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vMLK 9-12 Language Arts Lesson Plan

Draft for NEH's Edsitement

Subject/Topics: Literature & Language Arts, Listening, Speaking, Reading

Curriculum: Language Arts

Grade level: 9-12

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Brief Overview: The Virtual Martin Luther King Project offers a unique and interactive way to engage students with the Civil Rights era of U.S. history. Through the use of advanced sound technology, the vMLK Project offers students a chance to hear a recreation of Dr. King's speech entitled "A Creative Protest" also known as the "Fill Up the Jails" speech. This pivotal speech was never recorded, so this project gives students a sense of what attending that speech might have felt like. Here, you will find links to audio, video, and transcripts related to the project, as well as visual aids to help you set up the experience. In this lesson plan, we offer two activities to engage with with varying levels of digital/technological engagement.

Guiding Questions:

How does Dr. King's "A Creative Protest [Fill Up the Jails] speech and the vMLK recreation help us think about an idea whose time has come?

What does listening to Dr. King's "A Creative Protest [Fill Up the Jails] speech through the vMLK recreation offer that helps us better understand the text of the speech?

How does sharing the experience of hearing Dr. King's "A Creative Protest [Fill Up the Jails] speech through the vMLK recreation help us understand the power of language?

Learning Objectives:

1. Analyze "A Creative Protest" to identify the use of ethos, pathos, and logos.

2. Identify and explain illustrative language in “A Creative Protest”.
3. Describe how the use of language impacts you after reading the speech.
4. Describe how the use of language impacts you after hearing the speech.

Lesson Plan Details:

Background : Public speaking was, and continues to be, a cornerstone of social movements. In the context of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. deeply believed that speaking could change the world. His speeches always had a foundation of literature and theology, as well as rich, illustrative language. On February 16, 1960 he delivered his speech entitled “A Creative Protest”, better known as the “Fill Up The Jails” speech, in Durham, North Carolina. While this speech bears all of the hallmarks of his rhetorical style, it also marks the first time that he publicly endorsed direct, nonviolent action as another strategy of social change. The content of “A Creative Protest” includes the aspects of his thinking, organizing, and vision for the Civil Rights Movement’s work to expand democracy. In order to capture the vibrancy of the speech in both word and sound, the Virtual Martin Luther King (vMLK) project features a recreation of the speech in order to make the text’s structure and meaning more accessible to a contemporary audience. Students today can experience the rhetorical traditions common in recent history, but possibly less familiar today, in a way that demonstrates the lasting value of those ideas. Because this speech specifically addresses the organizing and activism of young people, students can also better situate themselves within the rhetorical traditions of the Civil Rights Movement.

There are two interpretive humanities frameworks that inform the vMLK project. The first is based on Kim Gallon’s concept of a technology of recovery. Gallon employs this to describe a productive intersection of black studies and digital humanities work that seeks to restore the humanity of black people through the “recovery of lost historical and literary texts” (Gallon, 2016), such as the vMLK speech, for which there is no known recording. The second interpretive framework is public address as experience, a conceptualization which foregrounds rhetoric’s materiality through the creation of spaces that combine auditory and visually immersive elements to enable audiences to directly experience rhetoric’s affective energies in relation to social transformation. Experiencing public address as a community contributes to students’ sense of participatory readiness (Gallagher et al., 2020), which is to say the activities help students feel and process a sense of civic agency. “By inviting visitors into an embodied experience of public address, the vMLK project structures a comparative rhetorical stance from which students reflect on the symbolic aspects and impact of words, text, and discourse as well as the embodied experience and consequence of sound, sight, and movement, all of which they experience as interwoven into a unified whole” (Gallagher et al., 2020, p. 296). Both of these frameworks help to highlight how the vMLK project’s recreation of “A Creative

Protest” allows students to bear witness to an embodied experience of the transformative power of Dr. King’s rhetoric.

The vMLK project achieves the goals of bringing students into relationship with this critical speech by inviting them into a sensory learning experience. Specifically, the Virtual Martin Luther King, Jr. (vMLK) project, which is centered on an immersive sound experience of MLK’s 1960 “A Creative Protest [“Fill Up the Jails”]” speech, contributes to and extends perspectives on rhetorical sound studies due to its structures, the kinds of arguments that are made in and through them, and the uptake of those arguments as indicated by visitor feedback. Sound serves to structure the six components or experiences in ways that are uniquely rhetorical. Each of the experiences serves to engage visitors in a recreation of King’s sermonic rhetoric (Calloway-Thomas & Lucaites, 2015) exhibited in commemorative spaces. The vMLK project demonstrates the following rhetorical functions of sound: (1) locating and immersing visitors (locative) (2) hailing visitors as embodied subjects from whom a response is required (generative), and (3) highlighting differences between materiality of text and materiality of experience (comparative). Unlike simply reading the speech, the vMLK experience allows students to situate themselves inside the experience of the speech, thereby more deeply connecting to the learning.

In addition to providing a multi-sensory learning experience, the components of the vMLK project come together to help students understand the significance of this speech within the Civil Rights Movement. Each aspect of the project uses media, including documentary and virtual reality, to prepare students to study the speech. “The Story of the vMLK project” is a short documentary that offers some context for how the project came to be. It also explains how the relationship between Dr. King and Rev. Roy Moore, who is featured in the next film, informed King’s decision to be in Durham for this speech. “Counterhistories: Durham” is a short documentary film about The Royal Ice Cream sit-ins made by the Southern Foodways Alliance. It highlights the sit-in that preceded the 1960 Woolworth sit-ins, led by Rev. Moore. There is a video of the reenactment of the speech that took place on June 6, 2016. There is also archival footage from “King: A Filmed Record” regarding the idea of filling up the jails. The last video is a history of the White Rock Baptist Church entitled “Nothing but Love in God’s Water” by the Bull City Doc Squad.

Dr. King’s rhetorical style distinguishes him as a speaker, and this influential speech is no exception. This speech is an exciting way to discuss various aspects of rhetoric including rhetorical appeals, intertextuality, and uses of language. Throughout the speech he demonstrates ethos, pathos, and logos. He opens with the powerful invocation, “Victor Hugo once said there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose

time has come". He uses other literary devices, including repetition. He repeats the refrain "fill up the jails" several times, stating in an interview in 1963 that the sit-ins and nonviolent direct action were finally helping the movement to achieve the "fill up the jails" goal, which was putting pressure on communities across the south to end practices of segregation in public spaces and businesses. The vMLK project offers a unique way to engage the rich rhetorical traditions of the Civil Rights Movement through "A Creative Protest".

Content Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

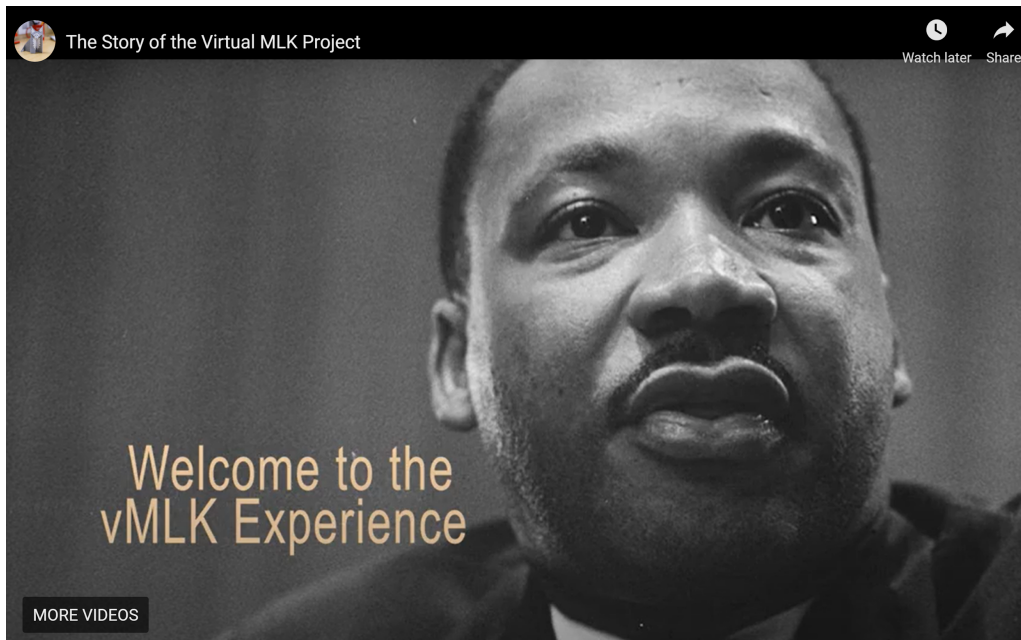
Preparation

In preparation for these assignments, students should be familiar with the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos as forms of rhetorical appeals. Students will also need to be familiar with metaphors, allusions, adjectives, and adverbs. Students will also need to have a shared, in-class experience of the vMLK website.



The website has six sections, seen above in the “Kit of Parts Overview.” Four of these sections are essential for a complete lesson. These include

- [The vMLK Documentary](#) (ten minutes)



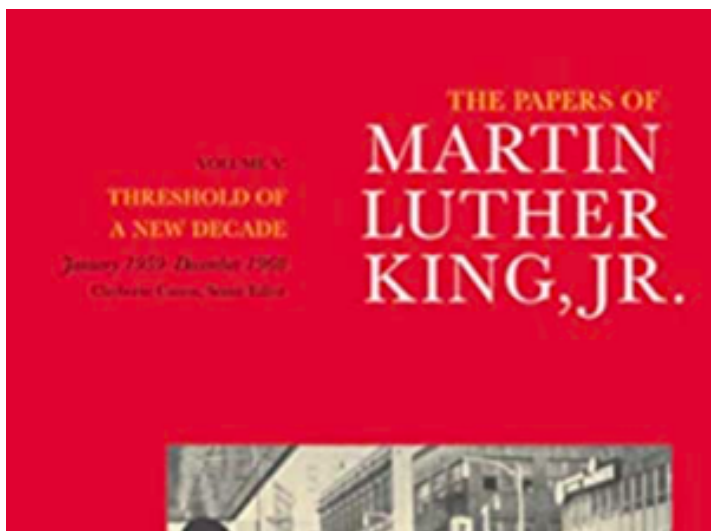
- [The Royal Ice Cream Sit-in Documentary](#) (eight minutes)

Royal Ice Cream Sit-In Documentary

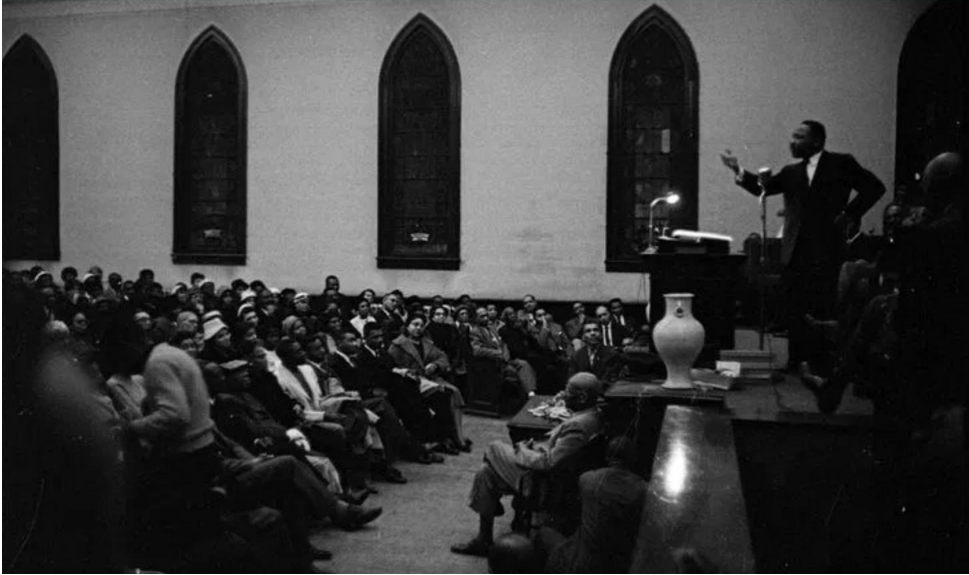
The [Southern Foodways Alliance](#) produced a film about the Royal Ice Cream Sit-in in Durham, North Carolina.



- [Transcript of Dr. King's Speech](#)



- [vMLK Multimedia Archive](#)



The lesson can take place over one or two days. The recommendation is that first the class watches the “The Story of the vMLK Project”, followed by the Royal Ice Cream Sit-In documentary, and then completes the lesson by listening to the vMLK listening experience using the recordings made in different parts of the sanctuary. Students should have access to the electronic copy of the full written speech or be provided a printed copy for their use. It may be helpful to have students listen to the speech more than once in order to fully participate in the activities, and students should be encouraged to listen to the speech from different audience perspectives (e.g., front row, balcony).

One activity will also rely on the students understanding the use of ethos, logos, and pathos. Reviewing these concepts will be helpful for students to do this work.

Lesson Activities

Activity 1

For this lesson students will need to first work independently, then share their findings with a small group. This activity features both writing and discussion.

Ethos

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is well known as a civil right leader who, in contemporary discussions, is known for his ethos.

For this section, you will work independently and write your answers. Identify two moments in the speech where Dr. King is demonstrating ethos. First consider only the written text.

For each moment:

- quote the passage you are discussing
- describe what is happening in the passage, including making reference to any relevant historical context
- clearly explain how this moment contributes to positive ethos
- clearly explain how, if at all, this moment detracts from positive ethos.

For this session, listen to each person's selection moments of ethos as a small group. Next discuss your responses. Now listen to the moments you have identified as moments of ethos. Consider how hearing the speech impacts your experience of ethos about which you wrote. Discuss the similarities and/or differences between reading and listening for helping you understand ethos.

Pathos

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated that pathos is a powerful tool of persuasion.

For this section, you will work independently and write your answers. Identify two moments in the speech where Dr. King is deploying pathos in order to persuade the audience. First consider only the written text.

For each moment:

- quote the passage you are discussing
- describe what is happening in the passage, including making reference to any relevant historical context
- clearly explain how this moment contributes to pathos
- clearly explain how, if at all, this moment detracts from the persuasive power of this passage because of the emotional appeal.

For this session, listen to each person's selection moments of pathos as a small group. Next discuss your responses. Now listen to the moments you have identified as moments of pathos. Consider how hearing the speech impacts your experience of pathos about which you wrote. Discuss the similarities and/or differences between reading and listening for helping you understand pathos.

Logos

Dr. King used examples and evidence to support his statements.

For this section, you will work independently and write your answers. Identify two moments in the speech where Dr. King uses logos in order to persuade the audience. First consider only the written text.

For each moment:

- quote the passage you are discussing

- describe what is happening in the passage, including making reference to any relevant historical context
- clearly explain how this moment contributes to logos
- clearly explain how, if at all, the logos present in this moment detracts from the persuasive power of this passage.

For this session, listen to each person's selection moments of logos as a small group. Next discuss your responses. Now listen to the moments you have identified as moments of logos. Consider how hearing the speech impacts your experience of ethos about which you wrote. Discuss the similarities and/or differences between reading and listening for helping you understand logos. .

Finally, once the individual and small group work is complete, students can share their work with the larger group. It may be helpful for each small group to choose a single example of ethos, pathos, and logos to share. As a group, have them prepare a way to present it to class

Activity 2

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a renowned speaker in part because of his masterful command of language. "A Creative Protest" includes many forms of illustrative language that help deliver his message in clear and powerful ways. For this activity, you can work either individually or in small groups. Select approximately 500 words (or other desired segment) of the speech. Ideally, the speech should be divided so that the entire speech is covered by the class. Once the desired section is selected, go through the written text and identify all of the following:

1. metaphors
2. allusions
3. adjectives
4. adverbs

After you have identified the language in the text, listen to the same passage using the audio. Note if you hear any additional metaphors, allusions, adjectives, or adverbs.

Now that you have completed the reading and listening parts of the activity, answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Dr. King used this kind of language?
2. How do each of these kinds of illustrative language help engage an audience in listening?
3. How does using language in this way help your understanding of the ideas in this speech? How, if at all, does using language in this way hinder your understanding of the ideas in the speech?

4. How does using language in this way impact your emotional response to the speech, positively and/or negatively?
5. Which is the most compelling or appealing use of illustrative language in the selection you analyzed? Why? In answering why it drew your attention, be sure to explain what the metaphor, allusion, adjective, or adverb helped your understanding of the idea in that usage.
6. Is there a speaker, writer, musician, or artist that you enjoy who uses language in this way? If so, who? How does their use of language compare to this speech?

Assessment

Ask students to create a 3-4 minute presentation on the vMLK project that includes at least one visual and one audio component when they present their work. They can also answer the following questions:

1. What did you learn about this speech by listening to it as well as reading it?
2. What does listening to this speech today make you think about what it might have been like to listen to it in that time?
3. What does listening to this speech today make you think about other contemporary civil rights speeches?
4. What is one thing that you learned by listening to this speech?
5. What is one question you still have?
6. How might you describe this project to someone who has not yet experienced it?

Materials and Media

<https://vmlk.chass.ncsu.edu/>