

Remembering King

Parent Guide, page 1 of 1

Read the “Directions” sheet for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY

In this activity, children and adults will think of three symbols to represent Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and create a window decoration with those symbols.

WHY

This activity will encourage children to think about the story of Dr. King and the ideas he shared with others and then use symbols to express meanings and historical information.

TIME

- 35 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in 1st through 4th grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **symbol:** something that stands for or suggests something else because of its relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance; especially a visible sign of an invisible concept, like faith or courage.

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).
- Read the [Step Back in Time](#) sheets.

YOU NEED

- [Directions](#) sheets (*attached*)
- *Martin’s Big Words* book (*optional*)
- Scissors
- 3 sheets of black construction paper
- Black marker
- [Step Back in Time](#) sheets (*attached*)
- Glue or tape
- Pencil
- Several sheets of colored tissue paper

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

Remembering King

Step Back in Time, page 1 of 2

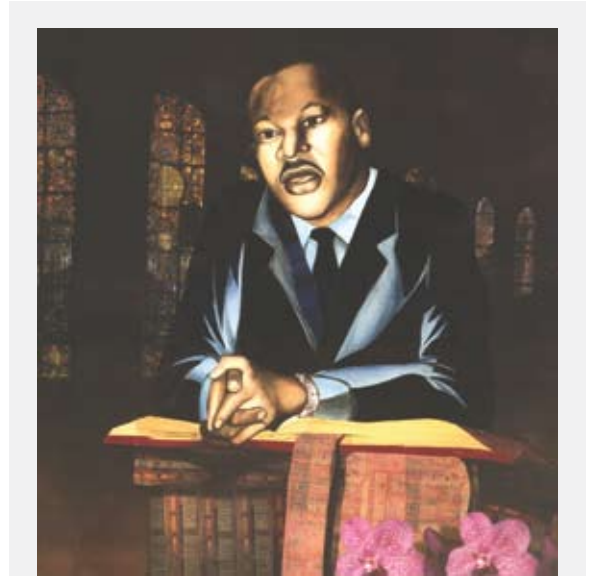
For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/mlk/>.

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*.

Remembering King

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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Remembering King

Directions, page 1 of 2

For adults and kids to follow together.

1. Read through the **Step Back in Time** sheets or *Martin's Big Words* (be sure to also read the time line at the back of the book). Use the **ThinkAbout** sheet to write down words or phrases that are important in the story of Dr. King's life and the ideas he shared with others.

Tip If you are looking through *Martin's Big Words*, also consider looking at the illustrations. Are there any illustrations that you think tell his story especially well?

2. Use the **ThinkAbout** sheet to develop **symbols** to express the story of Dr. King's life and the ideas he shared with others.
3. Once you have chosen the **symbols** you want to use, draw the outline of each one on separate pieces of black construction paper. The side you have drawn on will be the front of your project.

Tip Try to draw the symbols large enough to fill up most of the paper. If they are too small, you won't be able to see them well.

4. Use scissors to carefully cut out each of your **symbols**. You will have a hole in each piece of black construction paper that is the shape of one of your **symbols**.
5. Choose a piece of colored tissue paper for each of your **symbols**. It should be the color that you wrote down on the **ThinkAbout** sheet for each **symbol**.



Remembering King

Directions, page 2 of 2

6. Flip the paper over. Glue or tape the tissue paper to the back of your black construction paper. Make sure that the colored tissue paper covers the hole in the construction paper.
7. Turn over your construction paper so you are looking at the front of it.
8. Add details to your symbols using a black marker to draw on the tissue paper.
9. Tape all three symbols into a window in your home or classroom. When the sun shines through the window, the light should shine through the tissue paper, but be blocked by the black construction paper.
10. Explain your symbols to a friend or family member. Tell them how your artwork connects to the story of Dr. King's life and the ideas he shared with others.



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

Remembering King

ThinkAbout

You'll be making art that represents Dr. King's life and the ideas he shared with others, but you will try to do this without making a picture of Dr. King's face.

What words or phrases are important in telling the story of Dr. King's life? Think about...

- What were the ideas that he shared with others?
- What actions did he take? (Look for action-words or "verbs")
- What places were connected to his life?

Pick five words, and think of pictures and colors that would help express that idea.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Picture</i>	<i>Color</i> <i>Does the word make you think of something that is a specific color? Does it make you think of a feeling that could be connected to a color?</i>
peace	dove, globe, holding hands	Light blue like a clear sky, yellow like sunshine

Look at the left part of your chart and decide which three words best describe Dr. King's life or the ideas he shared with others. For each of those words, pick the picture and color that would go together to make the best symbol for that word.

For example, if you want to include the idea of "peace," you might pick to create a light blue dove as a symbol for "peace."

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

Remembering King

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:

- Communicate ideas and information through colors, images, and (possibly) words.
- Describe Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his message to others.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Selects logical words, phrases, or ideas for the basis of artwork.
- Uses symbolic colors and images to communicate ideas.
- Defends (or provides a sound explanation for) symbol choices in the context of historical information or personal interpretation.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 4C: The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.
- 4D: The student understands events that celebrate and exemplify fundamental values and principles of American democracy.

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.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Remembering King

For Teachers, page 2 of 2

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Creativity and Innovation