

## Honoring the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Introduction**

Students have learned many things about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through the years, as schools teach about his life and accomplishments to mark the national holiday in his honor each January. It is, therefore, logical to ask students what they already know about Dr. King before engaging in the preparation activities for the WITNESS Young People's Concert, "Let Freedom Ring." In addition to recalling prior knowledge about

Dr. King, his work and vision of racial equality, they will also articulate what else they are curious about related to Dr. King, his life and work. Short biographies and/or a PowerPoint presentation will prompt their recollections.

If this is your first WITNESS lesson, provide folders for each student to collect handouts, materials, and their own work related to the WITNESS Concert.

## Lesson Plan: Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Learning Goals

Students will organize their thoughts to recall prior knowledge about Dr. King, raise questions, and articulate what else they might learn about him, his work, and his vision. Evidence of their thinking will be captured on the first two sections of a Know/Want to Know/Learn (KWL) chart.

### Materials

- One large KWL (Know/Want to Know/Learn) chart or individual paper copies (see p. 33)
- *Martin Luther King*, track #3 from WITNESS Companion CD and Lyrics on p. 32
- *Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Peaceful Warrior* PowerPoint from WITNESS Companion CD
- Copies of an age-appropriate biographical reading, p. 34 or p. 36
- Folders for saving handouts and student work

### Process

1. **BEFORE** inviting students' prior knowledge, provide the context for this activity. In your own words tell students that:
  - You will attend the VocalEssence WITNESS Young People's Concert at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. The concert honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his lifelong work for **racial equality** through **nonviolent resistance**.
  - This is a big year for WITNESS. The concert will celebrate the 25th year that a WITNESS Concert has been performed to honor the contributions of African Americans to our shared American cultural heritage.
  - Sounds of Blackness, an award-winning musical ensemble famous for their performances of African American music, are the guest artists at the concert. The VocalEssence Chorus and the South High School Varsity Choir of Minneapolis will also perform.
  - We will learn new things about Dr. King's life and work in order to fully experience and enjoy all the sights and sounds of the WITNESS Young People's Concert.
2. Display the KWL chart electronically or distribute individual copies if you wish students to work alone or in small groups. The large chart works well in music classrooms because it provides music specialists with information about student learning in other classes. Classroom teachers will benefit by knowing what students have learned in prior years.
  - Ask students to discuss what they know about Dr. King, his life, and his work. As they respond, collect remarks under the "What do we already know or think we know about Dr. King?" column.
  - Read one of the biographical articles on Dr. King out loud, or view and read the PowerPoint biography. Ask if there is new information that can be added to the "K" section of the chart.



3. Ask students what else do they want to know about Dr. King? What sparks their curiosity about his life? Provide your own question as an example. For example: "I'm curious about when he made up his mind to be a minister – and why?" or "I wonder if he was ever afraid of being hurt when he marched and preached?" Write the questions in the "W" section of the chart.
4. Review your chart entries. As you work on lessons from the WITNESS Teacher Resource Guide, revisit the KWL Charts to add new questions to the "W" section and learnings to the "L" section.
5. Listen to Sounds of Blackness sing *Martin Luther King*, a song written by Gary Hines to honor Dr. King. Follow the lyrics on p. 32 as you listen.

### Extension Activities

- View a narrated biography of Dr. King at <http://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-king-jr-9365086>. The video biography is less than five minutes long.
- Make a variety of books and articles available for students to use for further reading, including *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Photographic Story of a Life*, by Amy Pastan, which you received from VocalEssence. Check your school library and the annotated bibliography on p. 128 for additional suggestions.

### Optional approach

Students can read biographies at home, search the web for more information, then spend class time completing the KWL chart with the teacher. This allows more time for student-teacher interaction. If you are connected with students via web, post the biography and PowerPoint as a homework assignment.

"Martin Luther King, Jr., was the conscience of his generation. He gazed upon the great wall of segregation and saw that the power of love could bring it down. From the pain and exhaustion of his fight to fulfill the promises of our founding fathers for our humblest citizens, he wrung his eloquent statement of his dream for America. He made our nation stronger because he made it better. His dream sustains us yet."

—Remarks by President Jimmy Carter at the 1977 Award Ceremony for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



## Lesson Plan: Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. [continued]

### Assessment

Informally assess student's prior knowledge about Dr. King and their interest in knowing more during the discussion and when filling out the KWL charts.

### Minnesota State Standards Connections

#### *Social Studies: History*

*Substrand 2: Peoples, Cultures  
and Change Over Time*

Standard 3: Historical events have multiple causes and can lead to varied and unintended outcomes.

Standard 5: History is made by individuals acting alone and collectively to address problems in their communities, state nation and world.

#### *English Language Arts: Reading*

##### *Key Ideas and Details*

Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

#### *English Language Arts: Writing*

##### *Text Types and Purposes*

Standard 8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources...and integrate the information.

### ***Martin Luther King by Gary Hines (2008)***

*From Kings and Queens: Message Music from the Movement  
Sounds of Blackness*

I wanna tell you  
'bout a man I know  
Who walked among us  
Not long ago  
He lived for peace  
Down here below  
His name is Martin

He marched & suffered  
For you and me  
He fought and died for liberty  
So we can have dignity  
I thank you Martin

& although, I never met you  
I never shall forget you  
No, no, never, never

Oh-Oh-Oh-Oh, Martin  
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King  
We have not forgotten  
How you said for all  
Let freedom ring  
Ring throughout the nation  
Brotherhood from  
Sea to shining sea  
No discrimination  
Only justice and equity

So I remembered his name  
And I remember it well  
For his is a story to forever tell  
Then everyone can  
Ring the freedom bell  
Because of Martin

Drum major for justice  
And a warrior for peace  
With a message from heaven  
To make the hatred cease  
Gave your life for freedom  
(Thank you)  
And you truly showed us the way  
People had you lead them  
To a brighter day

Oh-Oh-Oh Martin  
We have not forgotten  
& we won't  
& we can't  
Never shall



**A KWL Chart about  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**VOCALESSENCE  
WITNESS**

<p><b>K</b> <b>Know</b> What do we already know (or think we know) about Martin Luther King, Jr.?</p>	<p><b>W</b> <b>Want to know</b> What else do we want to know? What do we wonder about?</p>	<p><b>L</b> <b>Learned</b> What have we learned?</p>

*Name*

*Date*



## Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Biography for Younger Students

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in this Atlanta, Georgia house on January 15, 1929. At that time Southern states had many unfair laws to separate black



*Martin's birthplace*

and white people. For example, African Americans could not eat in many restaurants or stay in most hotels. When they went to the movies, they entered through a separate door and had to sit in the balcony. When they took the bus, they sat at the back. If the white section in front was full and a white person needed a seat, African Americans had to give up their seats and stand. The laws were called **Jim Crow** laws. And the way people treated blacks is called **racial discrimination**.

Martin had his first experience with racial discrimination when he was six years old. Across the street from his house was a store owned by a white man. For several years, the store owner's two sons came over to play in Martin's backyard. One day, Martin and his brother went across the street to get the boys—and came back alone. The boys' father told his sons that they could not play with the King boys anymore because they were Negroes. (This is an historical word used 80 years ago. Today we say African American.) It was very hard for Martin to understand.

The day Martin's father took him to buy new shoes was another time he experienced discrimination. They sat down to wait their turn. But the shoe

salesman told them if they wanted to be helped, that they had to move to the back of the store. Martin's father was very angry. He took Martin to another store for shoes.

Martin did not forget these lessons. His parents taught him to be proud of who he was. His mother, Alberta, told all her children that the laws in the South were unfair. She made sure they knew that they all deserved fair treatment. Alberta also taught Martin about "loving your neighbor" even when they were unkind and treated you poorly. This could help them learn that it was wrong to be unkind to others.



*Martin at age 7*

After attending the **segregated** elementary school (at that time, black students had to attend different schools than white students), Martin went to the Atlanta University Laboratory School for two years.

Then he moved to Booker T. Washington High School. Along the way he skipped two grades and graduated from high school at the age of fifteen. He then went to Morehouse College in Atlanta. There he decided that he wanted to be a minister, just like his father and his grandfather.

He graduated from Morehouse when he was 19 years old, then went to Pennsylvania to study **theology** (religion, faith, and beliefs) for three years. He wanted to learn even more, so he went

to graduate school at Boston University. He earned a **PhD degree**, the highest college degree one can receive. This is why he is called **Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.** Martin was a very well-educated man!



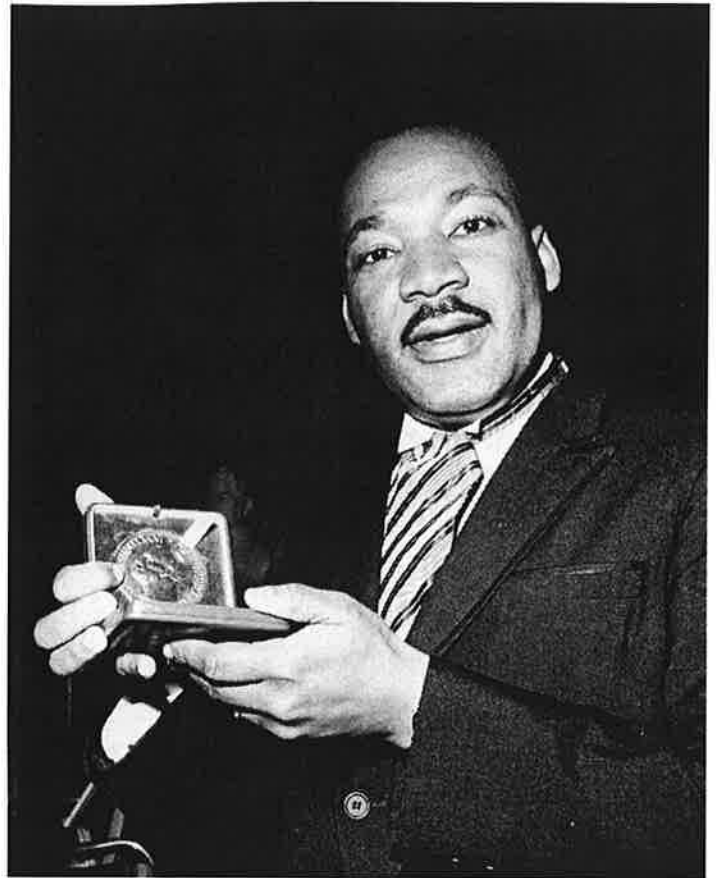
*With Coretta Scott King*

Coretta Scott was studying music at the New England **Conservatory** in Boston when she met Martin. After graduating, they married and started a family. They had four children, Yolanda, Martin, Dexter, and Bernice.

Martin's first job as a minister was in Montgomery, Alabama. There he joined others in working for change in the way blacks were treated. He made speeches, led marches, met with many leaders, and organized boycotts in order to show that African Americans wanted to be treated with respect. The most famous march led by Dr. King was the 1963 March on Washington D.C. for Jobs and Freedom. Over 250,000 people peacefully gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial to hear his speech.

Martin did not use violence. He taught **protesters** how to make change happen using **nonviolent** action. Even when he was beaten up or put in jail, he always remembered that he needed to love those who treated him badly. He convinced many white people that the laws in the South were unfair. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson, President of the United States, signed the **Civil Rights Act**, a new law that required equal treatment for everyone.

In 1964, something very important happened to Martin. The world noticed his hard work in



*With Peace Prize medal*

the Civil Rights Movement. He was given the Nobel Peace Prize for contributions to human rights in the United States. He gave the \$54,000 prize money to those working to secure the rights African Americans deserved.

Martin was put in jail 30 times for working to end discrimination. Sometimes people tried to kill him. Then on April 3, 1968, the worst happened. He was **assassinated** in Memphis, Tennessee. He was only 39 years old.

Because of Martin Luther King's leadership, many things changed for the better for all Americans. To honor Dr. King, Congress passed a law in 1986 that made the third Monday in January a new national holiday, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.



## Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A Short Biography for Older Students

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on Jan. 15, 1929. The son and the grandson of Baptist ministers, Martin followed their footsteps and was also **ordained**. Dr. King became the inspiring leader of the Civil Rights Movement and one of the world's most famous Americans.

Martin was born and grew up on Auburn Avenue in the home shared with his parents, grandparents, aunt, older sister, Willie Christine, and brother, Alfred Daniel (A.D.). In 1929, his grandfather was pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church. Two years later, Martin's father took over the job and served at Ebenezer Baptist for many years.

Martin grew up in the **segregated** South. He attended David T. Howard Elementary School and Atlanta University Laboratory School, both segregated schools for African American students. He graduated from Booker T. Washington High School when he was just 15 and went on to college at Morehouse College in Atlanta, the same school both his father and grandfather attended. He graduated in 1948 with a degree in **sociology**. The next stop was Crozer **Theological** Seminary in Pennsylvania where Dr. King went to study **theology** (the study of religious beliefs and practices). A popular student, Martin was elected class president. It was at Crozer that he first encountered the teachings of Mohandas Gandhi, the spiritual leader who led India to independence through peaceful protests. After receiving his degree in 1951, he continued his education at Boston University in Boston, MA. He graduated with a **doctorate** 1954. Dr. King was a well-educated man!

He was also a sociable person, and the lovely Coretta Scott, a music student at Boston's New England **Conservatory**, caught his eye. He persuaded a mutual friend to introduce him. They were married in 1953 and eventually had four children, two sons and two daughters.

Dr. King's first job as a minister was serving as the **pastor** of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in



*Left: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthplace*



*Below: Rosa Parks with Dr. King in the background*

Montgomery, AL. He was active in the **N.A.A.C.P.** (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and a member of the executive committee. Following Gandhi's example, Dr. King wanted to fight for civil rights in a peaceful way. His leadership evolved during the 382-day Montgomery bus boycott, a nonviolent protest which began when **Rosa Parks** refused to give up her seat to a white man and move to the back of the bus.

During the 1957 bus boycott, Dr. King became a highly visible public figure in Montgomery. The **Southern Christian Leadership Conference** (SCLC), an active civil rights organization, elected him president in 1957. Dr. King took his vision for **equality** for all directly to the American people. In



his short lifetime, he traveled extensively, logging over 6 million miles, and gave more than 2,500 speeches. He also wrote five books and numerous magazine and newspaper articles during this time.

In 1960, he and his family returned to Atlanta where he became co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church with his father. He continued at Ebenezer until his death in 1968.

Dr. King delivered his most celebrated speech in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963. The March on Washington D.C. for Jobs and Freedom drew 250,000 people, all peacefully gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial. This speech came to be known as the "I Have a Dream" speech. A few months later, *Time* magazine named him Man of the Year.

In 1964, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the youngest person ever to receive the **Nobel Peace Prize**. He traveled to Oslo, Norway to receive the prize. Dr. King and his wife, Coretta, gave the prize money, \$54,123, to organizations working for civil rights.

Dr. King participated in the famous Selma to Montgomery Freedom March to support more open voter registration efforts. More than 25,000 people marched in what came to be known as the Selma-to-Montgomery Freedom March.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 finally made it through Congress and was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Dr. King was there as a special guest when the president presented him with one of the pens used to sign the law.



*The March on Washington*



*Johnson and King at the Signing*

After the signing of the **Civil Rights Act**, Dr. King turned to other issues he felt needed attention. He joined those protesting the war in **Vietnam**, and lent his support to striking garbage workers in Memphis, Tennessee. He traveled to Memphis in April, 1968 to participate in a protest march. It was there on April 4, 1968, that a bullet fired by James Earl Ray found its target and Dr. King was **assassinated**.

Martin Luther King, Jr. spread a message of **nonviolent resistance** to many who were working for **equal rights**. His name and his deeds live on as a symbol of freedom and hope. His birthday, January 15th, is a national holiday and a time when citizens across the United States gather to remember Dr. King, the peaceful warrior, for his bravery and determination.