

Thinking About Architectural and Written Texts

A guide to analyzing the Lincoln Memorial and MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech

General Questions (Surface level reading/ viewing)

Text #1: The Lincoln Memorial

- Why is Abraham Lincoln one of the presidents honored with a physical memorial?
- Does the Lincoln Memorial look like any other memorials that you have seen in pictures or in person?
- What is written on the walls of the Lincoln Memorial? Where do these words come from?

Text #2: "I Have a Dream" Speech

- Based on what you know about President Lincoln, why do you think that Dr. King chose the Lincoln Memorial as the place to deliver his speech?
- What is the main objective of Dr. King's speech?

Close Reading and Analysis:

Text #1: The Lincoln Memorial

- Closely examine the text above Lincoln's sitting image. According to this text, why was the monument built? (Purpose)
- Can you identify the images present inside the memorial? What kind of story does this seem to tell?
- What is your emotional reaction to the images in the memorial?
- Examine carefully the features of Lincoln himself. How does his face look? How are his hands positioned?
- Notice the details of the chair on which Lincoln is seated. What are these images? How are they significant?

Text #2: "I Have a Dream"

- "Five score years ago," the opening phrase of King's speech, is an allusion to what or whom? Why was this an appropriate and strong way for King to begin his speech?
- King's speech contains other allusions in addition to the one with which he opens his speech. Find the allusion to the Declaration of Independence and explain why it is significant.
- Besides the famous "I have a dream" phrase, find two other examples of parallel structure or Repetition. Identify how the emphasis on these phrases and words add to the persuasiveness of his argument.
- Find an example of alliteration in King's speech. What is the impact of this alliteration?
- List all metaphors in the speech. Discuss the effect of one extended metaphor. How does the Comparison further develop King's purpose?
- Examine the speech to determine how King organizes his argument. What are the main sections of the speech, and what is the purpose of each? How does the organization serve King's overall purpose?