

# An American Leader

## The Story of Martin Luther King Jr.

**King was a leader who dreamed of a better world.**

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. Each January, Americans honor him with a holiday. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is observed on the third Monday of January each year.

## Unfair Laws



AP Images

King gives "I Have a Dream" speech to a large crowd in Washington, D.C.

When King was growing up, the laws in some places were unfair. Those laws treated African American people differently from white people. African Americans were not allowed to go to the same schools as white students. Many were also forced to sit in the back of buses.

## King Had a Dream



In the 1950s and 1960s, King worked to change unfair laws. He led peaceful marches and gave many speeches. In 1963, King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. He said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

House: James Randklev/Corbis; Young Martin Luther King: Martin Luther King Family  
King's birth home is in Atlanta, Georgia. Here he is at age 6.

## Equal Rights



As a result of King's hard work, equal rights laws were passed. Those laws make sure that all Americans are treated fairly and equally.

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

1. During which month do Americans celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day?

- A January
- B February
- C March

2. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work to change unfair laws was caused by a desire for people to be treated fairly. What was an effect of King's work?

- A Martin Luther King Jr. led marches and gave speeches.
- B Equal rights laws were passed, so Americans are treated fairly.
- C African Americans and whites went to separate schools.

3. African Americans were treated unfairly. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A African Americans were forced to sit in the back of buses.
- B Martin Luther King Jr. led marches and gave speeches.
- C Americans honor Martin Luther King Jr. with a holiday.

4. Read the following sentence from King's speech: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

How did Martin Luther King Jr. feel about the future of America?

- A scared
- B angry
- C hopeful

**5.** What is this passage mostly about?

- A** why African Americans were treated differently than white people
- B** how Martin Luther King Jr. helped change unfair laws
- C** Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech

**6.** Read the following sentences: "Each January, Americans honor him with a holiday. This year, Martin Luther King Jr. Day is January 20."

Why does the author begin the passage this way?

- A** to tell the reader about Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- B** to tell the reader why we honor Martin Luther King Jr.
- C** to tell the reader about Martin Luther King Jr.'s life

**7.** Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

\_\_\_\_\_ laws in some parts of the United States were unfair, African Americans had to sit in the back of buses.

- A** But
- B** Because
- C** So

**8.** What kind of marches did Martin Luther King Jr. lead?

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9. How were African Americans treated differently from white people?

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10. Why do Americans celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day?

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**Teacher Guide & Answers****Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 810

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8. What kind of marches did Martin Luther King Jr. lead?

**Suggested answer:** Martin Luther King Jr. led *peaceful* marches.

9. How were African Americans treated differently from white people?

**Suggested answer:** African Americans were not allowed to go to the same schools as white students. Many were also forced to sit in the back of buses.

10. Why do Americans celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day?

**Suggested answer:** Americans celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day because of Dr. King's work to get equal rights laws passed, ensuring that all Americans are treated fairly and equally.