

# Honoring King



Library of Congress

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King addresses a group of followers.

## Americans pay tribute to a leader's legacy.

For many Americans, Martin Luther King Jr. Day isn't just a "day off" from school or work. They will make it a "day on" and participate in community service projects in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

### A Great Leader

King (1929-1968) was a famous **civil rights**<sup>1</sup> leader. When King was growing up, the South was **segregated**,<sup>2</sup> or separated by race.

Black people did not have the same rights as white people. Under the law, they were not allowed to attend the same schools as white people and had to sit in the back seats of buses. Black people also had to use separate restrooms and drinking fountains.

When King was older, he worked to change those unjust laws. During the 1950s and 1960s, he gave speeches and organized peaceful marches and protests. Beginning in 1955, King led the famous Montgomery bus boycott. For 381 days, African Americans **boycotted**,<sup>3</sup> or refused to use, public buses in the Alabama city. A year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation on buses was illegal.

King gained national attention from the boycott and, in 1963, delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. He told a crowd of more than 200,000 people in Washington, D.C., that his dream was for all people to be treated fairly and equally under the law. As a result of his work, civil rights laws were passed. Those laws protect the rights of all Americans.

<sup>1</sup> **civil rights:** entitlement of citizens to be treated equally and fairly by law

<sup>2</sup> **segregated:** kept apart from other groups

<sup>3</sup> **boycott:** protest by not using the services of a particular company or business

## A Day of Service

Many people celebrate King's **legacy**<sup>4</sup> on Martin Luther King Jr. Day with parades and other events. The legacy of a leader is something he or she has accomplished that would benefit future generations. For King, that meant making the world a better place. Thousands more honor King by cleaning parks, volunteering at homeless shelters, and participating in other community service projects.

"Everybody can be great because everybody can serve," King once said. By taking part in community service projects, Americans are able to keep this leader's dream alive.

| A Civil Rights Hero: Martin Luther King Jr. |   |
|---|---|
| January 15, 1929:                           | Born in Atlanta, Georgia  |
| August 28, 1963:                            | Delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C.        |
| December 10, 1964:                          | Becomes the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize    |
| April 4, 1968:                              | Is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee                           |
| January 20, 1986:                           | Martin Luther King Jr. Day first Observed as a national holiday |

<sup>4</sup> **legacy**: something valuable left by a person when he or she dies

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did Martin Luther King Jr. do to change the unjust laws of segregation?
  - A He volunteered at homeless shelters and participated in other community service projects.
  - B He ran for Senate in order to pass legislation that would change the segregation laws.
  - C He became a Supreme Court justice and ruled that segregation on buses was illegal.
  - D He gave speeches, organized peaceful marches, and led the Montgomery bus boycott.
  
2. What dream did Martin Luther King Jr. describe during his famous "I Have a Dream" speech?
  - A His dream was that the South would be more like the North.
  - B His dream was for the Montgomery bus boycott to result in the end of segregation on buses.
  - C His dream was for all people to be treated fairly and equally under the law.
  - D His dream was to have more peaceful marches and protests against segregation.
  
3. What conclusion can one come to about Martin Luther King Jr. based on the passage?
  - A He used peaceful means to achieve widespread change for Americans.
  - B He inspired people to be violent if they needed to draw attention to problems of segregation.
  - C He felt marches, protests and boycotts were not effective ways to bring about change.
  - D He thought equality under the law would be very hard to achieve in the South.
  
4. Read the following sentence: "The legacy of a leader is something he or she has accomplished that would benefit future generations."

What does the word **generations** mean?

- A groups of people who belong to the same race
  - B groups of people of a similar age
  - C groups of people who are part of the same economic class
  - D groups of people who belong to the same profession
  
5. What is this passage mainly about?
  - A the life of Martin Luther King Jr. and how he was treated and how he is remembered today
  - B the Montgomery bus boycott and other famous civil rights events
  - C the civil rights work of Martin Luther King Jr. and how it should be celebrated
  - D the hardships faced by African Americans in the segregated South

6. Describe what life was like in the South when Martin Luther King Jr. was growing up.

---

---

---

7. Why is participation in community service projects an appropriate way to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.?

---

---

---

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ the South was segregated, black people did not have the same rights as white people.

- A However
- B Because
- C Even though
- D Although

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Thousands of Americans pay tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy on Martin Luther King Jr. Day by participating in community service projects.

Who? thousands of Americans

(do) What? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

How? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** legacy: something valuable left by a person when he or she dies.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 880

**Featured Text Structure:** Descriptive - the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** The passage discusses the civil rights work and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and the way his legacy is honored today.

1. What did Martin Luther King Jr. do to change the unjust laws of segregation?
  - A He volunteered at homeless shelters and participated in other community service projects.
  - B He ran for Senate in order to pass legislation that would change the segregation laws.
  - C He became a Supreme Court justice and ruled that segregation on buses was illegal.
  - D **He gave speeches, organized peaceful marches, and led the Montgomery bus boycott.**
  
2. What dream did Martin Luther King Jr. describe during his famous "I Have a Dream" speech?
  - A His dream was that the South would be more like the North.
  - B His dream was for the Montgomery bus boycott to result in the end of segregation on buses.
  - C **His dream was for all people to be treated fairly and equally under the law.**
  - D His dream was to have more peaceful marches and protests against segregation.
  
3. What conclusion can one come to about Martin Luther King Jr. based on the passage?
  - A **He used peaceful means to achieve widespread change for Americans.**
  - B He inspired people to be violent if they needed to draw attention to problems of segregation.
  - C He felt marches, protests and boycotts were not effective ways to bring about change.
  - D He thought equality under the law would be very hard to achieve in the South.
  
4. Read the following sentence: "The legacy of a leader is something he or she has accomplished that would benefit future generations."

What does the word **generations** mean?

  - A groups of people who belong to the same race
  - B **groups of people of a similar age**
  - C groups of people who are part of the same economic class
  - D groups of people who belong to the same profession
  
5. What is this passage mainly about?
  - A the life of Martin Luther King Jr. and how he was treated and how he is remembered today
  - B the Montgomery bus boycott and other famous civil rights events
  - C **the civil rights work of Martin Luther King Jr. and how it should be celebrated**
  - D the hardships faced by African Americans in the segregated South

6. Describe what life was like in the South when Martin Luther King Jr. was growing up.

**Suggested answer:** Black people did not have the same rights as white people. Under the law, they were not allowed to attend the same schools as white people and had to sit in the back seats of buses. Black people also had to use separate restrooms and drinking fountains. [paragraph 2]

7. Why is participation in community service projects an appropriate way to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.?

**Suggested answer:** Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his life to improving the lives of others by working towards a country where everyone was treated equally and fairly under the law. It is only fitting that this legacy is honored in the same way as people give back to their communities, by cleaning parks, volunteering at homeless shelters, and participating in other community service projects. [paragraph 5]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ the South was segregated, black people did not have the same rights as white people.

- A However
- B Because**
- C Even though
- D Although

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Thousands of Americans pay tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy on Martin Luther King Jr. Day by participating in community service projects.

Who? thousands of Americans

(do) What? **pay tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy**

When? **on Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

How? **by participating in community service projects**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** legacy: something valuable left by a person when he or she dies.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.