

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Consider the wise words of one of America’s most influential speakers and writers, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His contributions to the Civil Rights Movement and his religious sermons live on as examples of powerful rhetoric that moved a nation. On this handout, you’ll find five famous quotes worth imitating and sentence frames to help you use Dr. King’s style in your own writing.

Quote Worth Imitating	Sentence Frame
<p>“Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools.”</p>	<p>Through our (adjective) and (adjective) genius, we have made of this (noun) a (noun) and yet we have not had the (adjective) (noun) to make of it a (noun). [Optional sentence: But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this.] We must all learn to (verb) as (noun) or we will all (verb) as (noun).</p>
<p>“Give us the ballot, and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about our basic rights. Give us the ballot (<i>Yes</i>), and we will no longer plead to the federal government for passage of an anti-lynching law; we will by the power of our vote write the law on the statute books of the South (<i>All right</i>) and bring an end to the dastardly acts of the hooded perpetrators of violence. Give us the ballot (<i>Give us the ballot</i>), and we will transform the salient misdeeds of bloodthirsty mobs (<i>Yeah</i>) into the calculated good deeds of orderly citizens.”</p>	<p>Give us (noun-1), and we will no longer have to worry (person or entity) about (concern). Give us (noun-1), and we will no longer (verb) to (person or entity) for (specific outcome desired); we will (societal outcome that you're fighting for). Give us (noun-1), and we will transform (adjective and noun to describe current situation/A) of (adjective and person/entity doing wrong/B) into the (opposite of A) of (opposite of B).</p>
<p>“We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.”</p>	<p>We must develop and maintain the (noun) to (verb-1). He who is (adjective-1) of the power to (verb-1) is (adjective-1) of the power to (opposite of verb-1). There is (noun) in the worst of us and (noun) in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to (phrase describing negative outcome).</p>
<p>“Nonviolence is absolute commitment to the way of love. Love is not emotional bash; it is not empty sentimentalism. It is the active outpouring of one's whole being into the being of another.”</p>	<p>(Noun) is absolute commitment to the way of (noun-2). (Noun-2) is not (adjective) (noun); it is not (adjective) (noun). It is the (adverb) (gerund) of one's (adjective) (noun-5) into (noun-5) [optional: of another].</p>
<p>“We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and for justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.”</p>	<p>We must move past (noun) to (noun). We must find new ways to (verb) for (noun) in (location/topic) and for (noun) throughout (location/topic), a (location/topic) that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be (verb) down the (adjective), (adjective), and (adjective) (noun) of time reserved for those who possess (noun) without (noun), (noun) without (noun), and (noun) without (noun).</p>