

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was the leader of the African- American civil rights movement. He spoke out against laws which kept black and white people separate 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 him because he was African-American. Martin Luther King Jr. was deeply hurt and upset and couldn't understand why the colour of his skin would make any difference.

For African-Americans living in the USA, life was challenging. There were separate areas for African-Americans and white people on public transport, in parks, restaurants and even in public toilets. This was called segregation. Up until the 1960s, African-Americans in some states of the US could not vote in elections.

In some states, African-American 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, an African-American 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 African- Americans 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 talked about the importance of white and black people working together. The boycott ended with a United States court ruling that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses.



## Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of African-Americans. In 1963, he led an enormous march on Washington DC, the US capital. The march on Washington involved 250,000 people travelling to the Lincoln Memorial (Abraham Lincoln was the president who abolished slavery in America). 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 became the youngest person at the time to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Due to the actions of King and others like him, 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 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, King was shot and killed outside his motel room. 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.

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

- Martin Luther King Jr., 1965

# Questions

1. Where was Martin Luther King Jr. born?

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

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3. Give three examples of how African-Americans were treated differently from white people.

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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

to attend a funeral

to protest

to be a president

to kill an important person for religious or political beliefs

6. Where did the march in Washington DC travel to? Tick **one**.

The White House

The Lincoln Memorial

The Empire State Building

The US government

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

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8. **“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. Where was Martin Luther King Jr. born?

**Atlanta, Georgia.**

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

3. Give three examples of how African-Americans 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; 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 with violence. He wanted to show how the African-American community was willing to get along with the white community.**

5. Which definition best fits the word **assassinate**? Tick **one**.

to attend a funeral

to protest

to be a president

**to kill an important person for religious or political beliefs**

6. Where did the march in Washington DC travel to? Tick **one**.

The White House

**The Lincoln Memorial**

The Empire State Building

The US government

7. 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.**

8. **“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.**

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and the leader of the African-American civil rights movement. He spoke out against segregation laws which kept black and white people separate and led marches demanding fair laws for all people, no matter what their race. Martin Luther King Jr. was determined to ensure that all Americans had the same rights, regardless of their race.



## Childhood

He was born on January 15<sup>th</sup> 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 him because he was African-American. Martin Luther King Jr. was deeply upset and couldn't understand why the colour of his skin would make any difference.

## Segregation

For African-Americans living in the USA, life was challenging. There were segregated areas for African-Americans and white people on public transport, in parks, restaurants and even in public toilets. Up until the 1960s, African-Americans in some states of the US were not permitted to vote in elections.

In some states, African-American children had to go to different schools from their white peers. These schools were often inadequately funded and equipped.

## The Montgomery Bus Boycott

In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama after refusing to surrender her seat on a bus to a white man. Martin Luther King Jr. called on African-Americans 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 talked about the importance of white and black people working together. The boycott ended with a United States court ruling that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses.



## The March on Washington D.C.

Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of African-Americans. In 1963, he led an enormous march on Washington DC, the US

capital. The march on Washington involved 250,000 people travelling to the Lincoln Memorial (Abraham Lincoln was the president who abolished slavery in America). 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."

### Legacy

Due to the actions of King and others like him, 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.

In 1964, King was recognised for the contributions he made towards equality for African-Americans and became the youngest person at the time to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Tragically, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, King was assassinated outside his motel room. He was only 39 years old. 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.

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

- Martin Luther King Jr., 1965



# Questions

1. What profession was Martin Luther King Jr.'s father? Tick **one**.

- teacher
- pastor
- politician
- bus driver

2. What were the aims of the African-American civil rights movement?

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3. **Find** and **copy one** word that means **separation based on race**.

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4. Why was Rosa Parks arrested? Tick **one**.

- for bombing Martin Luther King Jr.'s house
- for violence in the streets
- for going to a school for white children
- for refusing to give up her seat on a bus for a white man

5. How many people attended the Washington DC protests in 1963?

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6. Why do you think the protestors chose to travel towards the Lincoln Memorial during the Washington DC march? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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7. What was Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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8. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr. believed it would be best to carry out non-violent demonstrations? Explain your answer.

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9. What do you think Martin Luther King Jr. meant when he said that he hoped his children **"...will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."**

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# Answers

1. What profession was Martin Luther King Jr.'s father? Tick **one**.
  - teacher
  - pastor**
  - politician
  - bus driver
2. What were the aims of the African-American civil rights movement?  
**The civil rights movement wanted to ensure all Americans had the same rights, regardless of their race.**
3. **Find and copy one** word that means **separation based on race**.  
**segregation**
4. Why was Rosa Parks arrested? Tick **one**.
  - for bombing Martin Luther King Jr.'s house
  - for violence in the streets
  - for going to a school for white children
  - for refusing to give up her seat on a bus for a white man**
5. How many people attended the Washington DC protests in 1963?  
**250,000 people**
6. Why do you think the protestors chose to travel towards the Lincoln Memorial during the Washington DC march? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: Protestors chose to travel towards the Lincoln Memorial as Abraham Lincoln was the president who abolished slavery in America. His memorial reminds people how much has changed in the civil rights of African-Americans in America.**
7. What was Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: 'I think Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech means that he is hoping for a future where children are friends and love each other like family, no matter what the colour of their skin is.'**

8. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr. believed it would be best to carry out non-violent demonstrations? Explain your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think Martin Luther King Jr. believed that they wouldn't be listened to if they protested with violence. He wanted to show how the African-American community was willing to get along with the white community.**

9. What do you think Martin Luther King Jr. meant when he said that he hoped his children "...will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think Martin Luther King Jr. meant that he didn't want his children to be judged by the way they look and their race but by the way they behave as human beings, their personality and their achievements.**

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and the leader of the African-American civil rights movement. He spoke out against segregation laws which kept black and white people separate and led marches demanding fair laws for all people, no matter what the colour of their skin. Martin Luther King Jr. was determined to ensure that all Americans had the same rights, regardless of their race.



## Childhood

He was born on January 15<sup>th</sup> 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. His father was a pastor and his mother had been a teacher. As a child, Martin Luther King Jr. befriended a local white boy whose father owned lands near his home. When they were six, the boys started school and King had to attend a different school to his friend because of his race. Soon after, King lost his friend as the boy's father didn't like his son playing with him because he was African-American. He was deeply upset and couldn't understand why the colour of his skin would make any difference.

## Segregation

For African-Americans living in the USA, life was challenging. There were segregated areas for African-Americans and white people on public transport, in parks, restaurants and even in public toilets. Up until the 1960s, African-Americans in some states of the US were not permitted to vote in elections.

In some states, African-American children had to go to different schools from their white peers. These schools were often inadequately funded and equipped.

## The Montgomery Bus Boycott

In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama after refusing to surrender her seat on a bus to a white man. In response to this, Martin Luther King Jr. called on African-Americans 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 talked about the importance of white and black people working together.



The boycott ended with a United States court ruling that ended racial segregation on all Montgomery public buses.

### 'I Have a Dream'

Martin Luther King Jr. went on to organise other non-violent demonstrations against the unfair treatment of African-Americans. In 1963, he led an enormous march on Washington DC, the US capital. The march on Washington involved 250,000 people travelling to the Lincoln Memorial (Abraham Lincoln was the president who abolished slavery in America). 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."

The march was a turning point for civil rights. Not a single arrest occurred during it and the American President, John F. Kennedy, had watched King's speech and had been very impressed. Shortly after, the leaders of the march were invited to the White House to discuss civil rights.

Slowly but surely, rules in America began to change. In July 1964, The US government brought the Civil Rights Act into law to ensure equal rights for all US citizens and to give everybody the chance to vote.

### Legacy

In October 1964, King was recognised for the contributions he made towards equality for African-Americans and became the youngest person at the time to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial prejudice in the United States.

Tragically, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, King was assassinated outside his motel room. He was only 39 years old. 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.

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

- Martin Luther King Jr., 1965

# Questions

1. Apart from leading the civil rights movement, what job did Martin Luther King Jr. have? Tick **one**.

- US President
- teacher
- minister
- bus driver

2. Match up the sentences.

Martin Luther King Jr. fought for

African-Americans and white people.

Some people treated him differently

equal rights for all.

There were separate areas for

because of the colour of his skin.

3. What does the word **segregation** mean?

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4. How were schools for African-American children different to schools for white children?

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5. What was the Montgomery Bus Boycott? What effect did it have on civil rights for African-Americans?

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6. Why do you think the protestors chose to travel towards the Lincoln Memorial during the Washington DC march? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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7. When did the Civil Rights Act become law?

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

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9. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr. is remembered as one of the greatest Americans in history? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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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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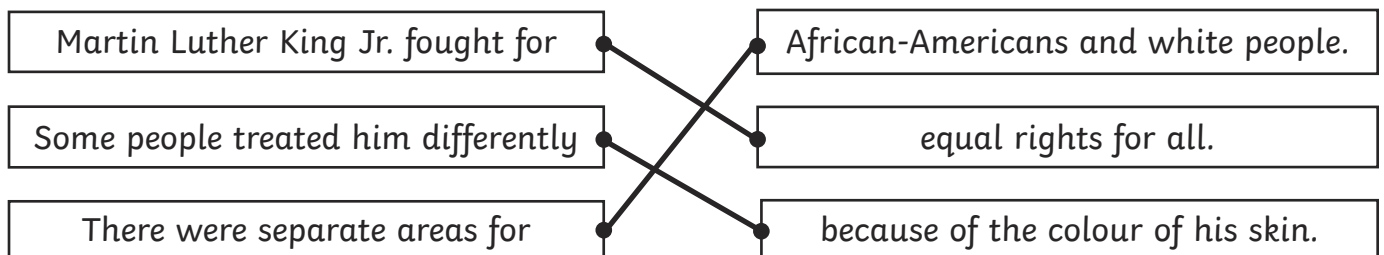


# Answers

1. Apart from leading the civil rights movement, what job did Martin Luther King Jr. have?  
Tick **one**.

- US President  
 teacher  
 **minister**  
 bus driver

2. Match up the sentences.



3. What does the word **segregation** mean?

**Segregation is the separation of people based on their race.**

4. How were schools for African-American children different to schools for white children?

**African-American schools were not as well funded (inadequately funded) compared to schools for white children.**

5. What was the Montgomery Bus Boycott? What effect did it have on civil rights for African-Americans?

**Pupil's own response, such as: The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a time in 1955 when African-Americans refused to travel on buses in Montgomery, Alabama after Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat on a bus to a white man. The boycott lasted for 385 days, during which people were furious and Martin Luther King Jr.'s house was bombed. The boycott ended with racial segregation ending on Montgomery buses.**

6. Why do you think the protestors chose to travel towards the Lincoln Memorial during the Washington DC march? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: Protestors chose to travel towards the Lincoln Memorial as Abraham Lincoln was the president who abolished slavery in America. His memorial represents the advances that had been made in civil rights for African-Americans in America.**

7. When did the Civil Rights Act become law?

**July 1964**

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

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The march was a turning point for Civil rights because it was after the followers of Martin Luther King Jr. had protested peacefully that more people took notice of their movement and agreed with their cause. The leaders of the march met with the US President and this was the start of the laws and rules in America changing to be fairer to African-Americans.**

9. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr. is remembered as one of the greatest Americans in history? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think Martin Luther King Jr. is remembered as one of the greatest Americans in history because of the impact he had on civil rights for African-Americans. Under his guidance, the civil rights protests were peaceful, even after people had been attacked themselves, and this helped people believe in civility between races.**

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.**