

Little People, BIG DREAMS™

TEACHERS' GUIDE



Martin Luther King, Jr.

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\$15.99 US/\$18.99 CAN

ISBN: 9780711245679

Ages: 4 to 8 (Grades: PreK to 2)

32 pages

Hardcover, 7.6 x 9.5 inches



LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

As a child, Martin Luther King, Jr. seemed destined to follow in the footsteps of many of his family members and become a preacher. When he learned about segregation and understood what a terrible thing it was he decided to fight injustice, and he realized that as a preacher he could use to use the power of words to inspire others to do the same. When Rosa Parks famously refused to move her seat on the bus for a white person, Martin helped stage the first of many peaceful protests that would become the hallmark of his remarkable influence around the world, calling for hope, change, and equality.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN THIS UNIT

1. Why is Martin Luther King, Jr. famous?
2. How did Martin find out about segregation?
3. How did Martin decide to fight against segregation?
4. What other famous spiritual leader influenced Martin?
5. What was Martin's first peaceful protest?
6. What is Martin's most famous speech?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. The book explains that many men in Martin's family were preachers. Ask the students if they think that made Martin want to be a preacher more or less. Does anyone in the class want to have

the same job as one of their family members? In what ways could that be good, and in what ways could it be difficult?

2. As a boy, Martin learned about the cruelty and unfairness of segregation. Ask the class what they know about segregation. Why do they think it existed? Do they think it was fair to judge people just because of the color of their skin?

3. In the book, Martin knows that “hate can’t drive out hate; only love can.” Ask the class their thoughts on this idea. Do they agree or disagree? In what ways can people use love to change unfair systems or ideas?

4. Martin believed strongly in the power of words and the importance of speaking out about injustice. He was even arrested many times for speaking out! Ask the class whether they think speaking out about what is unfair is the right thing to do, even if it gets you into trouble. What features of Martin’s protests do the students think were most effective in changing people’s minds and the country’s laws?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Locate the I Have A Dream speech on the internet (both NPR.org and YouTube have readily available versions). Play a few minutes of the speech for the class. As a group, discuss their reactions. Did they think he was persuasive? Ask the students to name something important they hope will happen someday.

2. As a child, Martin experienced segregation first-hand. To help the class better understand this concept, select a physical trait (for example, brown eyes, blonde hair, students wearing jeans, etc.) and separate the class by that trait. Tell the students that they can only be friends with, talk to, and eat lunch with others in their own group. What are their thoughts about being kept apart just because of their appearance?

3. Martin Luther King, Jr. became a widely respected, award-winning leader. As a class, list some of the character traits that helped Martin achieve so much and affect so many lives. Post the list in class and add to it as more ideas occur.

4. Using Martin’s dream as an inspiration, conduct an experiment. For one week, whenever the students are introduced to something new – a new person, a new food, an idea they’ve never heard before, etc. – ask them to try not to make up their minds about it right away. Have them try to find out more about the new thing before deciding. At the end of the week, ask volunteers to share their experiences.

