

KING IN THE WILDERNESS RESEARCH PROJECT AND LESSON PLAN

PRE-LESSON RESEARCH PROJECT

MLK'S EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS

GOAL Students will research and study Martin Luther King Jr.'s achievements before 1965.

TIME REQUIRED 45 to 60 minutes plus presentation time

INSTRUCTIONS

- Engage students to recall what they already know about Martin Luther King Jr. and his achievements. Write their ideas on the board, and use this list to spark discussion:
 - ▶ Montgomery bus boycotts
 - ▶ Southern Christian Leadership Conference
 - ▶ Nonviolent resistance to social change
 - ▶ Birmingham campaign to end discrimination
 - ▶ March on Washington
 - ▶ "I Have a Dream" speech
 - ▶ Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - ▶ Nobel Prize for Peace, 1964
 - ▶ Selma-to-Montgomery march
- Have students work in small groups to research one of the above topics and present it to the class. Each presentation should:
 - ▶ Provide a summary of the topic (who, what, when, where, why, and how).
 - ▶ Describe the impact of Dr. King's involvement with the event/topic.
 - ▶ Explain its importance to the larger civil rights movement.

LESSON

MLK'S LATER YEARS

GOAL Students will understand the pressures and new struggles Dr. King and the civil rights movement encountered after 1965.

TIME REQUIRED 45 to 60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED Film segments of *King in the Wilderness*; student activity sheet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Distribute the activity sheet and have students view the film segments. Explain that the three sections of the sheet—"Racism in the North," "Black Power Movement/Vietnam War," and "Poverty/Inner-City Riots"—cover new challenges faced by Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement in the later months of Dr. King's life.



Dr. King with Stokely Carmichael in *King in the Wilderness*.

- After students watch the segments, have them go over the discussion questions in small groups. As students discuss, write the following prompts on the board:
 - ▶ Present evidence that evaluates Dr. King's decision to expand his civil rights mission to issues of poverty, police brutality, and the Vietnam War.
 - ▶ Explore the differences between the nonviolent philosophy of Dr. King and Stokely Carmichael's Black Power movement. Are these philosophies relevant in the fight for equality today?
 - ▶ How is Dr. King's message relevant today? Identify areas where you believe his work is still needed and explain why.
- After the group discussions, have students choose one of the above prompts to respond to. You may choose to use these prompts as a written or verbal assessment. For a written assessment, have students write persuasive essays of an appropriate length and structure for their grade level. For a verbal assessment, separate students into groups by topic. Have students prepare notes to hold a panel discussion. Instruct them to make a minimum of three arguments during the panel discussion. If someone on the panel mentions a point they intended to make, they will need to use their notes to differentiate their statement from the other student's arguments.

TIMELINE FINAL PROJECT (OPTIONAL)

Have students prepare an annotated timeline of Dr. King's career, starting with his early achievements in civil rights up through events in the last years of his life. Students can annotate their timeline events with historical context as well as the impact on the civil rights movement.

STANDARDS

CCSS ELA—HISTORY / SOCIAL STUDIES: RH.6-8.1; RH.6-8.2; RH.9-10.1; RH.9-10.2; RH.9-10.3; RH.11-12.1; RH.11-12.2; RH.11-12.6. Get the full list of standards [here](#).

KING IN THE WILDERNESS STUDENT ACTIVITY

DIRECTIONS View the clips below from the film *King in the Wilderness*, which depicts new challenges in the later years of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. After viewing the segments, use the Discuss questions to hold small group conversations.

RACISM IN THE NORTH

15:39–23:53 Dr. King travels to Chicago to challenge new issues facing civil rights.

30:32–42:24 Dr. King proposes open housing reforms and targets real estate offices.

DISCUSS

What were the reasons Dr. King went to Chicago in 1966?

What responses did he receive from blacks and whites? How was he able to get the city of Chicago to reconsider its housing policies? Do you feel this was a good solution? Why or why not?

Dr. King and President Lyndon B. Johnson



BLACK POWER MOVEMENT / VIETNAM WAR

25:53–30:30 The Black Power movement led by Stokely Carmichael challenges Dr. King for leadership in the civil rights movement.

51:00–59:18 Pressure mounts for Dr. King to oppose the Vietnam War, although he fears such action would alienate President Lyndon B. Johnson.

59:18–1:07:50 Dr. King's wife, Coretta Scott King, becomes involved in the antiwar movement. Dr. King finally speaks out against the war.

DISCUSS

Compare and contrast Dr. King's nonviolent philosophy with the Black Power movement. Discuss the moral dilemma Dr. King faced in deciding whether to speak out against the Vietnam War. What would be gained and lost? Why do you think he decided to speak out against the war?



Dr. King with Stokely Carmichael in *King in the Wilderness*.

POVERTY / INNER-CITY RIOTS

1:07:50–1:13:34 Inner-city riots rage across the country. Dr. King calls for a March on Washington to refocus Congress's attention from the Vietnam War to the War on Poverty.

1:22:26–1:27:36 Memphis sanitation workers go on strike for better wages and working conditions. Dr. King pushes his staff to get involved.

1:29:00–1:31:34 Dr. King returns to Memphis determined to make a difference. He makes the last speech of his life.

DISCUSS

What were the goals of Dr. King in organizing the march to Washington? How was the situation in Memphis an example of problems across the country? Why do you think it was so difficult to convince the country to shift funding from the war in Vietnam to fight poverty? How are these issues relevant today?



Dr. King speaking at an anti-Vietnam War rally