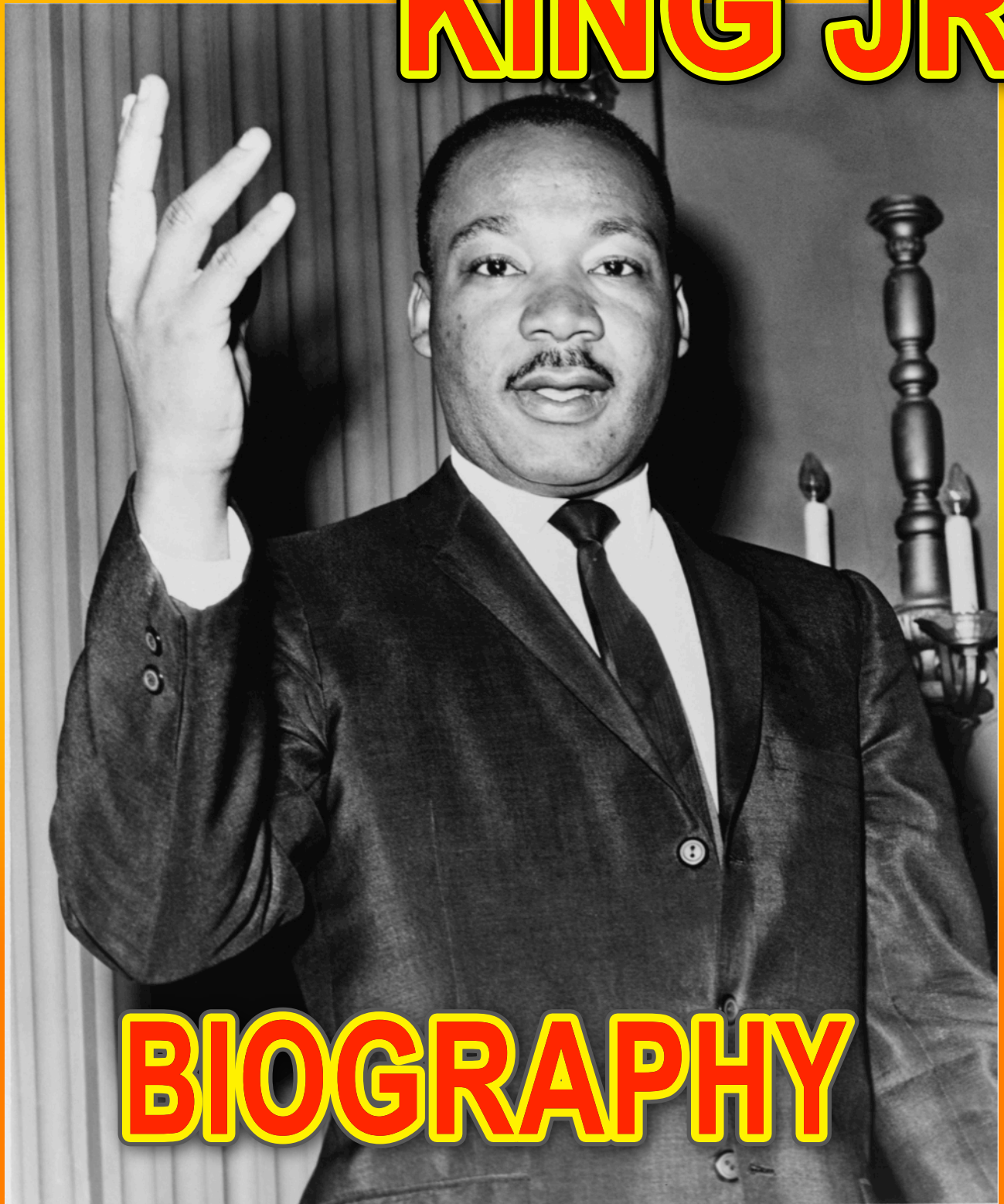


# MARTIN LUTHER KING JR



## BIOGRAPHY

# MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, to a religious family. King was a good student at school and college, but he was at first unsure about what to do afterwards. However, he later decided to start a religious career, like his father.

While at Morehouse College, King became increasingly spiritual, and he was influenced by the college president, who promoted racial equality. While he was still studying, King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

It was in Montgomery in 1955 that Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to white people on a bus, and she was arrested and fined. This sparked action from civil rights leaders in the area, including Martin Luther King. He gave a speech encouraging a boycott of buses in Alabama as a protest against segregation along racial lines.

For over a year, black people did not use bus services, and this act of protest angered some people. Even King's house came under attack. But the boycott led to Montgomery changing the law so that segregation on public transport in the city was no longer compulsory.

After this, King and other civil rights and church leaders got together to push for wider protests against racial prejudice. King was inspired by figures such as Mahatma Gandhi to use non-violent methods to drive social change.

As King became more and more widely known, he and others took part in more and more peaceful protests. During this time, King was arrested, and even put in jail at one point.

In 1963, a demonstration took place in Birmingham, Alabama, which King had organized. Huge crowds turned up, with people even bringing along their children. The police expected trouble and dispersed the crowds with water and dogs, which led some people to accuse King of putting children's lives at risk. However, King stuck by his principles of non-violent protest.

King's most memorable speech came at the March on Washington, which took place on August 28, 1963. A crowd of more than 200,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial and heard King's "I have a dream" speech arguing for equality and an end to racial prejudice.

The speech moved the audience and captured the public imagination, and people all over the country called for a change in the law. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, and King received the Nobel Peace Prize. It was now against the law to discriminate against people on racial grounds in public places.

Throughout the 1960s, more marches for civil rights took place, but some of them turned violent. In 1965, the Selma to Montgomery march ended in clashes with the police and the event became known as 'Bloody Sunday'. But King continued to encourage peaceful demonstrations, although his methods were unpopular with some civil rights activists, who wanted bolder, more direct action.

In 1968, King was planning a march on Washington. But first he was in Memphis, Tennessee, where a major strike was taking place. It was here that on April 4, King was shot as he stood on a hotel balcony. The assassination led to protests and riots in hundreds of cities all over the United States. Martin Luther King Jr. himself is remembered as a visionary leader in the civil rights movement in America.

# Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'promoted'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'promoted' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'promoted'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'promoted'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'promoted' means.

# Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: sparked	prompted

# Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

In 1963, King gave his 'I have a dream' speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

King was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee.

After success with the bus boycott, King organized more peaceful protests.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Georgia to a religious family.

King started the Montgomery bus boycott after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to white people.

Some later protests turned violent, but King tried to remain peaceful.

But some civil rights leaders criticized King for not taking strong enough action.



# Get to the facts

1 Where did King become a pastor?

2 Who refused to give up her seat on a bus?

3 Where did King give his 'I have a dream' speech?

4 Which award did King receive in 1964?

5 What happened on April 4, 1968?

# Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

## Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Today was Martin Luther King Jr. Day. At school, we celebrated by... (now complete the story)

**Below is a plain text version for printing:**



## **Understanding words:**

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Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – sparked                      Synonym – prompted

## **Sequencing:**

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