“I Have A Dream…”

Overview:
Dr. Martin Luther King is known to many as one of the most influential leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. His passion and enthusiasm for social justice and equality has changed the course of history and paved the way for freedom for so many from around the world. His legendary, “I Have a Dream Speech”, at the March on Washington, has been viewed as a symbolic message for hope, and continues to be acknowledged as one of the most powerful speeches for human rights. This lesson plan will challenge students to analyze the “I Have A Dream Speech” and write a speech that can describe a possible solution or “dream” to a world issue, such as discrimination, social injustice, racism etc.

Background and Information:

Important Vocabulary:

Civil Rights Movement¹: The civil rights movement was a mass popular movement to secure for African Americans equal access to and opportunities for the basic privileges and rights of U.S. citizenship. Although the roots of the movement go back to the 19th century, it peaked in the 1950s and 1960s.

March on Washington²: On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 demonstrators descended upon the nation’s capital to participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Not only was it the largest demonstration for human rights in United States history, but it also occasioned a rare display of unity among the various civil rights organizations. The event began with a rally at the Washington Monument featuring several celebrities and musicians.

Human Rights³: rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Racial Discrimination⁴: shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Fully understand the “I Have A Dream…” Speech
- Recognize the value of human rights and equality
- Understand the significance of the Civil Rights Movement in history
- Strengthen their skills in speech writing and public speaking

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: [I Have a Dream Speech Video, I Have a Dream Speech Transcript]

Common Core Standards:

CCSS ELA-LITERACY 9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5: Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

AFS Educational Goals:

Personal Realm:

- To look beyond superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes

Cultural Realm:

- To understand the concepts of “culture” and intercultural adaptation.
- Cultural knowledge and awareness: To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behavior

Interpersonal Realm:

- To have a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others and expand their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, and realities of others
Global Realm:

- To develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs, to develop a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seek out perspectives from other cultures in understanding world situations and problems

Activity 1:

- Review the key vocabulary terms: Civil Rights Movement, March on Washington, Human Rights and Racial Discrimination
- Watch the I Have a Dream Speech Video and follow the speech with the I Have a Dream Speech Transcript
- Ask students to underline sections that they feel are symbolic in the speech
- Start a short discussion on the different sections they selected
- Break students into 4 groups and ask them to select an important global issue and discuss various ways they can address it in a speech
- Ask students to collaborate in writing a speech and remind them that they will take turns reading the speech to the class

Activity 2:

Ask students to answer the following questions in an essay format:

- Why do you think it was important for MLK to have the speech in DC?
- What do you feel are the most significant messages of the speech?
- Why do you think this speech is crucial to the Civil Rights Movement?
- How does this speech relate to human rights?