

## **Teacher's Guide**

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### **Holiday Facts & Fun: MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**



- Suggested Instructional Procedures
- Script

**Holiday Facts & Fun:  
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**

**Teacher's Guide**

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## **HOLIDAY FACTS & FUN:**

# **MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**

**Time: 10:00**

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The program opens in 1935, as young Martin Luther King, Jr. happily plays with a group of neighborhood friends. One day, a mother tells Martin that he can no longer play with her children. Upset and confused, the youngster runs home, where his mother tells him about racial prejudice. As Mrs. King comforts her son, she says, "...a person's skin color doesn't matter. How people *behave* is what really matters." From that time onward, Martin becomes aware of racial divisions, and begins to ponder ways to fight them. Martin is seen as a precocious child, one with an unusual gift of oratory. His educational achievements are discussed, and his rise to national and international prominence as one of the world's leading spokespersons for civil rights is covered. In addition, Dr.

King's role in organizing the Montgomery bus boycott, a crucial event in the civil rights movement, is discussed.

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, students should be able to do the following:

- (1) Discuss the early life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- (2) Tell how racial prejudice affected Dr. King and others of African-American heritage.
- (3) Explain how Dr. King fought racial prejudice.
- (4) Tell how and why people celebrate Dr. King's birthday.

### SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

#### 1. Introduction

Discuss prejudice. Help your students understand that the word means *to prejudge*, to form an opinion of a person, or an entire group of people, without knowing them. Why is prejudice wrong?

Then talk about the different forms of prejudice, and how they can be harmful to individuals and groups of people.

## **2\* Pre-Viewing Activities**

Tell the class that they are now going to see a program about a man whose birthday is celebrated each year because he helped millions of people understand how terrible prejudice can be. Tell the class that this person's name is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Explain that Dr. King was not the kind of doctor who helps people get well. Rather, he was the kind of doctor who knows a lot about religion. Explain that Dr. King was a minister, and he used his understanding of religions and philosophy to help people respect and love each other.

Present the video. A transcript of the narration is found on pages 7-13.

## **3. Post-Viewing Activities**

Discuss Dr. King's first experience with prejudice as a young child. Ask the members of your class how they would feel if something similar happened to them. Help your children understand that Dr. King's reaction, to fight against prejudice, was better than becoming angry at his friends' mother. Why? Because anger would never solve the problem of prejudice.

Then discuss Dr. King's methods of fighting prejudice: education, understanding, and love - but never violence. If Dr. King had used violence in an

attempt to change the unfair law in Montgomery, Alabama, would he be successful? Help your students understand that violence often results in more violence, and as a consequence, innocent people are often hurt.

Finally, review the ways Dr. King's birthday are celebrated in your school and community.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO**

Many years ago, in Atlanta, Georgia, a group of neighborhood children played together practically every day.

They threw baseballs to one another. They raced to see who was the fastest runner. And they played hide and go seek.

One of the children was Martin Luther King, Jr.

One day, something happened to Martin. The mother of two of his friends told him that he couldn't play with her children any more.

"Martin," she said, "I don't want you to come to our house ever again. From now on, you'll just have to stay away."

As you can imagine, that made Martin very upset.

When he got home, his mother could tell that something was wrong. She asked him what had happened, and when Martin told her, she gave him a big hug.

Then she explained that some white people believed that they were better than black people. So they didn't want their sons or daughters to play with black children.

"But," she said, "what those people believe isn't so. Everyone who knows the truth understands that a person's skin color doesn't matter.

"How people behave is what really matters."

But everywhere Martin went, he saw signs that kept him from going where the white children could go.

He couldn't play in many parks. He wasn't allowed to play on many tennis courts or swim in many swimming pools. He had to sit upstairs, in a balcony, when he went to the movies. He couldn't sit downstairs with the white people.

And just because their skin color was dark, the King family wasn't allowed to eat in many restaurants.

Martin had to go to a separate school, too. But that didn't keep Martin from being a very good student.

His mother taught him, and his brother and sister, to read when they were very young - even before they started school.

Martin loved to read. He liked to learn about new things. He was always full of questions, and he wanted to find their answers.

One big question Martin kept thinking about was

how black people and white people could come together and be friends.

Martin liked to talk about things, too, especially with his grandmother. She was his favorite person.

They would talk for hours and hours on the front porch. Martin also liked to give speeches.

When he was in high school, he practiced giving speeches in front of a mirror. He also learned a lot about giving speeches from his father, who was a minister.

Martin had a special way with words: he could make people feel brave and proud with his speeches; he could make people want to do wonderful things.

When Martin was in high school, he studied very hard. He was such an excellent student that he graduated in only two years. Most people need four years to graduate.

Then he went to college, where he decided to become a minister, like his father.

When he was in college, Martin studied many important ideas.

He came to believe that when people are treated unfairly, they should fight back -- but not with guns, or fists, or sticks, or anything else that might cause harm.

The best way to fight back, he thought, was with love.

In time, Martin became a doctor of divinity, a person who knows a lot about religions, So he was now *doctor* Martin Luther King, Jr.

His first job as a minister was at a church in Montgomery, Alabama.

What happened next to Dr. King has been written about in many books. The story begins with a woman named Rosa Parks, who worked in a department store in Montgomery.

One day, Rosa was very tired after work. So she decided to take a bus home. Usually, she walked because she didn't like to ride on the bus.

You see, African Americans had to sit in the back. Only white people were allowed to sit in front. That was the law in Montgomery.

But Rosa, like many others, knew that the law was unfair.

Not only that, if the bus were crowded, a white person could order a black person in the back to get up and give him the seat.

Today, that's hard for us to understand, but that's the way it was back then.

As Rosa sat on the bus that day, it became very crowded. The bus driver ordered Rosa and some others in the back to stand up and let white people take their places.

But Rosa was much too tired to stand. She decided she would stay seated.

So the driver ran off the bus and called the police.

They took Rosa to jail. They said she broke a city law. And it was the law, but it was unfair.

Dr. King heard about Rosa's arrest, and decided to do something about the unfair law.

"Nobody should ride the buses," he said, "until the unfair law is changed."

Although Dr. King wanted a new, fair law, he didn't want anyone to get hurt -- neither black people nor white people. He wanted the law changed peacefully.

It took a long time, but finally a group of judges said the Montgomery bus law could no longer be used.

Because Dr. King was the most important leader in getting the unfair law changed, he became a hero.

And he became famous. He gave speeches all over the country. He became the leader of many groups that wanted other unfair laws changed.

In 1963, he led the one of the largest gatherings ever held to get more fair laws passed.

Dr. King made one of the most famous speeches ever given during that large gathering. It was called his "I have a dream" speech.

The next year, Dr. King was awarded one of the greatest honors any person can be given, the Nobel Peace Prize. He received the award because he helped remove so many injustices ~ and because he did it peacefully. Now he was a hero all over the world.

Nineteen years later, in Washington, D. C, our lawmakers said that the third Monday in January would become a national holiday to honor Dr. King because he worked so hard to get people to love and help each other.

And so every year, in late January, many librarians and teachers read stories about Dr. King's life. They also discuss his ideas, especially those that help us understand that each person is important, no matter the color of her or his skin - black, or brown, or white, or any other color.

And because each person is important, she or he must be respected and treated fairly.

At the Dr. Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, Georgia, the city of Dr. King's birth, special programs are held on the holiday, as they are in many other places around the country.

Also, on Martin Luther King Day, student speakers recite parts of Dr. King's many famous speeches, as their classmates look on.

STUDENT: I have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true

meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident - that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

NARRATOR: Often, the young speakers are contestants in speech contests - events that help everyone remember what a wonderful, and powerful, speaker Dr. King was.

In short, then, we celebrate Martin Luther King Day because Dr. King helped us see that friendship, love, and understanding are best ways for people of all races to get along.



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