

Martin Luther King

A

Martin Luther King was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He was the son of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. and Alberta Williams King. He had an older sister, Willie Christine King, and a younger brother Alfred Daniel Williams King. Growing up in Atlanta, King attended Booker T. Washington High School. He skipped ninth and twelfth grade, and entered Morehouse College at age fifteen without formally graduating from high school. From the time that Martin was born, he knew that black people and white people had different rights in certain parts of America. If a black family wanted to eat at a restaurant, they had to sit in a separate section of the restaurant. They had to sit at the back of the cinema, and even use separate toilets. Worse, and perhaps even more humiliating still, in many southern states, if a black man was on a bus and all the seats were taken, he would have to endure the indignity of relinquishing his own seat to a white man. King could never understand the terrible injustice of this.

In 1948, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology. Later, King began doctoral studies in systematic theology at Boston University and received his Doctor of Philosophy on June 5, 1955. King married Coretta Scott, on June 18, 1953 and they had four children.

B

Returning to the South to become pastor of a Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, King first achieved national renown when he helped mobilise the black boycott of the Montgomery bus system in 1955. This was organised after Rosa Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man – in the segregated south, black people could only sit at the back of the bus. The 382-day boycott led the bus company to change its regulations, and the Supreme Court declared such segregation unconstitutional.

C

In 1957 King was active in the organisation of the Southern Leadership Christian Conference (SCLC), formed to co-ordinate protests against discrimination. He advocated non-violent direct action based on the methods of Gandhi, who led protests against British rule in India culminating in India's independence in 1947. In 1963, King led mass protests against discriminatory practices in Birmingham, Alabama, where the white population were violently resisting desegregation. The city was dubbed 'Bombingham' as attacks against civil rights protesters increased, and King was arrested and jailed for his part in the protests.

D

After his release, King participated in the enormous civil rights march, in Washington, in August 1963, and delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech, predicting a day when the promise of freedom and equality for all would become a reality in America. In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1965, he led a campaign to register blacks to vote. The same year the US Congress passed the Voting Rights Act outlawing the discriminatory practices that had barred blacks from voting in the south.

E

As the civil rights movement became increasingly radicalised, King found that his message of peaceful protest was not shared by many in the younger generation. King began to protest against the Vietnam War and poverty levels in the US. On March 29, 1968, King went to Memphis, Tennessee, in support of the black sanitary public works employees who had been on strike since March 12 for higher wages and better treatment. In one incident, black street repairmen had received pay for two hours when they were sent home because of bad weather, but white employees had been paid for the full day. King could not bear to stand by and let such patent acts of racism go unnoticed. He moved to unite his people, and all the peoples of America on the receiving end of discriminatory practices, to protest for their rights, peacefully but steadfastly.

F

On his trip to Memphis, King was booked into room 306 at the Lorraine Motel, owned by Walter Bailey. King was shot at 6:01 p.m. April 4, 1968 while he was standing on the motel's second-floor balcony. King was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital, where doctors opened his chest and performed manual heart massage. He was pronounced dead at 7:05 p.m. King's autopsy revealed that although he was only 39 years old, he had the heart of a 60-year-old man.

Questions 1-5

Choose the correct letter A, B, C or D.

1. From a young age Martin Luther King

- A wanted to protest for the rights of black people.
- B could not understand why black people were treated differently.
- C was not allowed to go to the cinema or to restaurants.
- D was aware that black people were being humiliated in many northern states.

2. What initially made Martin Luther King famous?

- A the black boycott of the Montgomery bus system
- B becoming a pastor at a Baptist Church
- C when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus
- D when he persuaded Rosa Parks not to give up her bus seat to a white man

3. What influenced Martin Luther King regarding non-violence?

- A India's independence in 1947
- B Christianity
- C the Southern Leadership Christian Conference
- D the methods of Gandhi

4. What did Martin Luther King fight for in 1965?

- A the right of black people to vote
- B the actions of the US Congress
- C the right to win the Nobel Peace Prize
- D the right of black people to travel abroad

5. How did Martin Luther King feel about the civil rights movement?

- A It was helping the war in Vietnam.
- B It brought the younger generation together.
- C It had been exploited by politicians who wanted to get more votes.
- D The protesters sometimes behaved too violently.

Questions 6-8

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage? In spaces 6-8 below, write

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| TRUE | <i>if the statements agrees with the information</i> |
| FALSE | <i>if the statements contradicts the information</i> |
| NOT GIVEN | <i>if there is no information on this</i> |

6..... The black boycott of the Montgomery bus system was a success.

7..... In 1963 the white people in Alabama wanted desegregation.

8..... Martin Luther King achieved a lot in his protest against the Vietnam War.