

## To March or Not to March?

*Parent Guide*, page 1 of 2

*Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.*

### SUMMARY

In this activity, students will assume the role of fictional Americans in 1963 and make decisions based on the evidence found in a historical artifact related to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

### WHY

Through analyzing a choice that people in the past had to make, children will be better able to exercise critical thinking skills for problem-solving and decision-making in their own lives.

### TIME

- 25 minutes

### RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in 3rd through 5th grade.

### CHALLENGE WORDS

- **civic:** of or relating to a citizen, a city, citizenship, or community affairs
- **demonstration:** public display of group feelings toward a person or cause
- **federal works program:** a program funded by the national government that provides citizens jobs
- **integration:** the condition in which all members of society or an organization have equal rights and privileges, regardless of background or race
- **mobilizing:** preparing people to take action together
- **nonviolence:** a philosophy or strategy for change that opposes using violence
- **segregation:** keeping people in separate groups based on their race or culture
- **sit-in:** an act of occupying seats or sitting on the floor of an establishment, as a means of organized protest
- **unemployed:** without jobs

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.

## To March or Not to March?

### *Parent Guide*, page 2 of 2

#### GET READY

- Read *Martin's Big Words* together. *Martin's Big Words* is a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/mlk/mlk\\_reading.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/mlk/mlk_reading.pdf)).
- Read the **Step Back in Time** sheets. Students will need a basic understanding of the civil rights movement to complete the activity thoughtfully.

#### YOU NEED

- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- *Martin's Big Words* book (*optional*)
- Computer with Internet connection or *To March or Not to March?* PowerPoint at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/mlk/March.ppt>

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.



## To March or Not to March?

*Step Back in Time, page 1 of 2*

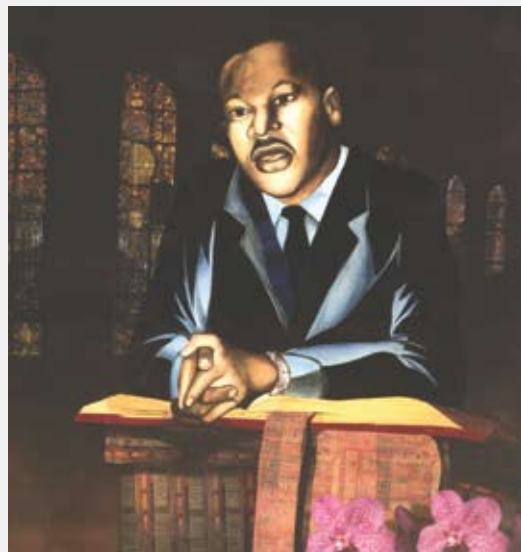
For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.

In 1955, African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, organized to demand equal treatment with whites on city buses. They chose as their leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a pastor at a church in the community. Dr. King had studied the lives of leaders who made changes through **nonviolent protests**. Like Mohandas Gandhi, who helped India gain independence from Great Britain without using violence, King believed that the moral power of **nonviolence** was the strongest force for social changes.

Dr. King used powerful speeches to lead others in marches, **boycotts**, and other forms of peaceful **demonstrations**. **Nonviolent demonstrators** often met with violence and were sometimes arrested for their **protests**. When these **demonstrations** were reported in the news, more people learned about the problems of other citizens and began to pay attention to how the **demonstrators** felt.

Dr. King fought against many kinds of **injustice**. He believed that all people had the right to go to good schools, get fair treatment at their jobs, and be able to use all public places like buses and restaurants.

Many of the **injustices** Dr. King protested against were considered **customs** in the communities where he worked. Many people in the governments of those



Dr. King was a pastor who worked at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama before he became known as a civil rights leader. Image from *Martin's Big Words*.



## To March or Not to March?

### *Step Back in Time*, page 2 of 2

communities benefited from these **customs** and made laws supporting them, so Dr. King and his followers couldn't just work with the local governments to make changes. Instead, Dr. King led **nonviolent demonstrations** and met with members of Congress, U.S. presidents and other national leaders, to talk about problems that needed to be solved.

#### *Important Dates*

- In 1963 about 250,000 Americans of all races came together in Washington, D.C., to protest against racial **injustice** and to demand strong national civil rights laws. At the March on Washington, Dr. King declared, "I have a dream," appealing to the hopes of all Americans seeking racial **harmony**.
- In 1964, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the **nonviolent** civil rights movement.
- In 1968, while he was working on a **protest** in Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. King was killed by a man who disagreed with his words and actions

*custom:* unwritten law

*demonstration:* public display of group feelings toward a person or cause

*demonstrator:* person who is part of a demonstration (see above)

*harmony:* balanced and peaceful relationship

*injustice:* unfair act

*nonviolence:* a philosophy or strategy for change that opposes the use of violence

*protest:* public demonstration of disapproval

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## To March or Not to March?

*Directions*, page 1 of 3

### *For kids and adults to follow together:*

1. Have students take on the role of one of the everyday Americans described on the [Take on A Role](#) handout.
2. Have students answer the questions at the bottom of the [Take on a Role](#) handout.

**Tip** In order to answer these questions, students will need to add details to, extrapolate from, or read between the lines of the written role descriptions. As such, there may be a wide variety of answers, even for children who are taking on the same role.

3. As a class, view the [To March or Not to March?](#) PowerPoint. With slide two, introduce the four object questions. You will be attempting to answer these questions through looking at a handbill that encouraged people to attend the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
4. As a class, attempt to answer the four object questions by looking at the handbill on slide three.
5. Check answers by clicking on the “hotspots” within the handbill on slide four. Each hotspot will include an enlarged image of the handbill, along with a brief analysis and one or more open-ended follow-up questions.

**Tip** The follow-up questions cannot be answered by simply studying the handbill. Students should use their background knowledge and critical thinking skills to answer the follow-up questions.

## To March or Not to March?

*Directions*, page 3 of 3

6. After answering the three object questions and discussing the follow-up questions, ask students to decide whether or not their everyday American should attend the March on Washington.

**Tip** For extra challenge, have students write a first-person narrative paragraph describing their decisions, rationales, and expected consequences of their decisions.

If multiple students took on the same role, ask students to compare their decisions. Did they all come to the same conclusions? Why or why not?

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For more activities and information about *Martin's Big Words* and Dr. King, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.

## To March or Not to March?

### Take On a Role

Read the descriptions below and select one role to take on for this activity.

- **Role 1:** You are a young African American college student. Before you went to college, you studied in a segregated school in your hometown in Mississippi. You've heard about others who went to marches and sit-ins, and some of those people got hurt even though they weren't trying to hurt anyone else. Some of your friends get very angry about the civil rights movement. They think that Dr. King is too peaceful and won't ever get anything done.

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- **Role 2:** You are a white parent, living and raising your children in New York City. At your office, you know African Americans who work in your building as janitors and elevator operators, but all the higher paid jobs are done by whites.

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- **Role 3:** You are a young white worker student in Washington, D.C. Finding a job has been hard. You have seen **demonstrations** on TV, but have never attended a civil rights **demonstration** yourself.

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- **Role 4:** You are an elderly African American grandparent. Your family works on a farm in Illinois, where you aren't getting rich but aren't going hungry. Coming to Washington would be difficult and expensive.

### Questions:

1. What are your hopes?
2. What experiences have shaped your point of view?
3. What are your fears?

## To March or Not to March?

*For Teachers*, page 1 of 2

*Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.*

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be better able to:

- Critically examine problems and solutions.
- Describe the rationale for the March on Washington.

### STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Provides logical responses to the questions on the [Take on a Role](#) handout.
- Logically defends decision to attend or not attend the March on Washington.

### STANDARDS

#### *NCHS History Standards*

##### *K-4 Historical Thinking Standards*

- 3G: Consider multiple perspectives.
- 3H: Explain causes in analyzing historical actions.
- 4B: Obtain historical data.
- 5A: Identify problems and dilemmas.
- 5B: Analyze the interests, values, and points of view.
- 5E: Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.
- 5F: Identify the solution.

##### *K-4 Historical Content Standards*

- 4D: The student understands events that celebrate and exemplify fundamental values and principles of American democracy.

## To March or Not to March?

*For Teachers, page 2 of 2*

### *IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards*

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

### *21st-Century Skills*

#### *Learning and Innovation Skills*

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

#### *Information, Media, and Technology Skills*

- Media Literacy