

Name _____

Understanding King's Use of Metaphors in the "I Have a Dream Speech"

One of the reasons that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech is considered one of the most powerful speeches in American history is King's masterful use of the metaphor as a rhetorical device. A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes its point by comparing two very different things that share at least one element in common. For example, when King compared the Emancipation Proclamation to "a great beacon of hope" and to "a joyous daybreak," he was making the point that just as a beacon or daybreak can bring light and hope, the Emancipation Proclamation brought enlightenment and hope to millions of slaves.

Directions: The following chart lists five different metaphors from King's "I Have a Dream" speech in the far-left column. Read the metaphors in the context of King's speech (<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=40>), define the highlighted words using the Visual Thesaurus, and then analyze each metaphor in the two columns on the right side of the chart.

Metaphor from "I Have a Dream" speech	Which Visual Thesaurus definitions of the words in bold fit this context?	What is being compared in this metaphor?	What is the message or point of this comparison (or metaphor) in the context of King's speech?
"... a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity ."			
"But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt ."			
"...the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood."			
"...storms of persecutions and staggered by the winds of police brutality ."			
"...a beautiful symphony of brotherhood ."			