**Parent Guide, page 1 of 1**

*Read the “Directions” sheet for step-by-step instructions.*

**SUMMARY**

In this activity, children and adults will think of three symbols to represent Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and create a window decoration with those symbols.

**WHY**

This activity will encourage children to think about the story of Dr. King and the ideas he shared with others and then use symbols to express meanings and historical information.

**TIME**

- 35 minutes

**RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP**

This activity will work best for children in 1st through 4th grade.

**CHALLENGE WORDS**

- **symbol**: something that stands for or suggests something else because of its relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance; especially a visible sign of an invisible concept, like faith or courage.

**GET READY**

- Read *Martin’s Big Words* together. *Martin’s Big Words* is a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/mlk/mlk_reading.pdf).
- Read the Step Back in Time sheets.

**YOU NEED**

- Directions sheets *(attached)*
- *Martin’s Big Words* book *(optional)*
- Scissors
- 3 sheets of black construction paper
- Black marker
- Step Back in Time sheets *(attached)*
- Glue or tape
- Pencil
- Several sheets of colored tissue paper

More information at http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/.
Remembering King

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 communities...
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  
*protest*: public demonstration of disapproval  
*injustice*: unfair act  
*nonviolence*: a philosophy or strategy for change that opposes the use of violence  
*demonstration*: public display of group feelings toward a person or cause  
*harmony*: balanced and peaceful relationship  
*demonstrator*: person who is part of a demonstration (see above)  
*injustice*: unfair act  
*nonviolence*: a philosophy or strategy for change that opposes the use of violence  
*protest*: public demonstration of disapproval

Images from Martin’s Big Words by Doreen Rappaport. Text © Doreen Rappaport. Illustrations © Bryan Collier. Used by permission of Disney Publishing. All rights reserved.
For adults and kids to follow together.

1. Read through the Step Back in Time sheets or Martin’s Big Words (be sure to also read the time line at the back of the book). Use the ThinkAbout sheet to write down words or phrases that are important in the story of Dr. King’s life and the ideas he shared with others.

   **Tip**  If you are looking through Martin’s Big Words, also consider looking at the illustrations. Are there any illustrations that you think tell his story especially well?

2. Use the ThinkAbout sheet to develop symbols to express the story of Dr. King’s life and the ideas he shared with others.

3. Once you have chosen the symbols you want to use, draw the outline of each one on separate pieces of black construction paper. The side you have drawn on will be the front of your project.

   **Tip**  Try to draw the symbols large enough to fill up most of the paper. If they are too small, you won’t be able to see them well.

4. Use scissors to carefully cut out each of your symbols. You will have a hole in each piece of black construction paper that is the shape of one of your symbols.

5. Choose a piece of colored tissue paper for each of your symbols. It should be the color that you wrote down on the ThinkAbout sheet for each symbol.
6. Flip the paper over. Glue or tape the tissue paper to the back of your black construction paper. Make sure that the colored tissue paper covers the hole in the construction paper.

7. Turn over your construction paper so you are looking at the front of it.

8. Add details to your symbols using a black marker to draw on the tissue paper.

9. Tape all three symbols into a window in your home or classroom. When the sun shines through the window, the light should shine through the tissue paper, but be blocked by the black construction paper.

10. Explain your symbols to a friend or family member. Tell them how your artwork connects to the story of Dr. King’s life and the ideas he shared with others.

For more activities and information about *Martin’s Big Words* and Dr. King, visit [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/).
Remembering King

You’ll be making art that represents Dr. King’s life and the ideas he shared with others, but you will try to do this without making a picture of Dr. King’s face.

What words or phrases are important in telling the story of Dr. King’s life? Think about...

- What were the ideas that he shared with others?
- What actions did he take? (Look for action-words or “verbs”)
- What places were connected to his life?

Pick five words, and think of pictures and colors that would help express that idea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
<td>dove, globe, holding hands</td>
<td>Light blue like a clear sky, yellow like sunshine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look at the left part of your chart and decide which three words best describe Dr. King’s life or the ideas he shared with others. For each of those words, pick the picture and color that would go together to make the best symbol for that word.

For example, if your want to include the idea of “peace,” you might pick to create a light blue dove as a symbol for “peace.”

More information at [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/)
Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

OBJECTIVES
Students will be better able to:

- Communicate ideas and information through colors, images, and (possibly) words.
- Describe Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his message to others.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Selects logical words, phrases, or ideas for the basis of artwork.
- Uses symbolic colors and images to communicate ideas.
- Defends (or provides a sound explanation for) symbol choices in the context of historical information or personal interpretation.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards
K-4 Historical Content Standards

4C: The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

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.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Creativity and Innovation