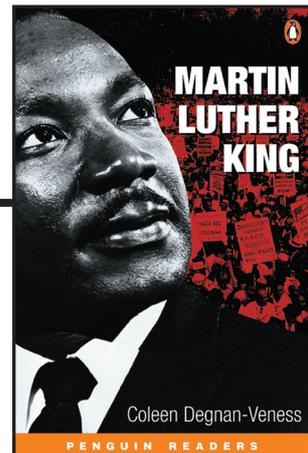


Teacher's Notes

Martin Luther King

by Coleen Degnan-Veness



Level 3 – Pre-Intermediate
Martin Luther King

Summary

This biography follows the dramatic life story of one of the world's most famous campaigners for peace. The writer has divided the story into the events that first brought King to the civil rights movement and the many episodes on the road to a better life for blacks in America.

Born in 1929 into a comfortable home in the southern United States, King first learned about the importance of skin color when he was 5 and could not go to the same school as his white friend. At 15 he was made to give up his seat to a white passenger on a two-hour bus journey. He enjoyed his college years in Philadelphia and Boston in the North of the US, where life for blacks was much better and more equal with whites. He was tempted to stay, but at 25, decided to move back to the segregationist South, to Montgomery, Alabama, where whites hated blacks and where people needed his help. Here the real campaign began.

The book describes the origins of slavery and how the North and South of America came to have very different attitudes to blacks. King's very public life began in 1955 with the Montgomery bus boycott, which saw the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) firebombing King's home. King started making speeches all over the country and fighting to stop segregation in schools. After reading Gandhi and Thoreau, whose ideas are described in the book, King taught non-violent resistance to his followers. Hate must be met with love.

The book follows the struggle in the South for equality. Terrible violence was committed against African-Americans. Politicians were divided. President Kennedy supported King and began to draw up a civil rights bill, and then came the famous march on Washington, with a crowd of 200,000 marchers including 50,000 whites.

Violence continued between blacks and whites in the South as blacks tried to challenge segregationist policies with direct action. Some gains were made, but many blacks lived in terrible poverty. As they became radicalized, they became more violent and they stopped listening to King. Their anger culminated in the Watts riots in Los Angeles in 1965.

In 1968 King made his last speech in front of an audience in Memphis. The next evening he was shot dead in a parking lot. Blacks have equal political and voting rights today, thanks to the work of Martin Luther King at the head of the civil rights campaign.

King's story, which has helped shape modern America, is as powerful today as it was when he lived it. Readers will probably find this lively account both shocking and compelling.

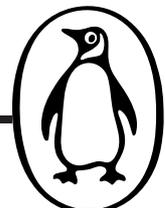
Background and themes

This biography shows that Martin Luther King, Jr. dedicated his life to his cause, and although he had a wife and four children, his time was not his own. The cause of civil rights for African-Americans was so big and his campaigns made it so active, that he could never rest. He lived a very public life in front of the world's press. His heart, mind and actions were ruled by his religious and political beliefs; he was driven. Other protest leaders who have given up their lives to their cause include Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma, who has left her family and children in England to fight for democracy in her country.

The central theme of King's campaign for civil rights was non-violence. It worked better for King in the US than it did for Gandhi in India, where independence was accompanied by terrible fighting between Muslims and Hindus. There are lots of examples in King's campaign of non-violent protest working. His campaign brought huge publicity and because King taught blacks to meet the whites with love, not hate, it made the whites look silly and evil in the eyes of the world. For example, when students organized lunchtime protests (see page 18), the world saw white men arresting peaceful blacks because they sat in the wrong seats in a lunch bar in Woolworth's. When children marched in Birmingham, Alabama (see page 24), the police used water cannon and dogs against them, arrested them and put them in jail.

Another important weapon in King's fight against injustice was publicity. For many poor blacks, life was simply a struggle to feed their families and keep a place to live. King needed to reach all those people and show them that their lives could be better. He made speeches all over America. He held meetings. When he was arrested, news of his arrest was in newspapers around the world. Black African-Americans became radicalized and wanted to fight. Some went further than King wanted, and used violence, as in the Watts riots in 1965 in Los Angeles. But he taught them that they could change things. Publicity then included posters, newspapers, meetings, word of mouth, marches, demonstrations, radio, and early television.

The central wrongdoing of this story is racism. The belief by one race that they are better than another or that they can rule another is behind most human conflict. The early slave traders treated black people as animals. It has taken centuries for most whites to stop believing they are superior to blacks. Many whites today still believe they are superior to blacks, in all parts of the world. Racism exists in more or less extreme forms in most cultures, and is one of the most pressing issues in world politics today.



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Teacher's Notes

This is a long story to tell in a short space. Encourage students to read more or search the internet if they are interested. One useful site is thekingcenter.com. Students may also come across anti-King sites which try to show that King was not a good man. There are plenty of people in the world today who wish the KKK had won the fight in the south of the US in the 1950s and 1960s.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/group work questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access center.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- 1 Ask students to look at the list of contents on page iii. What do these titles tell us about Martin Luther King, Jr? Expand the titles into predictions and ideas, and write notes on the board.
- 2 King, like Mahatma Gandhi, is associated with non-violent protest. Do students think peaceful protest can change things in the world? Can they think of examples where it has worked in their country?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Pages 1–13

Get students to read about Rosa Parks on page 10 again. Put them into pairs. Tell them to imagine they are young reporters on Montgomery newspapers. Half of the pairs work for a white newspaper. The other half work for a black newspaper. They prepare their reports. Compare reports across the class, looking at ways students have used to express bias and give only one side of the story.

Pages 14–28

Put students in pairs or small groups. Give each pair one of the following episodes in the story. Ask them to summarize it in two or three sentences and then read their summary to the class:

King's trip to Ghana, p.15; Rich's lunch bar p.18; the vote for US president, November 1960; the May 15 Freedom Ride p.20; the children's march pages 24–25; Little Rock High School, p.22; Bull Connor, pages 25–26; the Washington march, p.27; the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, p.28.

Pages 29–41

The story of Martin Luther King, Jr. is the story of the fight by African-Americans to change a racist society into a non-racist society. Ask students to think about why we have racism and where it comes from. Invite them to talk about racism in their own culture. Have they experienced racism themselves? What is the best way to respond to racism?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

- 1 Class discussion. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a hero to young black people in the 1950s and 1960s. Who are today's heroes? What battles do they need to fight in today's world?
- 2 Put students in small groups. When someone is murdered for a political reason, like Gandhi in 1948 and King in 1968, they may become more important, not less. Students can discuss these questions: What happens to people's ideas and actions when they are killed? Are people more interested or less interested in them? Are they remembered or forgotten?

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know these new words. They are practiced in the exercises at the back of the book. (The definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Pages 1–13

arrest (v) when the police take someone away

bail (n) money paid to the court so someone can leave prison until their case comes to court

bomb (v) bombs are dropped from planes during wars; when you bomb someone's house, you throw, for example, cans of gasoline through the window

boycott (v) to stay away from something or stop doing something for political reasons

campaign (n) a program of activities with a political purpose, usually to try and change something

civil rights (pl n) the rights that a person has by law, for example, to go to school and to vote

demonstrate (v) to show how you feel about something, often on the streets

equality (n) having the same rights as other people

freedom (n) the right to do what you like

jail (n) prison

leader (n) the person in an organization or group who decides things

march (n) when people walk together from one place to another with a political message

peace (n) when there is no war

preacher (n) a person who makes speeches about religion

protest (n) when a group of people do something, often on the streets, to show their feelings about something

segregate (v) to keep black people away from white people; for example, to have different schools and different buses

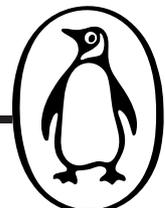
slave (n) someone who is owned by another person; they must work for them without any pay

violence (n) when people try to hurt and kill other people

voting rights (pl n) the right in law to vote

Pages 14–28

riot (v) when people run wild, usually in a city; they fight police, break store windows, burn cars

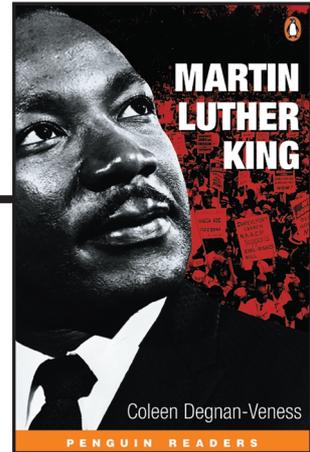


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Student's activities

Martin Luther King

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Level 3 – Pre-Intermediate
Martin Luther King
Photocopiable

These activities can be done alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Read the introduction on page iv and put these words in the right places.

- country segregation peaceful dream national
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is a _____ day in the US.
 - King loved his _____ but hated its laws against black men.
 - _____ means that a black woman cannot sit next to a white woman on the bus.
 - He wanted all protests and marches to be _____.
 - His _____ was for a better world for everyone.

ACTIVITIES WHILE READING THE BOOK

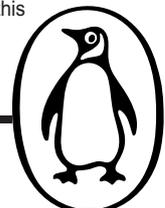
Pages 1–13

- Look through this section of the book quickly. Find these dates and match them with the things that happened.
1807 February 15, 1948 December 1955
December 1, 1955 January 30, 1956 August 28, 1963
 - King became a preacher.
 - King made his 'I have a dream' speech.
 - Rosa Parks was arrested on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama.
 - Slave ships became illegal in America.
 - The civil rights campaign began.
 - The KKK bombed King's house.
- Answer these questions.
 - How old was King when he first learned that life was hard for blacks?
 - Why did he leave his good life in the North for the segregated South?
 - On the train from Connecticut to Atlanta in 1945, what happened to him in the dining car?
 - What did King think about Gandhi's ideas of non-violent protest?
 - Black soldiers received a different welcome from white soldiers when they returned from the war in 1945. What happened?
 - What job did Coretta Scott have before she married King?
 - What job did she have after they were married?
- Work with another student. Look at page 10. One of you is Rosa Parks. The other is the Montgomery bus driver. What do they say on the bus?

- Which of these were for the Montgomery bus boycott? Which were against?
the bus company the KKK the black taxi companies the politicians the MIA the police world opinion

Pages 14–28

- Answer these questions.
 - Why did Henry Thoreau refuse to pay money on his earnings to the US government?
 - What did Mahatma Gandhi help to win with his peaceful protests?
 - What happened in Montgomery in the weeks after the blacks won the boycott?
 - Why were King's arrests "good for his campaign"?
 - Why were King and the students given steak for their first meal in prison in October 1960?
 - Why didn't King help John F. Kennedy's campaign for president?
- Find the right name.
 - 35th President of the United States
 - A Birmingham preacher
 - Atlanta city judge
 - Police chief, Birmingham, Alabama
 - State leader, Alabama
 - State leader, Arkansas
 - Time Magazine's Man of the Year 1957
 - Bull Connor
 - Fred Shuttlesworth
 - George Wallace
 - John F. Kennedy
 - Judge Mitchell
 - Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Orval Faubus
- Imagine you were on the Freedom Ride bus on 15 May near Anniston, Alabama. Write a few sentences to someone in your family about what happened. How did you feel? What did you do?
- Imagine the South without Martin Luther King in the 1960s? What happens? What is it like? Talk to another student.
- Answer these questions.
 - Why did President Eisenhower send soldiers to Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957?
 - In King's letter from Birmingham Jail, what does "Wait!" mean for black people?
 - What did people think when they saw US policemen and dogs attack black children on a protest march?
 - Why was John F. Kennedy worried about this civil rights bill?



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Student's activities

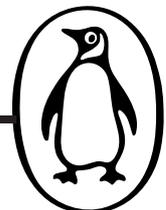
- (e) How many whites joined the march on Washington?
- (f) Two terrible things followed King's 'I have a dream' speech in August 1963. What were they?

Pages 29–41

- 1 Put these words in the right places.
defend destroy introduce organize protect solve take
- (a) War is not the only way to _____ problems, King said.
 - (b) King decided to _____ protest marches against segregation in Selma, Alabama.
 - (c) In February 1965 President Johnson promised to _____ voting rights for everyone.
 - (d) Alabama state leader, George Wallace, refused to _____ the Selma to Montgomery march in March 1965.
 - (e) Malcolm X told blacks to _____ themselves with guns against the white enemy.
 - (f) Stokely Carmichael told whites, 'You will have to _____ [freedom] from the whites!'
 - (g) Because King was against the war in Vietnam, President Johnson wanted to _____ him.
- 2 How was Stokely Carmichael's message different from King's?
- 3 In what ways are blacks still not equal with whites in the US?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

- 1 What do you think is the best moment in this story? What is the worst moment? Write some ideas. Look at another student's ideas. Have you chosen the same things?
- 2 What social problems make you want to demonstrate in the streets? Write a list.
- 3 Describe Martin Luther King, Jr. in one sentence.



Martin Luther King, Jr., Baptist minister and social activist who led the U.S. civil rights movement from the mid-1950s until his death in 1968. { "318311": { "url": "/biography/Martin-Luther-King-Jr", "shareUrl": "https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther-King-Jr", "title": "Martin Luther King, Jr.", "documentGroup": "TOPIC PAGINATED BIO LARGE" , "gaExtraDimensions": {"3": "false"} } }. Contents.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was born Michael Luther King, Jr., but later had his name changed to Martin. His grandfather began the family's long Martin Luther attended segregated public schools in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of fifteen; he received the B. A. degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a distinguished Negro institution of Atlanta from which both his father and grandfather had graduated.