

Name: _____

Great Minds: Martin Luther King Jr.

by Lydia Lukidis

You probably know about Martin Luther King Jr. He was a civil rights activist. And he made that famous "I Have a Dream" speech. But he did so much more than that. Let's take a closer look at his life and what he accomplished.



King was born in 1929 in Atlanta. His father was a preacher and his mother was a teacher. He had an older sister and a younger brother. When he was in high school, he was so smart that he skipped two grades. He went to

Morehouse College when he was only 15 years old, and got a degree in sociology. He was inspired by his father and later got a divinity degree. After that, he went to Boston University and got his doctor's degree in theology. This is why people call him Dr. King.

When he was younger, he experienced racism. He also saw racism against the African American community in general. Segregation was part of life at that time. That's when different races were kept separate and not given the same rights. For example, African Americans weren't given the same chances when it came to education, jobs, or transportation. Segregation was part of the law in the American South and other places in the United States at that time.

King wanted to do something about this. He wanted to make the world a better place. So he fought for equal rights for African Americans. This is what the civil rights movement was all about. He was an activist during the 1950s and 1960s. He wanted people to understand what was going on and that it was not fair. He also wanted to change the laws. He led many peaceful protests to create this change. He was not only the leader of the civil rights movement, but he also helped start it.

One of his first protests was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. (You might remember that during this

time Rosa Parks had refused to give up her seat to a white man when she was on a bus. She was arrested on the spot.)

King fought against the public

transportation system in Montgomery.

The protest lasted 382 days. It was not an easy battle. King was arrested and his

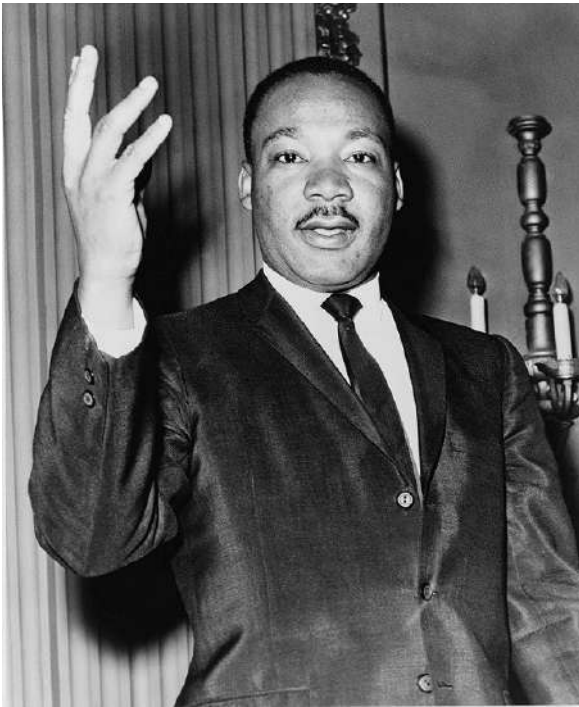
house was bombed. But in the end, King

was happy to see that segregation on

Montgomery buses ended. African Americans could sit wherever they wanted.

“ I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: **‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’** ”

– *Martin Luther King Jr.*



King continued to fight for equality. In 1963, he helped organize the "March on Washington." He wanted to help end segregation in public schools, end discrimination in jobs, and protect the African Americans from police abuse. Over 250,000 people joined the march. That's when King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The speech was very powerful. And the march was successful. A year later, the Civil Rights Act was passed and African Americans were given their rights.

King never backed down in his fight for justice, even when his life was in danger. And he didn't just fight for African Americans. He fought for equality for everyone. He fought for people of different religions. He also fought for

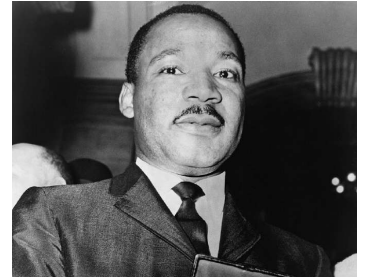
people who had less money. It didn't seem fair to him that people were mistreated just for being who they were. In 1953, King met and married Coretta Scott King. She was also passionate about fighting for equality. Together, they had 4 children.

King was killed in 1968. But his legacy will live on forever. His speeches still inspire us today, and he is still seen as one of the best public speakers. He traveled more than six million miles and gave speeches more than 2,500 times. He was the youngest person to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was even created in his honor. He became the only non-president to have a national holiday in remembrance of him.

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1. According to the article, Martin Luther King Jr. had a doctorate degree in which field of study?
- a. civil rights activism
 - b. medicine
 - c. sociology
 - d. theology

2. Based on the information in the article, Martin Luther King Jr. was the youngest person to do what?
- a. attend Boston University
 - b. get arrested for peaceful protesting
 - c. win the Nobel Peace Prize
 - d. give a speech at the White House

3. What was the Montgomery Bus Boycott and what did it help accomplish?

4. What did the 1963 March on Washington help to accomplish?

5. According to the article, which of the following approaches did Martin Luther King Jr. use to advocate for civil rights?
- a. intimidation
 - b. violence
 - c. bullying
 - d. peaceful protests

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. ____ activist | a. the opportunity for everyone to have the same rights, opportunities, and treatment |
| 2. ____ sociology | b. taken into custody by police or other legal authorities |
| 3. ____ racism | c. the rights of citizens to social and political freedom |
| 4. ____ boycott | d. having strong feelings or beliefs about something |
| 5. ____ equality | e. the study of human society |
| 6. ____ segregation | f. poor treatment of someone based on the belief that their race is inferior to one's own race |
| 7. ____ civil rights | g. the act of commemorating or remembering someone or something |
| 8. ____ remembrance | h. a refusal to participate in an event or policy in order to protest against it |
| 9. ____ passionate | i. a person who campaigns for social or political change |
| 10. ____ arrested | j. the enforced separation of people from different racial groups |

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In the article, "Great Minds: Martin Luther King Jr.," you learned that Martin Luther King Jr. gave speeches more than 2,500 times during the civil rights movement. He is remembered for his powerful, inspiring words.



Using the Internet, with the permission of an adult, choose a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. Write the quote on the lines below, and then describe what it means to you.

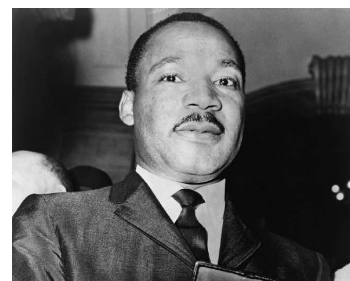
Quote I chose: _____

What it means to me: _____

ANSWER KEY

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3. What was the Montgomery Bus Boycott and what did it help accomplish?

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a 382 day protest of the public transportation system in Montgomery. As a result of the boycott, segregation on Montgomery buses was ended.

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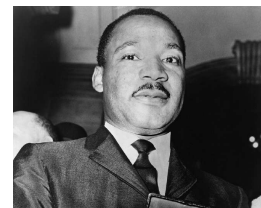
The March on Washington helped bring about the Civil Rights Act the following year.

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