

## Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Using the News

The following activities correlate to the Florida Standards for grades four through 12.

**Social Studies:** SS.4.A.1.1; SS.4.A.1.2; SS.4.C.2.2; SS.4.C.2.3; SS.5.C.2.4; SS.5.C.2.5; SS.7.C.2.11; SS.7.C.2.13; SS.7.C.2.14; SS.8.A.1.1; SS.8.A.1.2; SS.8.A.1.3; SS.8.A.1.4; SS.8.A.1.5; SS.8.A.1.6; SS.8.A.1.7; SS.8.FL.1.2; SS.8.FL.1.3; SS.8.FL.1.4; SS.8.FL.1.5; SS.8.FL.1.6; SS.912.A.1.2; SS.912.A.1.5; SS.912.A.1.6; SS.912.A.1.7; SS.912.A.7.6; SS.912.C.2.2; SS.912.C.2.3; SS.912.C.2.4; SS.912.C.2.5; SS.912.C.2.8; SS.912.H.1.6; SS.912.S.1.4 **Language Arts:** LAFS.412.RI.1.1; LAFS.412.RI.1.2; LAFS.412.RI.1.3; LAFS.412.RI.2.4; LAFS.412.RI.2.5; LAFS.412.RI.2.6; LAFS.412.RI.3.7; LAFS.412.SL.1.1; LAFS.412.SL.1.2; LAFS.412.SL.1.3; LAFS.412.SL.2.4; LAFS.412.SL.2.5; LAFS.412.SL.2.6; LAFS.412.W.1.1; LAFS.412.W.1.2; LAFS.412.W.1.3; LAFS.412.W.2.4; LAFS.412.W.2.5; LAFS.412.W.2.6; LAFS.412.W.3.7; LAFS.412.W.3.8



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” It is this quote that inspired former President Bill Clinton and Congress to designate the King federal holiday as an official day of service. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, “The MLK Day of Service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, creates solutions to social problems, and moves us closer to Dr. King’s vision of a ‘Beloved Community’.”

What does it mean to serve others? How do we determine if there is a need in our community to serve others? Where do we look? How do we learn about our community? Write down your ideas. Then, discuss your ideas with your classmates. Next, look in your newspaper for information about your community. Where do you see opportunities to serve others? Write down the information you read and share your thoughts with your classmates.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spent a good part of his life trying to make a positive difference in the world. He devoted his life to service. Do you know a person who has devoted his or her life to service? Service can take many forms? Brainstorm with your class about what the word “service” means. Write down the definitions. Go to the Corporation for National and Community’s website, [www.nationalservice.gov/mlkday](http://www.nationalservice.gov/mlkday), to see the focus areas and learn more about Dr. King. Using the newspaper articles in your newspaper as models, write a newspaper article about the MLK Day of Service and what volunteer opportunities may be available in your community.



Dr. King's actions during his life were guided by a powerful vision of a caring and supportive world that he called a "Beloved Community." As printed on the King Center website,

Dr. King's Beloved Community "is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict."

Read more about King's philosophy on the King Center website at [www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy#sub4](http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy#sub4). Discuss King's philosophy with your class. Do you think his concept of a Beloved Community is a possibility? Do you think there are people in the world today who are currently striving for the same goals as Dr. King? Look for examples in your newspaper that show King's concept of a Beloved Community is possible or impossible. Using the examples you find in the *Times*, write a well-developed argument essay supporting your points.



During the last year of his life, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized the Poor People's Campaign, a movement to end poverty and promote economic justice for all Americans regardless of race, ethnicity or gender. In 1968, they drafted a statement given to members of the U.S. government and publicly demanded an economic and social bill of rights to help citizens obtain jobs, income, education and housing, among other items.

How might a lack of education contribute to poverty? How might increased education lead to economic success not only for individuals, but also for an entire community? Did you know that according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers with more education have lower unemployment rates and higher incomes than workers with less education? Some studies suggest that people with higher levels of education are also healthier. Other studies suggest that higher education rates correlate to lower crime. Discuss these ideas with your class. In what ways do you think increased education might economically benefit a community?

Dr. King championed education, but he also stressed action. In 1947, he wrote an essay titled "The Purpose of Education." In this essay, he wrote: "Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate." What does Dr. King mean? To what worthy objectives might he refer? What is the power of your education? How might you be able to use it to help others?

Use your newspaper, the Internet and the school media center to research economic and education statistics for your state and community. Possible topics include median household income, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates and literacy rates. In addition to the newspaper, some other sources could

include the State of Florida website, the Florida Department of Education website, the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics, the Department of Education and the National Education Association. How does our state compare to others? Create a graphic organizer to show what you have learned. Share your results with your classmates.



Dr. King said, “In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies ... but the silence of our friends.” Free write in your journal what these quote means to you. Discuss your thoughts with your class. After your discussion, research the terms “bystanders” and “upstanders.” Share the definitions with your class. What is the difference between a bystander and an upstander? Community Awareness Author Cynthia Ozick writes, “Indifference is not so much a gesture of looking away – of choosing to be passive – as it is an active disinclination to feel.” What does this quote have in common with King’s words?

Look in your newspaper for articles of crimes in different areas of the state and world. You can check the police logs in the *Times*’ regional sections as well as the national sections of the newspaper. On a piece of paper, list the name of the incident and place in which the incident occurred. Update this list daily for two weeks. Then review the information with your class. Were there bystanders to these events? What would you have done if you had witnessed these actions? Could something have been done to stop or prevent these crimes or incidents from happening?



According to Dictionary.com, a columnist is a writer or editor who reports or comments upon a particular field of interest. For this exercise you are going to be a columnist focusing on your person experience as an upstander or bystander. Using the columnists in your newspaper as models for your writing, write about the following situations:

- Identify a time when you went out of your way to help somebody else — a friend, a family member, a neighbor or a stranger. What were the consequences of your actions for you and for others?
- Identify a situation in which you knew something was wrong or unfair, but you did not intervene to improve the situation. What were the consequences of your actions for you and for others?
- Compare these two situations. What led you to act in one situation but not to intervene in the other?



Throughout the year, there are many memorial holidays, but as the Library of Congress notes, special days aren't the only way communities celebrate their heroes. Throughout your community, there are statues, parks and works of art created to honor those who have made a difference. Think about it! Have buildings in your town been named or renamed for important people in history? Do you know of streets named for notable people? With your classmates, make a list of all the places you can think of that have been named or renamed for important people in history. What can a memorial – a place, a building, a work of art – tell us about the individual, the community, and the memorial's creators?

In many cities in the United States, you will find a street named for Martin Luther King, Jr. Many places have schools or other buildings named for Dr. King. Florida is no exception. The nation's capital, Washington, D.C., is home to the national King Memorial, and the District of Columbia central library building also bears his name. Walk inside and you can see a unique tribute to the civil rights leader. Noted artist Don Miller created a mural documenting King's life. You can see a photo of the mural on the Library of Congress website:

<https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2013/01/honoring-our-history-through-artwork-martin-luther-king-jr-in-library-of-congress-primary-sources>.

Analyze this mural. Why do you think this image was made? Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What people and objects are shown? Can you identify the other people in mural? Why do they think the artist used these images? What specific theme or story is presented by the mural? What images would you want to add or take away and why? What emotions does the mural evoke?

Often people create murals to represent a time period or a specific moment in time. A mural also can represent a community or specific event. Using your newspaper, the Internet and your individual experiences as your sources, create a mural to represent an event or a specific time that has importance to you. Write a fully-developed paragraph about the mural. Share the mural with your class.

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