

Martin Luther King Jr.

In this lesson, you will learn about Martin Luther King Jr., a civil rights activist. You will discuss racism and talk about Dr. King's dreams.



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. When did slavery end in the United States?
2. Did the end of slavery mean that blacks and whites were treated equally?
3. Do you know the meaning of "segregation"?
4. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr. was able to persuade people that things had to change in the United States?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. train | a) to injure with a knife |
| _____ 2. non-violent | b) a gathering of people who want to raise awareness and support for a cause or issue |
| _____ 3. theology | c) the study of religion |
| _____ 4. stab | d) to study or work to become better at something |
| _____ 5. persuade | e) the separation of people by race |
| _____ 6. inspire | f) peaceful |
| _____ 7. protest march | g) to cause a good change in someone |
| _____ 8. struggle | h) to try hard to beat or achieve something difficult |
| _____ 9. courage | i) bravery |
| _____ 10. segregation | j) to convince someone |

Quick Facts

NAME: Martin Luther King Jr.

BORN IN: _____

KNOWN FOR: _____

QUOTE: "Let no man pull you so low as to hate him."

Reading

1. Martin Luther King Jr. helped black people in the southern United States win equal rights.
2. King was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929. As a young boy, he loved books and was a good speaker. After graduating from college in 1948, King **trained** to be a minister like his father. During that time, he learned about Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian leader, and his belief in **non-violent** protest.
3. King then went to Boston University where he studied to be a doctor of **theology**. He met Coretta Scott there. They were married in 1953 and had four children.
4. In 1955, King became the minister of a Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama. He knew that black people were not treated fairly in the South and wanted to try to change that. He met Ralph Abernathy, another minister, and they worked together to help black people.
5. Some people did not like what King and his followers were doing. In 1957, someone bombed his home and his church. He was put in jail many times for protesting how black people were treated. He was also **stabbed**. But he never used violence, and he asked his followers not to use violence.
6. King was famous for the speeches he gave to **persuade** people that things must change. He **inspired** black and white people to fight for the fair treatment of blacks. In 1963, King gave his most famous speech to thousands of people in Washington, DC. It is called his "I Have a Dream" speech.
7. King led many **protest marches** in the American South during the 1960s. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He also wrote two books about black people's **struggle** for the same rights as white people.
8. King knew he might be killed one day by someone who did not like what he did. He was shot and killed on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Today, people are still inspired by the speeches he gave and by his **courage** to fight for what he believed in without using violence.

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information.

- _____ 1. Martin Luther King Jr. had the same profession as his father.
- _____ 2. King studied religion at university.
- _____ 3. King believed in using violence to make changes.
- _____ 4. In the 1950s, black and white Americans were treated equally.
- _____ 5. Many people tried to hurt King.

B. Ask and Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in complete sentences.

1. What did Dr. King learn from the Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi?

2. What did King want to change in the United States?

3. In what ways did people try to stop King's work?

4. How did King inspire people to work for change? Name two things he did.

5. What was Dr. King's most famous speech called?

6. What kind of books did he write?

7. What prize did he receive for his hard work?

8. When and how did Martin Luther King Jr. die?

Vocabulary Review

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

1. King trained to be a minister.
 - a) traveled by rail
 - b) studied
 - c) fought
2. He believed in non-violent actions.
 - a) fighting
 - b) doing nothing
 - c) peaceful
3. He studied to be a doctor of theology.
 - a) religion
 - b) law
 - c) education
4. In the 1950s in the US, black people were segregated from white people.
 - a) hurt
 - b) together
 - c) separated
5. King tried to persuade people that things had to change.
 - a) convince
 - b) force
 - c) march
6. King's speeches inspired people to work for change.
 - a) fought
 - b) encouraged
 - c) trained
7. King's home was bombed and someone once tried to stab him.
 - a) explosion
 - b) shoot
 - c) cut with a knife
8. King had a lot of courage.
 - a) money
 - b) bravery
 - c) education
9. He wrote two books about black people's struggle.
 - a) fight
 - b) treatment
 - c) church
10. King led many protest marches in the 1960s.
 - a) parades
 - b) music concerts
 - c) demonstration walks

Discussion

1. Have you ever heard Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech?
2. "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." This quotation comes from the "I Have a Dream" speech. Explain it in your own words.
3. Do you think that Dr. King's dreams have become a reality?
4. Do you believe it is possible to make great changes in society without violence?
5. What other great leaders have believed in non-violent protesting?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students learn about Martin Luther King Jr. They read about his life, answer comprehension questions, review vocabulary, and discuss topics such as his famous speech and non-violent protests.

LEVEL: Intermediate

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: famous people, intermediate, Martin Luther King, Martin Luther King Jr., MLK, Dr. King, racism, African American, segregation, equal rights, I Have a Dream

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

- Slavery ended in the United States in 1865, after the American Civil War.
- No, it did not.
- Segregation refers to the separation of one group from another. In the United States, for many years, blacks were not allowed to go to the same schools as whites, eat in the same restaurants, sit together on buses, etc.
- Individual answers.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. d | 3. c | 5. j | 7. b | 9. i |
| 2. f | 4. a | 6. g | 8. h | 10. e |

Quick Facts

Name: Martin Luther King Jr.

Born in: Atlanta, Georgia

Known for: Helping black people in the US get equal rights

Comprehension

A. TRUE OR FALSE?

- T
- T
- F – King promoted non-violence.
- F – Blacks didn't have the same privileges as whites in the 1950s.
- T

B. ASK AND ANSWER

- King learned about non-violent protest from Mahatma Gandhi.
- King wanted to end the unfair treatment of blacks in the United States.
- His home and his church were bombed, he was put in jail many times, he was stabbed, and eventually he was shot and killed.
- King inspired people with his speeches, his protest marches, and his books.
- Dr. King's most famous speech was called "I Have a Dream."
- King wrote books about black people's struggle for the same rights as white people.
- King received the Nobel Peace Prize.
- King was shot and killed on April 4, 1968.

Vocabulary Review

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. a | 5. a | 7. c | 9. a |
| 2. c | 4. c | 6. b | 8. b | 10. c |

Discussion

Discuss in groups or as a class.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Traveled*, *Color*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Travelled*, *Colour*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.