “justice” through the text. What “justice” is King demanding?

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***I Have a Dream***

**Responding to the prompt:**

*What is the purpose of this speech? In it Martin Luther King, Jr. states “Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning.” Based on evidence from this text, what is he hoping will begin? How does he convince the audience that it is time for this new beginning?*

**Thesis statement:**

**Text-based supporting detail –**

**Text-based supporting detail –**

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**Text-based supporting detail –**

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