



## Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Washington, D.C.

### Introduction and Instructions

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1929, Martin Luther King became the face of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s when he organized and led the Montgomery bus boycotts, the 1963 Birmingham protest, and the March on Washington, where he delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. MLK is the first African-American and one of the few non-presidents to be memorialized on the National Mall. In addition to any prior knowledge you may have, use your research skills and the resources provided here to answer the questions below.



Learn about MLK’s early life and later actions as a civil rights leader.  
READ: <https://www.biography.com/activist/martin-luther-king-jr>

#### 1. What happened in his early years that may have lead him to become a civil rights activist?

Answers will vary, but students should address how King grew up in a time of extreme racism. Due to his religious upbringing, he was taught that racism was an affront to God’s will. During his last year in seminary, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came under the guidance of Morehouse College President Benjamin E. Mays who influenced King’s spiritual development. Mays was an outspoken advocate for racial equality and encouraged King to view Christianity as a potential force for social change.

#### 2. Summarize what happened during the Montgomery bus boycott.

Answers will vary, but students should mention that a 42-year-old Rosa Parks was in the “colored” section of the bus after working all day. As more white people boarded the bus, there was no room. Many African American passengers gave up their seat, but Parks did not, even when the driver told her to move. She was arrested and found guilty of violating the Montgomery City Code. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights activists led a protest of this arrest and organized a citywide bus boycott.

#### 3. Give additional examples of how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., took a peaceful approach in standing up for civil rights.

Possible responses: Sit ins; Marches; Speeches; Protests, Signs

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Images and video clips from MLK's life will help illuminate his struggles and accomplishments.

WATCH: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ank52Zi\\_S0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ank52Zi_S0)

## 4. What did Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his family have to endure while he was fighting for civil rights?

Answers will vary, possible answers: King was jailed, harassed, his house was firebombed

## 5. How did Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., die?

Answer: Dr. King was assassinated on April 3, 1968



Learn more about the history and background of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial.

READ: <https://washington.org/visit-dc/martin-luther-king-jr-memorial>

## 6. What is special about the address of this memorial?

Answer: It is 1964 Independence Avenue SW, in honor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a landmark legislation in which King played an important role.

## 7. What was the architect trying to convey with the design of the memorial?

Answer: The architect wants the visitors to enter through the Mountain of Despair and tour the memorial as if they are moving through the struggles that Dr. King faced during his life. The solitary Stone of Hope appears to be cut out of the Mountain of Despair and on it is Dr. King looking towards the horizon, forever encouraging all citizens to strive for justice and equality.

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## WHAT DO YOU THINK? *This is your chance to share your opinions, make connections, and apply what you've learned!*



Martin Luther King was a master orator and many of his words still resonate today.  
READ: <https://www.nps.gov/mlkm/learn/quotations.htm>

1. Pick two of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s quotations from the memorial website, write them down, and explain what you think he meant by those quotes.

Answers will vary.

2. Imagine that Dr. King was still alive today. What do you think he would say or do about the racial tensions that still exist in America today?

Answers will vary.

3. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is one of the newest memorials in Washington, D.C. Which other African-American or civil rights leaders do you think should have a memorial in Washington, D.C.? Make a persuasive argument for this person's memorial and describe what it would look like.

Answers will vary.