

Reading *Martin's Big Words*

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ACTIVITY SUMMARY

During this activity, you and your child will actively read *Martin's Big Words*, using the suggested reading strategies.

WHY

Through this activity, your child will have fun while learning about the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In the process, your child will build reading skills, including the ability to compare and contrast, and make connections between characters in stories and real people.

TIME

- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best with children in kindergarten through fourth grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **arrested:** when a person is taken to the police station by the police because it is thought the person did something illegal
- **blistering:** extremely hot (as in “blistering heat”)
- **Indian nation:** referring here to the country of India and not American Indians
- **movement:** effort made by many to achieve a goal; people organized to effect change
- **protested:** to have said or done something publicly to show that you disagree with or are angry about something you think is wrong or unfair
- **segregation:** the practice of keeping people of different religions or races apart and making them live or work separately
- **threatened:** declared that one will cause someone harm or trouble of some kind

PARENT PREPARATION

- If you have time, read *Martin's Big Words* yourself before sharing it with your child. Also read the notes on the last two pages of the book and the [Step Back in Time](#) sheets.
- If you have time, preview some of the reading suggestions below. Pick just a few suggestions that look interesting and fun for you.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.



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BEFORE YOU READ

- Before reading, young children may want to do a “picture walk” through the book, where children look at the pictures in the book and talk about what they think will happen in the book, based only on looking at the images. After the “picture walk,” while reading, children should compare their guesses (based on pictures) to the story being told through words.
- Point out how the title of this book is on the back cover and talk about the title of the book and what it might mean. Look at how the word BIG is printed larger than the other words. Ask your child what “big words” he knows and why they are “big words.” As you read the story, listen for words that sound “big.”

DURING READING

- Point out the words of Dr. King (in larger type, within quotation marks, and in color) as you go through the book. Talk about what the words mean and how they connect to the story.
- Listen for the names of places that are mentioned in the book. Have you ever been to those places? After reading, try to find the places on a map and find your own town. How far away are those places? How does the book say Dr. King changed those places?

Tip Consider using one of National Geographic’s Xpeditions Atlas maps (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/>) to locate your hometown and the places named in *Martin’s Big Words*.

AFTER READING

- Talk about how the book was written in time order, to show the sequence of events in Dr. King’s life. Talk together about the sequence of events of your life and in the life of your child. Talk about the day’s sequence of events, or make a timeline of important events in your family’s history.

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- Talk about different connections you can make with this story and its characters.
 - How does this story connect to you? Have you ever felt the same ways Dr. King felt during the story?
 - Have you ever seen signs in your hometown telling you where you could go? Have you ever seen something you thought was unfair? Are there other ways this story connects or compares to your world today?
 - How does this story connect or compare to another book you've read? Can you think of another character in a book, movie, or TV show who was a leader like Dr. King? Does the artwork remind you of anything else you've seen before?

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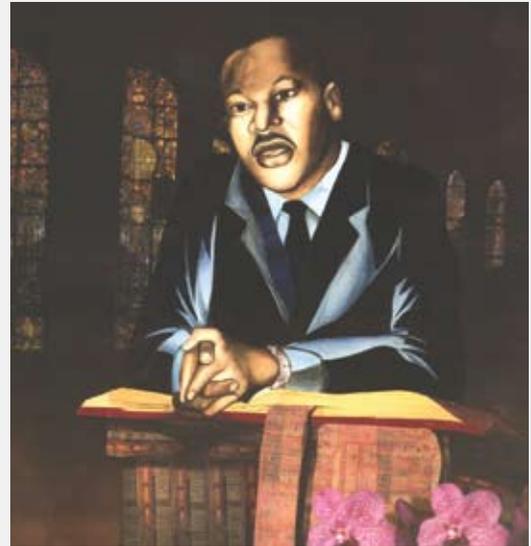
For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.

In 1955, African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, organized to demand equal treatment with whites on city buses. They chose as their leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a pastor at a church in the community. Dr. King had studied the lives of leaders who made changes through **nonviolent protests**. Like Mohandas Gandhi, who helped India gain independence from Great Britain without using violence, King believed that the moral power of **nonviolence** was the strongest force for social changes.

Dr. King used powerful speeches to lead others in marches, **boycotts**, and other forms of peaceful **demonstrations**. **Nonviolent demonstrators** often met with violence and were sometimes arrested for their **protests**. When these **demonstrations** were reported in the news, more people learned about the problems of other citizens and began to pay attention to how the **demonstrators** felt.

Dr. King fought against many kinds of **injustice**. He believed that all people had the right to go to good schools, get fair treatment at their jobs, and be able to use all public places like buses and restaurants.

Many of the **injustices** Dr. King protested against were considered **customs** in the communities where he worked. Many people in the governments of those



Dr. King was a pastor who worked at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama before he became known as a civil rights leader. Image from *Martin's Big Words*.

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communities benefited from these **customs** and made laws supporting them, so Dr. King and his followers couldn't just work with the local governments to make changes. Instead, Dr. King led **nonviolent demonstrations** and met with members of Congress, U.S. presidents and other national leaders, to talk about problems that needed to be solved.

Important Dates

- In 1963 about 250,000 Americans of all races came together in Washington, D.C., to protest against racial **injustice** and to demand strong national civil rights laws. At the March on Washington, Dr. King declared, "I have a dream," appealing to the hopes of all Americans seeking racial **harmony**.
- In 1964, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the **nonviolent** civil rights movement.
- In 1968, while he was working on a **protest** in Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. King was killed by a man who disagreed with his words and actions

custom: unwritten law

demonstration: public display of group feelings toward a person or cause

demonstrator: person who is part of a demonstration (see above)

harmony: balanced and peaceful relationship

injustice: unfair act

nonviolence: a philosophy or strategy for change that opposes the use of violence

protest: public demonstration of disapproval

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See the “Reading Guide” sheets for specific directions.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- Read for understanding.
- Describe Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., his accomplishments, and his place in history.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Discussion exhibits understanding of story and historical details.
- Discussion exhibits understanding of vocabulary in the context of the story.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 1B: Identify temporal structure of a historical narrative or story.
- 2H: Draw upon the visual data presented in photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings.
- 4B: Obtain historical data.

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 4C. Describe how historical figures in the United States and other parts of the world have advanced the rights of individuals and promoted the common good and identify character traits such as persistence, problem solving, moral responsibility, and respect for others that made them successful.
- 4D. The student understands events that celebrate and exemplify fundamental values and principles of American democracy.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

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3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

21st-Century Skills

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy