

Humanities Out There Lesson 7: Cashing the Check

1. What is King referring to when he talks about the “cancelled check”?

2. Think of another metaphor that could be used to mean the same thing.

3. Do you think that blacks have cashed the check now that it’s the year 2007?
What about other minority groups in the U.S.?

Hypothesis: _____



Support #1:

Support #2: _____

Support #3: _____

Martin Luther King, Jr.
“I Have a Dream” Speech ~ August 28, 1963

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

Manacles – chains around someone’s wrists or ankles, like a slave or a prisoner would have

Metaphor - a word that stands for another word or idea, e.g. “Kobe Bryant is *money* from *downtown*. He’s an *assassin*.”

4. Choose one of the cards from the game and glue it on top of the space on the right →
Picture side up. You should choose the one that is the most interesting to you, or
the one you think you understand the best.

5. Explain the picture shown on the card. What specifically does it show? Is there
anything unusual about it?

6. What is significant about the historical event or process shown on the card? How
did it affect the lives of African-Americans?

7. Try to imagine that you are an African-American who is living during the same
time period shown on the card. If I asked you, “how do you feel about X?”,
where X = the event or process shown on the card, what would you say about it?

8. Think of one contemporary event or situation that this one reminds you of. What
is the connection that made you think of this comparison? It can be something
from your own life or something from the news.

9. Make a card for a new historical event or process that you choose. It can be
something from the 20th century or even contemporary life; maybe the same as
#8. Put your text and picture in the spaces on the right →



A large, empty white rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing an explanation of the picture shown on the card.

A large, empty white rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a contemporary event or situation that the historical event reminds you of.