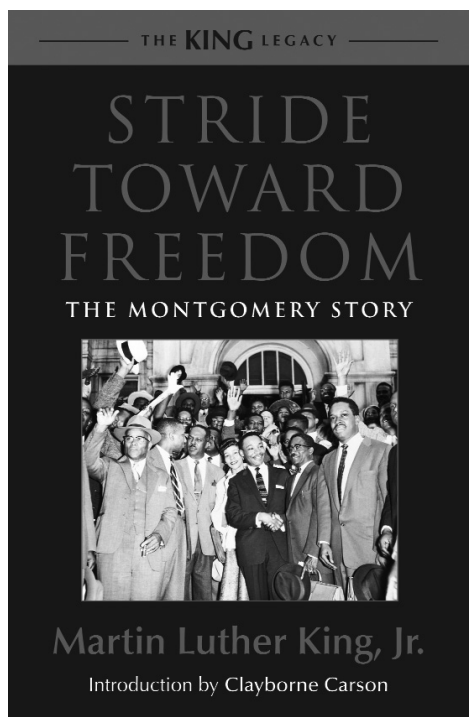


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TEACHERS' GUIDE



STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM

The Montgomery Story

by Martin Luther King, Jr.
Guide written by Kimberly N. Parker

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A NOTE TO TEACHERS

Martin Luther King, Jr., has assumed a well-deserved place in our understanding of racial equality and justice. For younger generations, however, the danger exists that they “know” Dr. King as a person who championed a cause a “long time ago” and fail to connect King’s efforts to modern struggles. In thinking of King as a hero, too, the potential also exists to see him as someone without uncertainty, without fear, without the characteristics that define all of us at moments throughout our lives. For these reasons, *Stride Toward Freedom* is an important text to help students understand the Montgomery bus boycott, as well as to help students understand the personal struggles King endured. In this moving, personal account, King reveals his doubt, his anger at those he was attempting to organize, and his lasting, sometimes unexplainable love for his enemies as he united a movement in which over 90 percent of the black citizens of Montgomery participated. *Stride Toward Freedom* is the back story to King the hero, and a story students must know to help them realize what it means to be courageous in the face of danger, to favor love over hatred, and to choose justice when others around you are clamoring otherwise.

Stride Toward Freedom is useful for all curriculum units, discussions, and investigations that grapple with the issues of justice and injustice, and this text encourages students to think deeply about what it means to pursue nonviolence in words and in action. Though written in the 1950s, *Stride Toward Freedom* is relevant for today’s students as they find their way and seek to add their own voices to the world. *Stride Toward Freedom* provides a compelling rationale for helping students think through how to effect substantive change.

Notes

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Stride Toward Freedom is appropriate for grades 9–12, and for the English and History classrooms. This guide is divided into four parts: pre-reading activities; summaries of the chapter and teaching suggestions; post-reading activities; and resources. Pre-reading activities are intended to build students' prior knowledge and provide points of entry before reading the text. Summaries and teaching suggestions include what happens in the chapter as well as various activities that teachers can use to engage students in critical thinking about the chapter. Post-reading activities are designed to help students synthesize their reading and make connections to other aspects of their learning. Finally, resources are included for extended study about the text. Teachers can break up the reading based on their allocated time periods. The chapters can be broken up to be adapted to classroom instructional time.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. **Predictions:** Accumulate ten to twelve images from the Montgomery bus boycott. (For images, teachers can draw from the text or visit the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, <http://bit.ly/9k64ze>). In pairs, students will look at the images and predict connections between the images and the text.
2. **Writing Prompt:** Ask students to write what they know about Martin Luther King, Jr. Teachers can ask additional questions: How did they learn about King? Do they think he is still important today? Allow students to share their responses in small groups and/or whole-class discussions.
3. **Analysis:** Teachers will give students a copy of a freedom song (see Bernice Johnson Reagon's reflection about freedom songs on the PBS Web site for Eyes on the Prize, <http://to.pbs.org/96B3TD>) and ask them to analyze the song for meaning. Additional questions teachers might ask: Why would a group of people sing this song? If you were singing this song, how would it make you feel, particularly if you were singing it with a group of your friends? Would it make you feel brave? Afraid? Teachers might also choose to play the song for students to accompany their reading of the song.
4. **Setting the Scene:** Teachers will play audio of the NPR story, "50th Anniversary of Montgomery Bus Boycott" (<http://n.pr/dzNwyq>). The transcript is also available for printing. Teachers will ask students to either discuss or write their reactions to the story and discuss their responses. ment on the buses, why do you think blacks decided to act?
5. **Concept Map Activity:** In groups of four, students discuss the relationships among these words: justice, nonviolence, boycott, racism, segregation, freedom, and resistance. What connections do these words have with one another? Students will create a visual to show how these words interact.

LANGUAGE

The text contains words that teachers might use to assist students in their vocabulary development. A list of words, including page numbers, is included in the appendix of this guide (see pp. 16–17). Some ways teachers might incorporate these vocabulary words include:

1. Selecting words and grouping in "families" encourage students to learn the words on a continuum. Teachers are encouraged to help students understand the meaning and relationship of the words in connection with each other.
2. Decide which words are crucial for students' understanding of the text and pre-teach those words.
3. Relate the new words to ones students might already know. Teachers might press students to explain the connection between the words.
4. Teachers might want students to learn what the word means as well as what it does not mean.
5. Teachers might also encourage students to actively use the words they are learning (i.e., in writing assignments, during discussions) to increase their comfort and familiarity with the words.

- Teachers might encourage students to use a vocabulary journal for the new words they learn. Potential journal entries could include word, part of speech, usage, synonyms, antonyms, or sentences. Teachers should encourage students to draw on their vocabulary journal regularly.

SUMMARIES AND TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Ongoing Activities

Throughout the reading of the text, it is important to help students keep track of the names and locations mentioned throughout the text. The following activities can be used to help students deepen their understanding as they read.

- Timeline:** Instruct students to keep a timeline of events as they read. Teachers might wish to provide students with a graphic organizer that allows them to keep track of times and dates, or else students can be instructed to keep track independently. The teacher might also want to create a bulletin board where students can add event notices, pictures, newspaper clippings, etc., that help them make connections between the text and the present.
- History/Story Maps:** Teachers may advise students to keep history maps as they read to improve their understanding of events. These maps ask students to identify key historical events, what caused the event, the important people involved, and how the event was resolved.
- Problem-Solution Charts:** King discusses several problems leading up to the Montgomery bus boycott, as well as problems that linger after the boycott. Teachers may assign students to create a chart (two-column notes) where they list the problems on one side and solutions on the other side of the chart to provide students with a visual representation of consequences, causes, and solutions.
- Summarizing:** Teachers might encourage frequent comprehension checks for students as they read the text. Some summarizing strategies include think-write-pair-shares; quick writing; and turning passages from the text into summaries that are concise and accurate.
- Double Entry Journals:** Students use a notebook to record textual impressions of what they read. Using two columns, the student records a quotation in the left-hand column and responds to the quotation in the right-hand column.
- Document Analysis:** Students can be taught to critically evaluate the images included in the text. The National Archives has several different handouts for teachers to help students with the analysis (<http://bit.ly/9G1mD>).

INTRODUCTION (pp. IX–XXVII)

Summary: Clayborne Carson, founder of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, introduces the text. Carson states that *Stride Toward Freedom* is “an essential starting point for anyone interested in understand[ing] the sources of his leadership” (p. xiv). Carson’s introduction helps to frame the historical context of the Montgomery bus boycott and offers a critique of King’s work. The introduction would be a worthwhile starting point with students, because teachers can begin with the people and places listed to build students’ background knowledge before they begin reading, as well as help them to read criticism.

Discussion Questions

- How does Carson set up two personas for Martin Luther King, Jr. (i.e., who is the person that King wanted people to know, and who is the King that Carson knew)? Why would two different personas be necessary?
- Carson talks about omissions King made in writing about the bus boycott, particularly of women. Why do you think King would have downplayed the importance of women to his efforts?

Notes**Critical-Thinking Activities**

1. Research Clayborne Carson. What was his connection to King? Why is he appropriate to write the introduction?
2. Create a glossary of acronyms and add to it throughout your reading.
3. Read the award-winning young adult biography, *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice* by Phillip Hoose. Write a critical analysis of the text.
4. Carson discusses several “notable silences” that King makes in not mentioning certain people connected to the boycott. Choose one of the following people for further research and present your new knowledge in the form of a blog post or podcast that notes their historical importance: Virginia Durr, Clifford Durr, or Bayard Rustin.

PREFACE (pp. XXIX–XXXII)

Summary: King frames the Montgomery Bus Boycott as the act of a group of determined people rather than the work of him alone. He thanks those who helped his efforts.

Discussion Questions

1. Who does King credit as being responsible for the bus boycott?
2. Why does King insist he was not the only one responsible for the boycott? Do you think the distinction makes him more or less of a leader?

CHAPTER I: RETURN TO THE SOUTH (pp. 1–10)

Summary: In January of 1954, King was in the process of finishing his PhD and looking for a job. He was offered a position as preacher of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Although he accepted the offer, it was not an easy decision for King, who recounted his experiences with racism and segregation in the South, and how those experiences influenced his decision to return.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was King anxious about becoming the preacher at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church?
2. Think about the pros and cons King weighed in deciding to accept the offer from the Dexter Avenue church. In your opinion, what were some of the most compelling reasons for accepting the offer? For turning them down?
3. King’s father rejected a white police officer’s attempt to demean him. King regarded this as an example of all black parents having to explain segregation to their children. Discuss the impact on King after seeing his father confront racism.
4. Ultimately, why does King decide to return to the South?
5. If you were faced with a similar dilemma, what would you have done? What reasons would have compelled you to make your choice?
6. By his own admission, it was not an easy decision for King to accept the position at Dexter Avenue. What does his hesitancy reveal about his character? Is his hesitancy surprising?
7. King and his wife, Coretta, had been married for less than a year when he became the preacher at the Dexter Avenue church. Consider how his concern for her affected his decision making.

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. Compare Montgomery, Alabama, in 1954 to the city today. Visit Web sites that chronicled the time period (see the resources section) for information. Then, using either a Venn diagram or two-column notes, present the similarities and differences. Finally, create a travel brochure and a corresponding explanation and analysis of your findings.
2. Journal entry: Write a journal entry as either King or Coretta on the evening of preparing to move to Montgomery. What emotions do you feel? What worries you? What do you think about the future?
3. Letter of advice: Who would King have solicited advice from concerning his career decision? Write a letter that asks for advice, being sure to draw on King's own concerns mentioned in the chapter.
4. Begin to create a timeline of events. Initial events should include King's first visit to Montgomery. Update this timeline as you read.

CHAPTER II: MONTGOMERY BEFORE THE PROTEST (pp. 11–29)

Summary: King begins an active life as the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. As he becomes more involved, he realizes the effects of segregation on all aspects of Montgomery life, including housing patterns, employment, and voting rights.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did King doubt church members would welcome his proposed changes?
2. King juggled multiple responsibilities, among them running the church and completing his PhD. Explain how he allocated his time to complete his tasks.
3. King became involved in community life in Montgomery. In what ways did this “hands-on” approach help him to become familiar with Montgomery? Were there any negative outcomes to this approach?
4. King noted a prominent difference in income between blacks and whites in Montgomery. How did a gap in income hinder a family's quality of life?
5. Segregation was a way of life in Montgomery, and King describes the differences in treatment of blacks and whites. Evaluate the motives for segregation.
6. How would you have handled living beside black or white neighbors but being unable to speak to them because of segregation, which was the case for Montgomery communities?
7. In what ways were blacks prevented from voting?
8. Consider the ways King galvanized his church around issues of importance to its members. Compare how King expanded involvement from committee organizing to community organizing.
9. Why was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) so important? Contrast the NAACP to the Alabama Council on Human Relations.
10. King had numerous responsibilities as the Dexter Avenue pastor. What conclusions can you draw about how he regarded his role, particularly regarding his community involvement?
11. What is factionalism? King describes different groups and organizations in Montgomery that represented competing interests. How would you have gone about uniting these groups? How did King unite them?
12. King criticizes the educated and uneducated blacks in Montgomery for their lack of participation. To what did King attribute their apathy? Does he agree with their reasons for a lack of participation?

Notes

13. What is social responsibility? For what were preachers and community leaders socially responsible? What are the social responsibilities of your generation?
14. Who were the “foes of injustice”? Why did King have hope in them?
15. King said, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice” (p. 27). Do you agree or disagree? What evidence can you use to make your claim? Debate your answers in small groups.
16. Note the tension leading up to the bus boycott. Name the different instances of mistreatment of blacks.
17. The first talk of a boycott came after Claudette Colvin was arrested. After all the previous mistreatment on the buses, why do you think blacks decided to act?
18. What is King’s outlook at the end of this chapter? What evidence can you find to support your opinion?

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. Chart King’s activities for one week as outlined in this chapter. Create a key that corresponds to time, places, and activities. What patterns do you notice? What other reactions do you have?
2. Research the current wealth gap between blacks and whites in the United States. Write a letter to the editor that summarizes the wealth gap and offers suggestions for closing the gap. Reference the article about the current black-white racial gap report from the Institute on Social Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University (<http://iasp.brandeis.edu/whatsnew/index.html>).
3. Make a graphic that represents the resources within the black community and how each resource benefited the membership (i.e., professional organizations).
4. Produce a “You Are There” segment that would accurately inform a younger audience about life in Montgomery as described by King.
5. Research and recreate the trial of Jeremiah Reeves.

CHAPTER III: THE DECISIVE ARREST (pp. 30–40)

Summary: Rosa Parks refuses to move to the black section of a bus, triggering the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The black community of Montgomery is galvanized to begin demanding integration and the boycott is planned. King remains doubtful about the success of the action, however.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you recall about Rosa Parks? Compare/contrast what you remember to the account of her on page 30. What is different and similar between the two accounts?
2. King asserted that Rosa Parks and others were compelled by the “zeitgeist—the spirit of the time” to demand an end to segregation on the buses. What changes does the zeitgeist of your time demand?
3. King had to publicly declare that the NAACP did not ask Rosa Parks to remain in her seat. What is the reason King gives for Parks’s actions? What is he implying about racism, justice, and the human spirit?
4. On page 31, King describes Rosa Parks. Note the use of figurative language: what image is evoked through his description of Rosa Parks as a person?
5. How does the fact that Rosa Parks was not planted and, instead, acted on her own volition affect your opinion of her?

- Members of the Women's Political Council were the first to know about Rosa Parks's arrest, even before King did. What can you infer about the importance of these women, and others like them, to the efforts of the boycott?
- Recall what King noted about factionalism in an earlier chapter. What was the significance of the unanimous decision to boycott the buses?
- Do you think the black public would have been incensed if the people arrested had been men?
- The boycott occurred long before cell phones and the Internet. How did word spread? Who spread the news? Why were these forms of communication effective?
- What is the distinction between King's boycott and the actions of the white Citizens' Council? Why did King need to make the differences between the two groups explicit?
- How did King move from considering the actions of his followers as a boycott to non-cooperation? Analyze why such a change was necessary, noting the philosophical importance of the decision.
- Do you think King should doubt the success of the boycott? Should he have hoped for more than 60 percent cooperation?

Critical-Thinking Activities

- Contrast Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin. In your opinion, who would have been the "ideal" face of the boycott? Debate your positions, being sure to draw on historical documents and primary sources where appropriate.
- On a timeline, plot the course of events following Rosa Parks's arrest; include estimates of time and the key people involved.
- It is the night before the boycott. Write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the following: white female homeowner who employed a black domestic worker, black taxi driver, white bus driver, black female domestic worker, black male and female college students from Alabama State University
- Socratic Seminar: What is morality? In small groups, students will construct working definitions of the term. Then, in a Socratic Seminar, they will consider King's rationale. What is the role of morality in King's argument? Do they agree or disagree?

CHAPTER IV: THE DAY OF DAYS, DECEMBER 5 (pp. 41–55)

Summary: The bus boycott begins on December 5, 1955. King and Coretta watch from their house and note the empty buses. Rosa Parks is convicted for disobeying the segregation ordinance as, throughout the day, black workers walk to and from work. In a single day, King and his advisors organize systems of support and formally name the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). King worries about being able to inspire his followers to continue the boycott but receives Divine Inspiration.

Discussion Questions

- Describe the people who participated in the bus boycott.
- During the first full day of the boycott, what were King and his advisors doing? What were some of their challenges during this time and how did they overcome them?
- As King prepared to address the boycott participants, he stated he was "almost overcome, obsessed by a feeling of inadequacy" and was in a "state of anxiety" (p. 48). What does this admission tell us about the magnitude of the speech? What does it tell us about his position at this point in the movement?
- Why would King focus on balancing anger with love? Why not choose one over the other?

Notes

5. In his speech, King encourages “persuasion, not coercion” (p. 51). How does each one of these ideas affect action? Which one is, ultimately, more successful in effecting political and social change?
6. The points of the resolution are on page 52. Evaluate each part of the resolution. In your opinion, which part would have been easiest and most difficult to accomplish? For what reasons?
7. Agree/disagree: King stated, “The Montgomery story would have taken place if the leaders of the protest had never been born” (p. 54).
8. Would the integration efforts have been successful if they had been spontaneous rather than slowly developing and well planned? Is there a place for spontaneity in social justice actions and movements?
9. On what grounds does King appeal to those who are religious and non-religious? How does he persuade readers to fight for integration?

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. Conduct research about Aristotle’s appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos). Then, consider which of these rhetorical elements appear in King’s speech to the community on the day of the boycott. Evaluate their effectiveness. Then, rewrite parts of his speech to change the appeal. How does changing the appeal influence the meaning of the text?
2. Have students listen to the speech King gave at the first MIA meeting (available on *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*). In what ways does hearing the speech help understand the emotion, the atmosphere, and the importance of the speech to the participants?
3. Rewrite the interaction between King and Coretta as they watched the empty buses roll by on the first day of the boycott. Write this interaction as a play and perform.
4. Write and perform a radio broadcast/video log describing the action from Main Street on the first day of the boycott.
5. Make a graphic depiction of the activities that happened on December 5.
6. Conduct research on “freedom songs.” What was their importance? Why was singing freedom songs such an important part of the movement? Present your findings and include songs that were sung.

CHAPTER V: THE MOVEMENT GATHERS MOMENTUM (pp. 56–76)

Summary: King galvanizes community leaders to continue the boycott. While he mobilized a diverse group of people to help him, local leaders attempted to stop the protest. As a result, local African Americans coordinated an intricate system of carpooling that allowed them to continue boycotting the buses. King also expresses the relationship between the MIA’s actions and the importance of Gandhi and nonviolence.

Discussion Questions

1. How did King mobilize committees? What purpose did each committee serve? Which committees were formed first? What does that order suggest about the issues King perceived as important to continuing the boycott efforts?
2. How did King balance committee members to lessen personality conflicts? What were the assets of each member of the strategy committee?
3. Consider the first board meeting. Were any women present at the meeting? Were any women appointed? Who was represented and who was not?

4. King did not limit his committee to Black members. Discuss the importance of having a diverse membership.
5. How did King mobilize Black taxi drivers for the car pool? How many different people were involved, and what was each groups'/person's role?
6. In what ways did local authorities attempt to end the boycott, and how did the MIA respond?
7. Walking became a central aspect of the boycott. What did walking symbolize for the participants?
8. Discuss the various forms of alternative transportation people used to avoid riding the bus.
9. What evidence was there that this was an integrated movement? How were Whites involved?
10. What effect did the letters of support have on the boycott participants?
11. What was the irony of the letters on King (p. 68)? Analyze King's frustration and what it revealed about him as a leader. Do you find his frustration surprising?
12. Why was it so important to have a permanent office for the MIA? Why did King regard "getting the movement going" as unfinished until the office was established?
13. What is the relationship between nonviolent resistance and love? For King, was one possible without the other?
14. What was the purpose of the regular mass meetings?
15. In your opinion, was the MIA more effective because it involved people from different social classes?
16. What were the intentional actions aimed at making sure everyone maintained a nonviolent stance? To what extent were these actions effective?
17. Examine the negative responses to nonviolence. Why did some members say it was difficult to be nonviolent? How would you have responded to their resistance?

Critical Thinking Activities

1. Write a journal entry about what is taking place three days into the boycott. Select from any of the following roles and be sure to think about, and exemplify, how that particular person might have responded/acted/felt. Be sure you write using your five senses: What do you see? Hear? Smell? Etc. Roles: A White Citizens Council member, a White bus driver, a Black domestic worker, a Black teacher who is a car pool driver, a White housewife.
2. Think about Jo Ann Robinson, described on page 64. Create a presentation about her, using a program such as PowerPoint, Glogster, or one of your choice.
3. Draw a diagram that depicts that multiple aspects of the car pool. Be sure to include the different people involved, their roles, and the number of people involved in each role.
4. Create one of the postcards of support King and the MIA might have received.
5. Produce a "You Are There" segment from one of the mass meetings.

CHAPTER VI: PILGRIMAGE TO NONVIOLENCE (pp. 77–95)

Summary: King reveals the philosophical sources that helped shape his stand on nonviolence. He details how his views were shaped and were changed through critically examining various philosophers. He makes the strong distinction between pacifism and nonviolence as well as the importance to Gandhi on his beliefs. This chapter also contains several pages of images that can be used to aid students in their media-literacy development.

Notes

Discussion Questions

1. What is the relationship between racial injustice and economic injustice? In what ways are they “inseparable twins”?
2. From where did King draw his philosophy? How did his philosophical views grow and change, and what were some of the catalysts for those changes?
3. Why is it important to understand King’s philosophical influences?
4. What can we learn about King as an intellectual when thinking about his process of critiquing philosophers, rejecting others, and synthesizing their ideas to create his own philosophy? What can we learn from considering this philosophical journey as an “intellectual odyssey to nonviolence” (p. 85)?
5. Why was Gandhi such a powerful influence on King?
6. King contends that true transformation is possible through love rather than through evil. However, people have been killed as victims of nonviolent resistance. Is transformation worth the risk?
7. For what reasons does King write about love, the different kinds, and its importance?
8. King argues that nonviolence and love are neither neutral nor passive. Does such a stance seem contradictory and/or unachievable? For King, why was this stance necessary?
9. Think about King’s description of agape love. In what ways does he appeal to different audiences (i.e., what in his description appeals to whites, blacks, men, women, Christians, non-Christians, etc.)?

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. Review the elements of nonviolence on pages 90–95. Select one of the six facts about nonviolence. Define the fact, then create a scenario of your fact in action in a modern context.
2. Select one of the many philosophers King mentions in this chapter. Conduct further research and present your findings in a report, a Power Point presentation, or other visual. Then, summarize the philosopher’s influences on King, as well as King’s critique of that philosopher. Finish your project with an analysis of whether you agree or disagree with King’s assessment of the philosopher, being sure to cite evidence for your argument.

CHAPTER VII: METHODS OF THE OPPOSITION (pp. 96–121)

Summary: Tension grows as the boycott continues. After meetings with city officials and the head of the bus company, the MIA is offered an unacceptable settlement offer. After the MIA rejects that offer, whites attempt to divide the membership, and King’s courage is again tested. However, he perseveres.

Discussion Questions

1. After the meeting with the mayor, King reflects, “I had believed that the privileged would give up their privileges upon request” (p. 101). He continues his thought with a reflection on what he learned about segregation and about resistance. Examine the lesson King learned and how he learned it. Why was his understanding of this lesson valuable for his future efforts to end racial inequality?
2. Why is Totten accompanied by blacks unknown to King?
3. How did people use religion as a justification for their action?
4. Consider the meeting among King, Parker, Frazier, and others (pp. 105–107). What strategies does each man incorporate to argue his point? Who is most persuasive?
5. Do you think the settlement offers were acceptable? Was King being too demanding?

6. Should Totten have been more persistent, given that he owned integrated buses in other cities? Why wasn't he more persistent?
7. Why would the Montgomery white Citizens' Council want to depict King as the reason there was no compromise?
8. King felt guilty after he reacted in anger (p. 110). How did he work through his guilt for being angry?
9. What distinguished the Men of Montgomery from other white community groups?
10. What happens on page 122 might be considered as one of King's potential breaking points. What caused him to reach that point? How does he get through it? What does he learn?
11. How did Coretta help King maintain his vision?
12. How quickly did the MIA stop the false information from the newspaper? In what ways was the leadership able to communicate with members?
13. Think about the different moments in this chapter that threatened to stop King and the movement. Which moment was most pivotal? What does one learn about his character and about his leadership from these instances?

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Rewrite the meeting between King, Mayor Gayle, and commissioners Sellers and Parks as a one-act play or a screenplay. Perform your play or read your screenplay for your peers.
2. Compose a journal entry or write an interior monologue that Dr. Parker might have written after hanging up the phone with King.
3. Compare the MIA's ability to communicate with its membership at an important moment. If you had to circulate an important message to a large group of people, what methods of communication would you use? Justify your decisions.

CHAPTER VIII: THE VIOLENCE OF DESPERATE MEN (pp. 122–142)

Summary: King and his family are harassed, culminating in the bombing of his house. He draws on his faith in God for courage to continue leading the boycott. Faced with the decision to retaliate, King sets an example by giving away his gun, further strengthening his nonviolent stance. He also averts a riot by reminding his followers to be peaceful, even in the face of hatred and violence. Mass arrests followed after the bombings, and King was jailed, where he observed unequal conditions among inmates. After the arraignments from the mass arrests, King and others were joyful because they were united and were free from fear, what King called a “new Negro.”

Discussion Questions

1. Reread on page 123 King's address at the mass meeting when he tells the group that if he is killed not to retaliate in violence but to continue protesting. How would you have responded if you were at that meeting and heard him say that?
2. Discuss the attempts to threaten King. Why did it take him some time before he took the threats seriously?
3. Have you ever felt a task was insurmountable? Consider how, on page 125, King responded to a task he thought was initially insurmountable. How did you respond when you thought your task was insurmountable? What did you learn about yourself?
4. Explain how King's faith in God helps him draw strength to face attacks against him, of which the bombing of his house is one.

Notes

5. Would you have wanted to retaliate if you were the victim of a house bombing? What parts of King's words on page 128 were the most reassuring to help continue nonviolent resistance?
6. Speculate about the power of nonviolent resistance and King's leadership to prevent a race riot after King's house was bombed.
7. What is empathy? How does King use empathy to understand the commissioner? Why is it important to be empathetic in difficult situations?
8. For what reason did King and Coretta get rid of their gun? What did they do, consequently, to maintain their safety?
9. What were the various sources of support that helped King? What did each person/group provide to him?
10. What toll did maintaining a nonviolent stand take on others?
11. King draws on his "moral courage" to return to Montgomery, despite his father's request otherwise. What is moral courage? How does it push King to a "point of no return"?
12. Think about King's arrest. Why was there a "holiday atmosphere" in the jail? Why were people happy to be arrested?
13. While at the jail, describe the conditions that King observed.

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. On page 126, King describes driving to his house and taking in the scene of his house bombing. Draw this scene as he described it, including as many relevant details as possible.
2. Role-play the courtroom trial of King and others on pages 138–140. Then, critically interrogate the underlying reasons they were found guilty of violating the anti-boycott law.
3. King describes the "old Negro" and the "new Negro." What are the characteristics of both? Summarize the differences between the two, drawing on evidence from the text.

CHAPTER IX: DESEGREGATION AT LAST (pp. 143–172)

Summary: The U.S. Federal Court finds Alabama's bus segregation laws unconstitutional. One of the MIA leaders dissents and threatens to disband the organization, but King fixes it. Montgomery city officials continue to delay integration, issuing a car pool insurance challenge that is halted only when the official integration order is received in Montgomery. The MIA organizes a systematic plan for bus integration, which corresponds with another rise in violence.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the court decision that ended bus segregation in Alabama (p. 145).
2. Why was Fields unhappy with the MIA? How did King handle Fields and the dissension he caused? How did he keep the black community united?
3. Despite the federal desegregation decision, what did Montgomery officials do that continued to cause difficulty for black residents? What does their response suggest about the speed in which federal decisions are enacted on local levels?
4. On page 153, King states, "Tuesday, November 13, 1956, will always remain an important and ironic date in the history of the Montgomery bus protest." What is the irony of which he speaks?
5. Reread the specific suggestions the MIA provided its members about integration (p. 158). Which suggestions would be the most difficult to follow, in your view?
6. Describe the responses of the white citizens of Montgomery to the desegregation order.

7. Once bus integration began, what happened? Were you surprised by any parts of the integration?
8. What was the significance of church bombings? What does targeting churches suggest about the role of the church in the community and in the boycott movement?
9. Why did maintaining a nonviolent stance become even more important after bus integration began?
10. Make connections among the relationships of poor whites, violence, and the Ku Klux Klan.

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Develop a way to illustrate the relationship between the federal, state, and local courts as related to passing the integration decision. Indicate the roles of each and how each court exercised its role.
2. Research segregation laws (some examples of Jim Crow laws are available here: <http://bit.ly/dlvoZ2>) and evaluate how the laws maintained segregation.
3. Write a journal entry upon hearing King announce the legal decision that officially declared segregation illegal. What were your emotions at hearing King announce this? What would that mean for your life?
4. Conduct an analysis of rhetorical speech elements in King's address to the meeting at St. John A.M.E. (pp. 160–162). Which lines were most effective, and for what reasons?
5. Create a map of church bombings. Though it occurred years after the bus boycott, the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in 1963 was significant in that four young black girls were killed. More information about that particular bombing can be found here: <http://bit.ly/cezq1X>. What did these bombings have in common?
6. Watch the documentary *Four Little Girls* and write a review of the movie for a magazine such as *Teaching Tolerance* that argues for the inclusion of the movie in history classes that study the civil rights movement.

CHAPTER X: MONTGOMERY TODAY (pp. 173–181)

Summary: King reflects on Montgomery following integration of the buses. He notes that while blacks are permitted to ride the buses, integration has not reached other parts of Montgomery, particularly within schools. King cites school integration and securing voting rights as the next struggles for blacks.

Discussion Questions

1. What changes happened in Montgomery after the boycott?
2. Did the quality of life improve for blacks, according to King?
3. What legislative challenges remained?
4. While he admits there are still challenges remaining in the battle for integration, what is King most proud of accomplishing?
5. How did Montgomery officials keep the federal court at bay (i.e., what did it mean that they did not want any of their integration offenses to be tried as a “test case”)?

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. Compare the current quality of life for black residents of Montgomery to those described by King. What differences and similarities do you find? What reasons can you provide for why the quality of life has changed/has not changed?
2. King blames newspapers and politicians for slowing down integration efforts. Conduct a critical analysis of newspapers that had a readership that was mostly black and newspapers that had readerships that were mostly white. What elements of segregation and integration do you find? Do you agree with King's assessment?

Notes

CHAPTER XI: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? (pp. 182–221)

Summary: In the concluding chapter, King turns to the larger struggle for racial inequality. Because blacks gained victory in the Montgomery desegregation efforts, King contends that desire for equality will lead to change in education. He also notes that the United States garnered worldwide attention for failing to correct its race-based problems. He concludes by reminding everyone they have a role to play in continuing the nonviolent movement for racial equality.

Discussion Questions

1. King says that America has a “second-class citizenship” (p. 191). Has black America achieved first-class citizenship? What other groups currently struggle for first-class citizenship?
2. What “citizens” do the citizens’ councils represent? Why would a person choose to join one of these councils?
3. What is King’s critique of churches and “other forces of justice” about school desegregation (p. 189)? Evaluate his tone. Why is he using this tone? What does he want readers to understand?
4. King appeals to white Southerners to join integration efforts. What strategies and arguments does he use to persuade them (p. 196)? Why are white Southerners important to future actions?
5. What do the recommendations that King demonstrate about the power of the church?
6. Who are the different groups and individuals that King charges with responsibility for racial equality? How does he challenge those groups specifically?

Critical-Thinking Activities

1. Reflect on the phrase “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (p. 193). What examples from the Montgomery bus boycott can you draw from in your reflection? What other evidence from the book can you use to support your reflection?
2. In the years since King wrote this text, how has life changed for blacks and whites in America, particularly around issues of education? Are schools now equal? What response would you give to King in this chapter? Write a letter to him that explains, as you see them, the present condition of race relations, of education, and of nonviolence.

Culminating Essay Topics

1. King says he was just a vessel, and that if anything should happen to him, people should continue fighting for justice. Since his death, has the fight continued? Who has led the efforts? How have the efforts changed? What is the current state of attempts to effect justice?
2. How might aspects of this movement have been affected by technology?
3. In what ways is *Stride Toward Freedom* an account of conquering fear and of the necessity of moral courage to do the unthinkable? What meaningful connections can you make between the text and your own life?
4. Compare the rhetorical elements evident in King’s addresses to his congregation to speeches given by President Barack Obama. What similarities do you observe? What do these similarities indicate? In what ways are these two speakers effective and ineffective?
5. Do you have to be college-educated to make a difference? Who were the different groups of people that supported the MIA? What was each group’s contribution? How would the movement have been different if some/all of these groups were not involved?
6. What problems could be addressed by nonviolent action? Select one issue and propose how nonviolent action could be used to solve it. Be sure to incorporate technology and other modes of communication you use frequently, as well as a rationale for how and why you would use each aspect of

nonviolent resistance. In addition, propose an appropriate audience to present your proposal to. If possible, work with your teacher and peers to present your proposal to that audience for feedback and to demonstrate what you've learned.

RESOURCES

Print

- Freedman, R. 2008. *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. Holiday House.
- Hoose, Philip. 2009. *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Miller, Connie. 2007. *Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Graphic History Series)*. Capstone.
- Moore, Charles. 2007. *Powerful Days: The Civil Rights Photography of Charles Moore*. University of Alabama.
- Williams, Donnie, and Wayne Greenhaw. 2005. *The Thunder of Angels: The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the People Who Broke the Back of Jim Crow*. Lawrence Hill Books.

Web

- Civil Rights Digital Library contains digital video archives and a virtual library, including political cartoons: <http://crdl.usg.edu/>.
- Citizen King Web site by PBS details King's life after Montgomery. The site includes an interactive map of civil rights hotspots, as well as more information on his philosophical influences: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/mlk/index.html>.
- Encyclopedia of Alabama has useful information about Montgomery, integration, and people involved, as well as ample pictures: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Home.jsp>.
- King Institute: Montgomery Bus Boycott encyclopedia entry contains numerous links and information to related information about King and nonviolence; created and maintained by Claybourne Carson: <http://bit.ly/9k64ze>.
- Montgomery Bus Boycott: The Story of Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement includes newspaper front pages and timelines: http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/newsfronts_01.htm.
- *Teaching Tolerance* has an array of teacher resources and teaching ideas appropriate for continuing to integrate principles of nonviolence and social justice into curriculum: <http://www.tolerance.org>.

APPENDIX: VOCABULARY

Abetted (37)	Augmented (64)	Denounced (116)	Abject (82)
Abhor (7)	Averred (105)	Deprecation (80)	Abrogate (192)
Abhorring (77)	Avowedly (79)	Desolate (162)	Abstain (35)
Abject (82)	Barbarous (77)	Despondent (101)	Academic (49)
Abrogate (192)	Belligerent (180)	Discretionary (16)	Adhere (117)
Abstain (35)	Blasphemy (122)	Dispelled (1)	Admonitions (75)
Academic (49)	Blight (5)	Dispelled (49)	Alacrity (17)
Adhere (117)	Boisterous (219)	Dissension (76)	Alighted (164)
Admonitions (75)	Brethren (212)	Dissuaded (100)	Alleviate (56)
Alacrity (17)	Cajoled (142)	Diversions (1)	Apathy (29)
Alighted (164)	Capitulating (217)	Dormant (42)	Ardor (59)
Alleviate (56)	Cessation (205)	Duress (18)	Assiduously (36)
Apathy (29)	Concomitant (165)	Edicts (48)	Atrocity (28)
Ardor (59)	Condoned (7)	Efficacious (68)	Augmented (64)
Assiduously (36)	Conventional (42)	Abhor (7)	Averred (105)
Atrocity (28)	Dearth (14)	Abhorring (77)	Avowedly (79)

Notes

Barbarous (77)	Evanescent (148)	Lurked (59)	Reprimand (29)
Belligerent (180)	Evocative (105)	Malady (25)	Reprisal (38)
Blasphemy (122)	Formidable (16)	Malefactors (199)	Reprisal (9)
Blight (5)	Fortitude (113)	Menial (197)	Repudiate (210)
Boisterous (219)	Fortitude (46)	Meticulously (118)	Repugnant (107)
Brethren (212)	Glib (209)	Misnomer (39)	Retrogression (190)
Cajoled (142)	Grapple (76)	Mitigating (201)	Robust (5)
Capitulating (217)	Heresy (80)	Modicum (70)	Rostrum (49)
Cessation (205)	Hovered (4)	Monotony (1)	Rouse (166)
Concomitant (165)	Imbued (48)	Moribund (79)	Schism (203)
Condone (7)	Immutable (79)	Nonplused (155)	Semblance (119)
Conventional (42)	Impasse (182)	Oligarchy (199)	Shrouded (51)
Dearth (14)	Impeccable (31)	Ordinance (43)	Splendor (1)
Denounced (116)	Impel (213)	Pernicious (82)	Stalemate (109)
Deprecation (80)	Impervious (214)	Piety (83)	Stanch (111)
Desolate (162)	Implicit (37)	Plied (60)	Stave (114)
Despondent (101)	Indefatigable (59)	Posited (82)	Sublime (89)
Discretionary (16)	Inescapable (48)	Potent (71)	Superfluous (82)
Dispelled (1)	Inestimable (57)	Prescience (43)	Surmounting (16)
Dispelled (49)	Inestimable (65)	Prescribed (107)	Synthesis (83)
Dissension (76)	Ingenuity (60)	Promulgated (144)	Tacitly (60)
Dissuaded (100)	Inimitable (1)	Purporting (37)	Tempestuous (58)
Diversions (1)	Inseparable (5)	Quagmire (196)	Tenacity (21)
Dormant (42)	Interminable (41)	Quiescent (42)	Tenet (11)
Duress (18)	Intransigent (100)	Quintessence (105)	Trepidation (12)
Edicts (48)	Intrinsic (85)	Radiant (31)	Turbulent (4)
Efficacious (68)	Irreconcilable (48)	Recalcitrance (111)	Unperturbed (134)
Efficiency (59)	Irreconcilable (81)	Receptive (4)	Vehemently (109)
Eloquence (108)	Jubilant (42)	Rectify (96)	Veneer (11)
Emulation (190)	Languid (59)	Redress (144)	Veracity (116)
Enamored (85)	Languished (119)	Refute (87)	Virulent (169)
Enjoined (151)	Lathis (214)	Regalia (166)	Vituperative (28)
Epoch (67)	Lavish (206)	Relegate (80)	Zeal (108)
Ethos (199)	Lexicon (81)	Religiosity (11)	Zeitgeist (31)

ABOUT DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968), Nobel Peace Prize laureate and an architect of the nonviolent civil rights movement, was among the twentieth century's most influential figures. An eloquent advocate of nonviolence, Dr. King is the author of several books. In addition to receiving degrees from Morehouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary, and Boston University, he was awarded more than two hundred honorary degrees by colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. One of the greatest orators in U.S. history, his speeches, sermons, and writings are inspirational and timeless. Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Kimberly N. Parker teaches English at Newton North High School in Newton, Massachusetts. She is completing her PhD in curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois-Champaign Urbana, and has expertise in the area of literacy and African American young men. Ms. Parker has taught in urban public schools in Boston and has published articles and given professional development about the literacy practices of young people of color.

