

DrMartinLutherKingJr.com - What Is Your Life's Blueprint?

drmartinlutherkingjr.com

Directions: As you read, annotate (highlight and comment in the margins) for King's use of rhetoric (ethos, pathos, and logos) to prove his point.

Background: This speech was given on October 26, 1967, six months before he was assassinated. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to a group of students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia.

I want to ask you a question, and that is: What is your life's blueprint?

Whenever a building is constructed, you usually have an architect who draws a blueprint¹, and that blueprint serves as the pattern, as the guide, and a building is not well erected² without a good, solid blueprint.

Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is whether you have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint.

I want to suggest some of the things that should begin your life's blueprint. Number one in your life's blueprint, should be a deep belief in your own dignity³, your worth and your own somebodiness. Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.

Secondly, in your life's blueprint you must have as the basic principle⁴ the determination to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor.⁵ You're going to be deciding as the days, as the years unfold what you will do in life — what your life's work will be. Set out to do it well.

And I say to you, my young friends, doors are opening to you--doors of opportunities that were not open to your mothers and your fathers — and the great challenge facing you is to be ready to face these doors as they open.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great essayist, said in a lecture in 1871, "If a man can write a better book or preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

This hasn't always been true — but it will become increasingly true, and so I would urge you to study hard, to burn the midnight oil; I would say to you, don't drop out of school. I understand all the sociological⁶ reasons, but I urge you that in spite of your economic plight⁷, in spite of the situation that you're forced to live in — stay in school.

And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this

¹ a design plan or other technical drawing.

² paste; to construct (a building, wall, or other upright structure)

³ the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect

⁴ a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning

⁵ your day job, your college major, your career, etc.

⁶ concerning the development, structure, and functioning of human society

⁷ a dangerous, difficult, or otherwise unfortunate situation

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particular moment in history to do it. don't just set out to do a good job. Set out to do such a good job that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn't do it any better.

If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo⁸ painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven⁹ composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price¹⁰ sings before the Metropolitan Opera. Sweep streets like Shakespeare¹¹ wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well. If you can't be a pine at the top of the hill, be a shrub in the valley. Be the best little shrub on the side of the hill.

Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.

Article Questions:

1. What is Martin Luther King Jr.'s purpose for writing this speech? What is he trying to convince the audience of?

2. Who was Martin Luther King Jr.'s audience? Why was he targeting this specific audience?

3. List an example of ethos, pathos, and logos.

- a. Ethos: _____
- b. Pathos: _____
- c. Logos: _____

4. Choose one of your examples above and explain the effect it creates on the reader (you).

⁸ (1475–1564), Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and poet; full name **Michelangelo** Buonarroti

⁹ (1770-1827) was a German composer and pianist.

¹⁰ (born 1927) an American soprano. Born and raised in Laurel, Mississippi, she rose to international acclaim in the 1950s and 1960s, and was one of the first African Americans to become a leading artist at the Metropolitan Opera.

¹¹ Shakespeare is a famous English poet and playwright who lived from 1564-1616 and produced countless sonnets and plays.

<https://www.drmartinlutherkingjr.com/whatisyourlifefblueprint.htm>

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