

“Speech on the Vietnam War, 1967” by Martin Luther King Jr.

Guiding Questions

1. Lines 1–13: What does King’s explanation that he does “not wish to speak with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, but rather to my fellow Americans” suggest about his purpose in this speech? Why does King use the phrase “my fellow Americans”?
2. Lines 18–29: Explain the first reason that King gives for taking a stand on Vietnam. Is this a logical reason for his view that the war should be stopped? Why or why not?
3. Lines 34–37: Why does King choose to use “crippled” rather than the words “hurt” or “held back”? How does the use of this word intensify the point he is making in this sentence?
4. Lines 61–81: Explain what opposing view King is addressing in this counterargument.
5. Lines 82–87: What is the effect of King mentioning his Nobel Prize?
6. Lines 88–99: What important reason does King give in these lines for opposing the war in Vietnam? Summarize King’s defense of the reason he states.
7. Lines 107–110: Does King use the word *nationalism* in a positive or negative sense in this sentence? Explain what ideas are associated with the word *nationalism*.
8. Lines 123–138: What kind of evidence does King present in this part of his argument? How can you determine whether this information is valid?

9. Lines 148–161: Why does King provide so much detail about the political history of Vietnam? Evaluate whether these facts support his central idea.
10. Lines 166–170: Which words in these lines convey judgment. Explain the connotation of each word.
11. Lines 189–193: Explain with evidence how the use of parallelism enhances King’s argument.
12. Lines 202–211: What does King risk by his sympathetic comments about the Viet Cong? Why might he be willing to take that risk?
13. Lines 233–238: Explain King’s strategy in looking at the war from these differing perspectives. How does he believe this approach will help him accomplish his purpose?
14. Lines 239–254: Cite evidence to explain the opposing view and counterargument that King presents in these lines.
15. Lines 273–305: What topic does King choose to finish this segment of his argument and why? Review lines 273–285. In what lines does King state his central idea? What is the conclusion that all of these reasons and evidence have been leading to?
16. Lines 297–303: Describe the possible effect of including the quotation from a Buddhist leader.
17. Lines 307–334: How do the proposals King lists affect his persuasiveness?

18. Lines 349–359: Why might this part of King’s speech be considered controversial?
19. Lines 360–391: Which line states the focus of the next part of the speech? How does the argument about ending the war in Vietnam relate to this idea? What evidence does King offer to support his assertion?
20. Lines 386–388: What appeal does King incorporate in these lines? What is the intended effect of this appeal on his audience?
21. Lines 399–407: What is King appealing to in these lines? Why does he allude to the story of the Good Samaritan here?
22. Lines 408–416: What does the repetition of the phrase “This is not just” emphasize?
23. Lines 427–444: Explain how the evidence in this part of King’s speech differs from the support for his first conclusion. Give specific examples and explain if the evidence can be verified.
24. Lines 451–454: What feelings and ideas does King want his listeners to associate with the phrase “arch antirevolutionaries”?
25. Lines 474–476: How does the word *bosh* convey King’s attitude?
26. Lines 486–489: What metaphors are in these lines? How does the use of metaphors affect listeners’ understanding of King’s message?
27. Lines 513–539: What rhetorical devices does King use in these last three paragraphs? What is their effect on the audience?