

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Objective:** *To encourage a sense of unity and community*

**Key Words:** *responsibility, Martin Luther King, freedom fighter, Baptist, America, Gandhi, passive resistance, opposition, threatening, Nobel Peace Prize, prophetic*

**QUOTATION/THEME FOR THE WEEK**

**FOR THE NON-VIOLENT PERSON, THE WHOLE WORLD IS ONE FAMILY**



**IN DREAMS BEGINS RESPONSIBILITY**

Brainstorm and discuss.

**SILENT SITTING**

Step 1 *(See page 40 of the Introduction)*

Steps 3, 4 *(optional)*

Step 5: Imagine your world expanding to cover all the earth ...

Everyone is your brother or sister ...

Everyone needs your love and respect ...

Pour out good feelings to your family ...  
to your friends ...

to your neighbours ...

to everyone in the country ...

to the whole world ...

Now send out love and good feelings to the universe and see everything becoming covered with a warm glow of love ... Feel the happiness of being in a warm glow of love.

Step 6.

**STORY TELLING**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING**

Martin Luther King, Jr. was loved by people throughout the whole world because, although for many years this great freedom fighter knew he ran the risk of being killed at any time, he continued to pursue his dream of fair and equal treatment for all people in his country.

As a child, he and his sister and brother spent a lot of time in the Baptist Church where his father was pastor. His mother was a schoolteacher and the family were respected and liked in the local black community. Some of the friends that Martin played with were white and this presented a problem when they wanted to go out together, perhaps on a bus, or to a film. This was because they were not allowed to sit together as there were laws of segregation in the Southern States of America which had been made because there was so much fear and hatred between the black and white communities.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Martin was determined to do something about the situation and to arm himself for the task ahead, he worked hard at school and university. When he left university, he could have earned a lot of money in a successful career in the Northern States, where things were different, but he knew that most black people had little to hope for in the South.

Realising the power that speech can have, he developed this talent, deciding to become a minister like his father. Influenced by the great Indian freedom fighter, Gandhi, and his 'passive resistance' policy, Martin considered non-violent protest as the best way to help.

In 1954, he began his rousing speeches as the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the South. He told people not to use buses that made black people sit in a separate part from white people and he got support from people all over the U.S.A. But he also received many threatening letters. His house was bombed, for which no one was arrested, and then he himself was arrested. When he was released, he toured the country making speeches. By now he was internationally famous and at last the bus laws were changed, but this was followed by bombings of black churches.

He continued to demand equal voting, housing and education rights until eventually changes in the law were made. In 1958 the Rev. King was arrested leading a big march and beaten up. Later he was stabbed and seriously wounded in New York. He then travelled to India, Gandhi's homeland, gaining fresh inspiration to continue the fight of peaceful protest at home, this time for equal rights in restaurants and cafes. He was arrested and given four months hard labour (for an earlier driving offence) and sent to a prison where his life was in great danger from people there who hated him. It was only with the help of President Kennedy that he was finally freed.

In August 1963 a quarter of a million people marched on Washington, the capital, calling for civil rights for black Americans. The Rev. King said, *"I have a dream that my four little children will one day be judged, not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today."*

At the end of 1964 the Rev. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway. Returning, a hero, he continued the struggle and in 1968 declared, *"I've seen the promised land"*. For many years he had known he could be murdered at any time if he continued protesting for black equality. Within a day of uttering those prophetic words he was dead, at the age of 39, but his dream moved on.

He had improved the quality of life for many people and like Gandhi, had shown the power of peaceful protest, an important part of the peace movement today.

#### QUESTIONS:

- 1 What did you already know about Martin Luther King and what do you know now?
- 2 Martin Luther King has become most famous with these words: "I have a dream ." Can you say what his dream was about?
- 3 What did you feel when you heard this story?
- 4 What sort of opposition did Martin Luther King encounter?
- 5 Mention what some people did to him.
- 6 Martin Luther King considered non-violent protest as the best way to help to improve the conditions and laws. What changes did it bring about?
- 7 What is the power of peaceful protest?
- 8 Does the story remind you of anything in your own life?
- 9 What does this story mean to you?

#### GROUP ACTIVITY

Give each child a copy of the picture of Planet Earth on the next page. Discuss with the children the values related to non-violence or non-violation. (see the picture on page 27 and the list on page 29 of the introduction)

Ask the children to say which values we need to practise in order to make the world a good place to live in and which values will keep our planet Earth safe too. Then colour the picture.

#### Extension exercise/Links to Other Subjects:

*History link:* Children can research the life of Martin Luther King using a variety of sources. The children can also look into other similar situations of oppression throughout time e.g. Apartheid, Communism, etc.

*Media Studies link:* Through research children can discover how different media presented the Apartheid problem in South Africa.

*Poster work:* Invite the children to design a poster celebrating the work of Martin Luther King and other freedom fighters.

*Literacy link:*

'Our Deepest Fear' (poem read out by Mandela during his freedom speech) 'Animal Farm' by George Orwell.

**Link :** 'Our World, Our Rights' by Amnesty International UK ISBN No. 187 332 8168  
*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Summary of Articles) page 163.*