Learning Objectives

1) Know some of the major events in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life.
   a) He was born Michael Luther King, Jr. on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He and his father changed their names to Martin in 1935.
   b) He was a very good student who loved to read and learn. He did well in many areas, including debate, sports, and speech.
   c) After graduating from high school at the age of 15, he went to Morehouse College in Atlanta. After finishing college, he was ordained a minister and became assistant pastor at his father’s church in Atlanta.
   d) In 1953, he married Coretta Scott.
   e) The following year, he and his wife moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where the Reverend King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.
   f) In 1955, he received his Ph.D. in theology from Boston University.
   g) He organized a bus boycott in Montgomery. Before the boycott, the first few rows of the bus were for whites only. Blacks could sit anywhere else—until the bus was full. If there were no place for a white person to sit, the blacks had to give up their seats and stand.
   i) The bus boycott meant that blacks would refuse to ride the busses.
   ii) The event that started the boycott was Rosa Parks, an African American woman, being arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a Caucasian man.
   iii) Many people refused to ride the busses for more than a year. As a result of the boycott, blacks and whites were given equal treatment on busses in Alabama, starting on December 21, 1956.
   h) Dr. King gave speeches and wrote books against segregation. Segregation laws were laws that forced people (in this case, blacks and whites) to be separate. These laws made black and white people use separate restaurants, restrooms, pools, hotels, and even drinking fountains.
   i) In 1957, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed, and Dr. King was named its president. In 1960, he moved from Montgomery back to Atlanta in order to work closely with the Conference.
   j) Dr. King met with President John F. Kennedy in 1962. He asked the President to support equal treatment and opportunities for black citizens.
   k) Dr. King led many nonviolent protests all over the South. Some of these were “sit-ins,” in which people would sit down together right on the steps or in the way of an office to protest against unfair treatment of black people.
   l) He also led voter registration drives to encourage all African Americans to vote.
   m) One of his most famous speeches was given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.
   i) On August 28, 1963, the largest civil rights demonstration in U.S. history took place in the March on Washington, officially known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Over 200,000 Americans, including whites, took part in the march.
   ii) King and other civil rights leaders hoped the march would convince Congress to pass laws giving black people their civil rights—the same rights that white people had.
   iii) In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, he shared his dreams of freedom for all people, that one day blacks and whites would enjoy the same freedoms, that all would walk together as brothers and sisters, and that his children would live in a nation where they would be judged not by the color of their skin but by their character.
   n) Dr. King received much recognition for his efforts. Many universities gave him honorary degrees. Time magazine named him man of the year for 1963. He was chosen as the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize winner. He also received $54,000 in prize money, which he donated to the civil rights movement.
   o) Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed racial discrimination in public places. It called for equal opportunities and education for all people.
   p) On April 4, 1968, Dr. King was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee.

2) Know that in 1983, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was declared an annual federal holiday by the United States Congress. The holiday is celebrated on the third Monday in January.

3) Realize that many of Dr. King’s followers still volunteer at hospitals, homeless shelters, schools, and anywhere else there is people who need help.

4) Know some of the ways people celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Many give parades, others have marches, and some recite his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Suggested Activities

1) Before viewing the video:
   Ask the students how they think certain parts of the country might have been different before Dr. King’s influence. Briefly explain to them how segregation affected many communities.

2) After viewing the video:
   Lead a discussion in what the students can do to keep Dr. King’s dream alive. This could include not being prejudiced toward people of different races, promoting equal opportunities for every kind of person, and providing services for the needy.