

Great communicators

What makes normal communicators great? Why can some phrases or speeches **impress themselves** firmly on our mind or **arouse** emotions? What is it about the persona or message of great communicators that moves people and creates action?

Let's look at a couple of examples from the last century.



■ Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was the leader of the African-American civil rights movement and was assassinated in 1968. His most famous speech was 'I have a dream', and here are the reasons why it was so powerful:

- he used simple, yet key phrases like "I have a dream", "together" and "let freedom ring" over and over again, as a sort of **refrain**. This allowed him to make his idea clear and evident, and, at the same time, enabled his audience to stay focused and connected with him;
- he used the right level of **pace**, tone, and volume to make his communication effective. He started out at a slow, calm pace to make sure he was perfectly understood; he then gradually increased his pace, volume, and tone to become more **assertive**;

- he used emotive words and his language was rich in visual imagery;
- he established a historical context for his message, taking well into consideration the age, religion and gender of his audience.

■ Winston Churchill

Though Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain during World War II, had a major speech impediment since he had a **stutter**, he is considered a **consummate** communicator.

- He spoke passionately, but in measured tones.
- His mastery of the English language was without equal and he made use of ancient **rhetorical devices**: allegory (a symbolic narrative), anaphora (the repetition of one or more words at the beginning of a sentence), antithesis, and humour.
- His speeches were guided by deep personal beliefs that made people trust him.

to arouse: *suscitare*
assertive: *assertivo*
consummate: *molto esperto*
to impress: *restare impressi*

pace: *ritmo*
refrain: *ritornello*
rhetorical device: *figura retorica*
stutter: *balbuzie*



1  **Watch part of the well-known speech by Martin Luther King. And choose the correct option.**

▶ Martin Luther King, Jr. I Have A Dream Speech
posted by Ilya Gokadzes

1. King uses the rhetorical figure of anaphora a lot. What is it?
 - a. It is the repetition of a word or phrase.
 - b. It is a game with words.
 - c. It is the comparison of one thing with another.
 - d. It is a contradictory statement.
2. How many times does King repeat the refrain "I have a dream" in the first part?
 - a. 7 times.
 - b. 5 times.
 - c. 9 times.
 - d. 3 times.
3. Why does King repeat "I have a dream" so often?
 - a. To make the concept clear.
 - b. To emphasize the concept.
 - c. To make the concept easier to understand.
 - d. To call his audience to action.
4. How many States does he mention?
 - a. 3.
 - b. 5.
 - c. 7.
 - d. 9.
5. What can we say about Martin Luther King's body language?
 - a. He looks very anxious and angry.
 - b. He doesn't use body language.
 - c. He looks excited.
 - d. He looks calm and grounded.
6. Why does he use so many breaks in his speech?
 - a. To make it memorable.
 - b. To get the audience interested.
 - c. Because he was tired.
 - d. Because he was reading.
7. What are the other two refrains he uses in his speech?
 - a. With this faith/Let freedom ring
 - b. This is our hope/Let freedom ring
 - c. Let freedom sing/What this faith
 - d. Watch this faith/Let us be free
8. What feature do the people of America have in common, according to him?
 - a. They are free.
 - b. They have children.
 - c. They're God's children.
 - d. They live in the mountains.



9. What are the words of the old Negro spiritual he mentions?
 - a. Be free at last!
 - b. Free at last!
 - c. Break free at last!
 - d. Three at last

2   **GROUP WORK** Watch the famous speech "We Shall Fight on the beaches" by Sir Winston Churchill. Discuss it and highlight any similarities or differences with Dr King's speech.

▶ We shall fight on the beaches – Winston Churchill
posted by Paul Thewlis

	Dr Martin Luther King	Sir Winston Churchill
Use of repetitions		
Tone of voice		
Mood		
Use of <i>we</i> instead of <i>I</i>		
Use of <i>shall</i> to describe future events		
Use of pauses in the speech		

3  **PAIR WORK** Search for more information about the two great communicators and their speeches and talk about their techniques in class.