

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Black man and was born in the USA on January 15th 1929. As a child, he enjoyed playing sports, playing the piano and going to school. Sadly, life was often hard. Many people treated him differently because of the colour of his skin.

Life was difficult for Black people living in the USA. At the time, many White people did not respect people of other races and treated them very badly. There were separate areas for Black people and White people on public transport, parks, restaurants and even in toilets. Black people were not allowed to use the areas that were for White people.

## Did You Know?

In 1955, Rosa Parks, a Black woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man.

Black children were not allowed to go to school with White children. They had to go to separate schools that didn't have many resources to help with their learning.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Christian who wanted to make sure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race. He became a civil rights activist. This means that he campaigned for improved rights for people.

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. led a huge march in Washington DC, the US capital. In front of the enormous crowd, Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Here is a short piece of that speech:

"I have a dream that one day little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as brothers and sisters."

It is because of Martin Luther King Jr., and others like him, that the law was changed to state that everyone in America had the same rights regardless of their skin colour. The law was also changed so that everyone could vote.

In 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Every January, there is an American national holiday to celebrate his birthday.

## Did You Know?

Martin Luther King Jr. was only 39 years old when he was killed because of his beliefs about fighting racism. Many thousands of people went to his funeral.



# Questions

1. Where was Martin Luther King Jr. born and raised? Tick one.

- Australia                       Africa                       America

2. What did Martin Luther King Jr. become? Tick one.

- a bus driver                       a civil rights activist                       a musician

3. Match up the sentences.

Martin Luther King Jr. fought for

Black and White people.

Some people treated him differently

equal rights for all.

There were separate areas for

because of the colour of his skin.

4. Which faith did Martin Luther King Jr. follow? Tick one.

- Buddhism                       Hinduism                       Christianity

5. What was the name of the famous speech Martin Luther King Jr. made in 1963?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Complete the sentence by filling in the missing words.

Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded the \_\_\_\_\_ in 1964.

7. In which month is there an annual American national holiday to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday? Tick one.

- January                       June                       July

8. How would you describe Martin Luther King Jr. in two words?

Give reasons for your choices.

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Answers

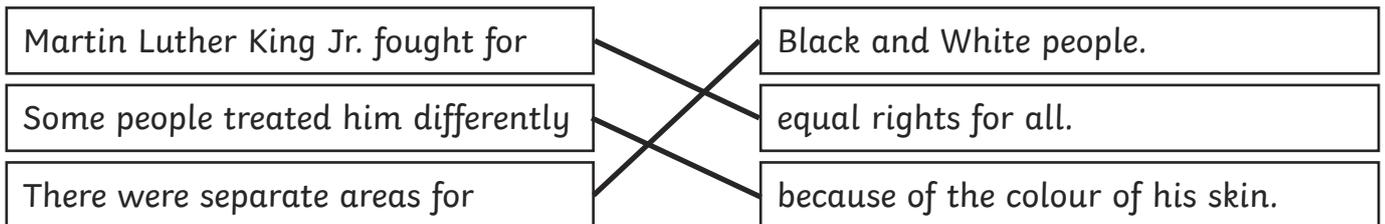
1. Where was Martin Luther King Jr. born and raised? Tick one.

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2. What did Martin Luther King Jr. become? Tick one.

- a bus driver                       a civil rights activist                       a musician

3. Match up the sentences.



4. Which faith did Martin Luther King Jr. follow? Tick one.

- Buddhism                       Hinduism                       Christianity

5. What was the name of the famous speech Martin Luther King Jr. made in 1963?

**Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech was called "I Have a Dream".**

6. Complete the sentence by filling in the missing words.

Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 1964.

7. In which month is there an annual American national holiday to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday? Tick one.

- January                       June                       July

8. How would you describe Martin Luther King Jr. in two words?

Give reasons for your choices.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would describe Martin Luther King Jr. as determined and respectful because he worked hard to gain improved civil rights and wanted everyone to respect people regardless of the colour of their skin.**

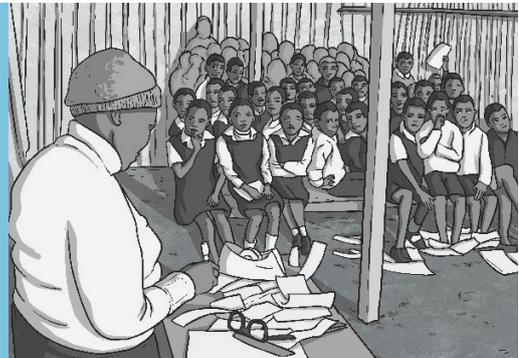
# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Black man and was born in the USA on January 15th 1929. As a child he enjoyed playing sports, playing the piano and going to school. Sadly, life was often difficult. Many people treated him differently based on the colour of his skin.

At the time, many White people did not respect people of other races and treated them very badly. Black Americans did not have the same rights as White Americans; for example, they were not allowed to use many of the same public places, such as public transport, parks, restaurants and even public toilets. Furthermore, up until the 1960s, Black people in some states could not even vote in elections



Black children were not permitted to go to school with White children. They had to go to separate schools that didn't have many resources to help with their learning.



Martin Luther King Jr. was determined to make sure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race so he became a civil rights activist. This means that he campaigned for improved rights for people.



## The 1955 Bus Boycott

In 1955, Rosa Parks, a Black woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man. Martin Luther King Jr. called on Black people to protest by not travelling on buses in that area. This protest lasted for 385 days and ended with a United States Court ruling that ended separate areas for Black and White people on all Montgomery public buses.

Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of Black people. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. led a huge march in Washington DC, the US capital. Here, in front of a crowd of 250,000 people, King made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Here are some short extracts:



"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."

"I have a dream that one day... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

### Did You Know?

On October 14th 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence.

As a result of Martin Luther King Jr.'s actions and words, and others like him, the US Government brought in laws to ensure equal rights for all US citizens and to give everybody the chance to vote.

Tragically, Martin Luther King Jr. was only 39 years old when he was killed by a man who disagreed with his beliefs about fighting racism. The funeral was attended by around 300,000 people. Every January, there is an American national holiday to celebrate his birthday.

# Questions

1. How do you think Martin Luther King Jr. felt about the way Black people were being treated?

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2. Give two examples of places where Black and White people could not mix.

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3. What is a civil rights activist?

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4. Where did King make his famous 1963 speech? Tick one.

New York City

Chicago

Washington DC

5. Match up the sentences.

Rosa Parks

called on Black people to not travel on buses in that area.

Martin Luther King Jr.

lasted for 385 days.

The protest

a United States Court ruled that there would be no separate areas on Montgomery public buses.

In the end,

was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man.

6. Complete the sentence by filling in the missing words.

King went on to organise other \_\_\_\_\_ against the unfair treatment of Black people.

7. Why was Martin Luther King Jr. awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964?

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8. As a result of King's actions and words, and others like him, what did the US Government do?

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9. How old was King when he died? Tick one.

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39

49

10. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral was so well attended?

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# Answers

1. How do you think Martin Luther King Jr. felt about the way Black people were being treated?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Martin Luther King Jr. felt a great sense of injustice about the way Black people were being treated.**

2. Give two examples of places where Black and White people could not mix.

**Accept any two of the following: public transport; parks; restaurants; public toilets.**

3. What is a civil rights activist?

**A civil rights activist is someone who campaigns for improved rights for people.**

4. Where did King make his famous 1963 speech? Tick one.

New York City

Chicago

Washington DC

5. Match up the sentences.

Rosa Parks	called on Black people to not travel on buses in that area.
Martin Luther King Jr.	lasted for 385 days.
The protest	a United States Court ruled that there would be no separate areas on Montgomery public buses.
In the end,	was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man.

6. Complete the sentence by filling in the missing words.

King went on to organise other **non-violent demonstrations** against the unfair treatment of Black people.

7. Why was Martin Luther King Jr. awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964?

**He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through non-violence.**

8. As a result of King's actions and words, and others like him, what did the US Government do?

**As a result of King's actions and words, and others like him, the US Government brought in laws to ensure equal rights for all US citizens and to give everybody the chance to vote.**

9. How old was King when he died? Tick one.

29

39

49

10. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral was so well attended?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think his funeral was so well attended because his words and actions had a positive effect on people's lives and they wanted to pay their respects for what he had done to help them; I think his funeral was so well attended because he had inspired so many people to stand up for what they believe in.**

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was the leader of the Black civil rights movement. He spoke out against laws that separated Black people from White people and did not give Black people the same rights, and led marches demanding fair laws for all people. Martin Luther King Jr. was determined to ensure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race.

He was born on January 15th 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. His father was a pastor and his mother had been a teacher. Martin Luther King Jr. loved to play with his friends but, as his friends got older, two of them stopped playing with him. The father of one of the boys didn't like his son playing with Martin Luther King Jr. because Martin Luther King Jr. was a Black man. He was deeply hurt and upset and couldn't understand why the colour of his skin would make any difference.



Life was difficult for Black people and other people of colour living in the USA. Many White people did not respect them and treated them very badly. Black people were not allowed to use many of the same public places as White people. This was called 'segregation'. There were segregated areas on public transport, in parks, restaurants and even public toilets. Up until the 1960s, Black people in some states could not even vote in elections.

In some states, Black children had to go to separate schools from their White peers. These schools were often poorly funded and equipped.

## The 1955 Bus Boycott

In 1955, Rosa Parks, a Black woman, was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a White man in the city where Martin Luther King Jr. preached. Martin Luther King Jr. called on Black people to protest by not travelling on buses in that area. The boycott lasted for 385 days and



the situation became so tense that Martin Luther King Jr.'s house was bombed. Other people were furious and wanted to retaliate with violence but Martin Luther King Jr. said that things needed to be solved peacefully and stressed the importance of White and Black people getting along. The boycott concluded with a United States Court ruling that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses.

Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of Black people. In 1963, he led a huge march on Washington DC, the US capital. The march on Washington involved 250,000 people travelling to the Lincoln Memorial (Abraham Lincoln was the American president who abolished slavery). Here, in front of the enormous crowd, King made his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Here are some short extracts:



“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.”

“I have a dream that one day ... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

### Did You Know?

In 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Rules in America began to change. The US Government brought in laws to ensure equal rights for all US citizens and to give everybody the chance to vote.

Tragically, on 4th April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated while standing on a hotel balcony, by a man who disagreed with King’s beliefs about fighting racism. His funeral was attended by 300,000 mourners.

In 1983, US President Ronald Reagan declared that the third Monday in January each year would be a holiday to remember King’s achievements and the ideas of living in a world which was fair for everyone, no matter what the colour of their skin.

# Questions

1. Find and copy one word which means the same as **separation based on race**.

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2. In your own words, explain Martin Luther King Jr.'s aim?

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3. Give three examples of how Black people were treated differently from White people.

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4. Why do you think that Martin Luther King Jr. believed it best to carry out non-violent demonstrations?

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5. What do you think Martin Luther King Jr. mean when he says he hopes his children will be judged by the "**content of their character**"?

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6. Which definition best fits the word assassinate? Tick one.

- to attend a funeral
- to be a president
- to kill an important person for religious or political beliefs

7. How was Martin Luther King Jr. killed?

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8. Why do you think President Reagan declared a public holiday in memory of Martin Luther King?

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9. Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral was well attended. Why do you think this was the case?

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10. **“The time is always right to do what is right.”**

Explain Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote in your own words.

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# Answers

1. Find and copy one word which means the same as **separation based on race**.

**segregation**

2. In your own words, explain Martin Luther King Jr.'s aim?

**Accept any suitable summary of King's aim, such as: Martin Luther King Jr.'s aim was to ensure that all Americans had the same rights regardless of their race.**

3. Give three examples of how Black people were treated differently from White people.

**Accept any three of the following: There were separate areas for African Americans and White people on public transport, parks, restaurants and in public toilets; Some African American adults and children suffered violence, were threatened, wrongfully put in prison or killed; Up until the 1960s, African Americans in some states of the US could not vote in elections; African Americans were not allowed to go to school with White children; In certain parts of the USA, African American children weren't allowed to go to school at all; African Americans had to give up their seats for White people on public transport.**

4. Why do you think that Martin Luther King Jr. believed it best to carry out non-violent demonstrations?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Martin Luther King Jr. believed that they wouldn't be listened to if they protested aggressively. He wanted to show how the Black community were willing to get along with the White community.**

5. What do you think Martin Luther King Jr. mean when he says he hopes his children will be judged by the "**content of their character**"?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Martin Luther King Jr. meant that he didn't want his children to be judged by the way they look but by the way they behave as a human beings.**

6. Which definition best fits the word assassinate? Tick one.

to attend a funeral

to be a president

to kill an important person for religious or political beliefs

7. How was Martin Luther King Jr. killed?

**Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated outside his motel room.**

8. Why do you think President Reagan declared a public holiday in memory of Martin Luther King?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Reagan declared a public holiday in memory of King because it gives people the opportunity to remember King's actions and determination which has shaped the rights and the world in which we live today.**

9. Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral was well attended. Why do you think this was the case?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think his funeral was well attended because his words and actions had a positive effect on people's lives and they wanted to pay their respects for what he had done to help them; I think his funeral was so well attended because he had inspired so many people to stand up for what they believe in.**

10. "The time is always right to do what is right."

Explain Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote in your own words.

**Accept any suitable explanation of the quote, such as: I think that Martin Luther King Jr. is encouraging others to stand up for what is right, whenever it is necessary; I think Martin Luther King Jr. meant that there is never a wrong time to do what is right.**