

# WE ARE THE DREAM

## THE KIDS OF THE OAKLAND MLK ORATORICAL FEST

Public speaking classroom activity inspired by the documentary.

### OBJECTIVE

Students will discover and practice strategies for effective public speaking to deliver a speech or poem, as well as analyze documentary clips.

### TIME

60 minutes (with additional time to prepare for classroom oratorical festival)

### MATERIALS

- The film *We Are the Dream: The Kids of the Oakland MLK Oratorical Fest* at [hbo.com/classrooms/we-are-the-dream](http://hbo.com/classrooms/we-are-the-dream)
- Finding Your Voice activity sheet

### STANDARDS

#### Common Core ELA

- SL.4 Present information clearly for an audience
- SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks
- L.3 Make effective choices for meaning or style

#### C3 Social Studies

- D4.3 Present arguments for a range of audiences
- Speaking and Listening 4 Present information with consideration of task, purpose, and audience

### LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

#### PART A: Guided Exploration

1. **Ask** students how they convince someone to agree with their point of view or change someone's mind—for example, a friend who may not understand why they like/dislike something. Examples might include: You can talk to them with convincing (persuasive) language; you can let the tone of your voice help express your feelings; you can use something they already agree about or relate to as a starting point.
2. **Explain** that the class will be learning about how people can inspire others and promote change through the power of giving a speech. Then, they'll try out the power of oration themselves by practicing and delivering a famous speech or poem in their very own Classroom Oratorical Festival.
3. **Tell** students they are about to watch a clip from Martin Luther King's famous 1968 speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop." Explain that this was the final speech that the legendary civil rights leader delivered; he was assassinated the following day in Memphis. Share a clip from it in the *We Are the Dream* documentary [34:26–35:46]. Ask: *Why do people consider Dr. King to be such an inspiring, powerful orator? What did they observe in the clip of Dr. King's speech? (Examples: musicality/rhythm, pauses, raising/lowering voice)*
4. **Distribute** the Finding Your Voice activity sheet. Show a clip from the *We Are the Dream* documentary of the young boy practicing Dr. King's speech for an oratorical competition [3:07–3:50]. Discuss students' reactions. Ask: *What advice did he get? What other advice would you give him?*
5. **Show** and discuss the remaining four documentary clips on the Finding Your Voice activity sheet (time stamps and discussion questions are provided) to serve as a how-to guide for preparing to give a public speech.



#### PART B: Presentation Activity—Classroom Oratorical Festival

1. **Direct** students to choose a speech to deliver to the class by researching a famous speech online, selecting a poem from a book, or writing their own words. Some research ideas include Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama, Mahatma Gandhi, Maya Angelou, Malala Yousafzai.
2. **Explain** that students can practice a sentence or a paragraph at a time to memorize it. They can also write on paper or index cards any hand motions they intend to use.
3. **Have** students practice speeches, getting feedback from their teacher and peers. (Students can use a cell phone to record each other giving speeches, and then analyze and adjust.)
4. **Host** a Classroom Oratorical Festival. Invite families and other classrooms, if possible.
5. **Wrap up** by having students reflect on what they've learned about the power of words and presentation. Ask: *What will you apply to your life even when not giving a formal speech? (e.g., enunciating, posture, etc.)*

# FINDING YOUR VOICE

View the clips from the film *We Are the Dream: The Kids of the Oakland MLK Oratorical Fest*. Discuss how the tips below could help you find your voice when you prepare to deliver your speech in class.

## TOPIC 1: DOES REHEARSING HELP?

🎥 3:07–3:50 (practice)

🎥 48:42–51:47 (performance)

- Watch these before-and-after clips to compare a student's practice and performance.

**Discuss:** What did the boy change between his early rehearsal and his performance? Did it make him a better speaker?



## TOPIC 2: STRATEGIES AND INSPIRATION

### Speak Clearly

🎥 28:20–30:42

- A teacher talks to his students about speaking from the diaphragm and pronouncing words clearly.

**Discuss:** Why did the teacher stress speaking from the diaphragm? What changes in pronunciation did the class make thanks to the teacher's comments?

### Use Your Hands

🎥 15:50–18:15

- Two girls practice a poem about discrimination they and their family have experienced.

**Discuss:** How do the hand gestures the girls use reinforce the words they're speaking?

### Deal With Stage Fright

🎥 21:20–22:03

A student talks about how she handles being nervous onstage.

**Discuss:** What tip did the student give? Why do you think it would be effective?

### Practice Makes Perfect

🎥 40:00–42:20

A student practices public speaking in front of her father.

**Discuss:** Why did the father choose a picnic table in a park as the best place to practice? Do you think it helped her?



## QUICK TIPS FOR SPEECH SUCCESS

- 1. Stand up straight**, with your shoulders back.
- 2. Look out** at your audience, not down.
- 3. Use your voice.** Speak loudly and clearly, and add power by pausing before or after important words and changing your volume.