

Martin's Big Words



Literature Guides

AUTHOR:

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ILLUSTRATOR:

Brian Collier

Awards

Coretta Scott King Book Award, Illustrator Honor, 2002
Orbis Pictus Award, Honor, 2002
Randolph Caldecott Medal, Honor, 2002
Jane Addams Children's Book Award, Winner, 2002
ALSC Notable Children's Books, Commended, 2002
New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books, Selection, 2001

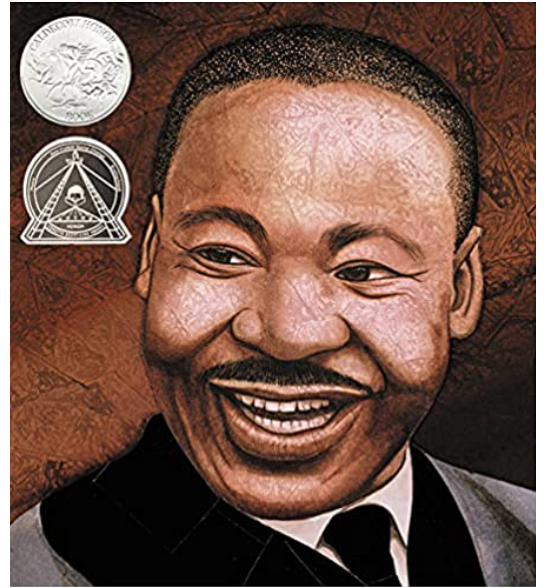
Vocabulary

admired, courage, segregation

Reviews

[Kirkus Reviews](#)

[Publishers Weekly](#)



Summary

This picture book biography provides a moving introduction to the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. His words are woven throughout both illustrations and text.

FAIR Standard

HM.K-2.4 I can discuss how Martin Luther King, Jr. spent his life spreading a message of love and humanity.

Discussion

1. What does Martin mean by "big words"? Look closely at the last page. Can you find some of Martin's words? Why are they "big"?
2. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Love is the key to the problems of the world." What do you think he meant by this?
3. Martin went wherever people needed help. He walked with them and talked with them and sang with them and prayed with them. How did that help them?
4. The book says: "For 381 days they walked to work and school and church. They walked in rain and cold and blistering heat." Imagine walking to school or anywhere else every day for more than a year. What do you think it must have been like for the people of Montgomery? What would you have done if you were there? What made them want to keep walking?
5. How did Martin Luther King spread a message of love during his life? How are his words "alive for us today"? Which of Martin Luther King's words do you feel are most important? Why?

Activities

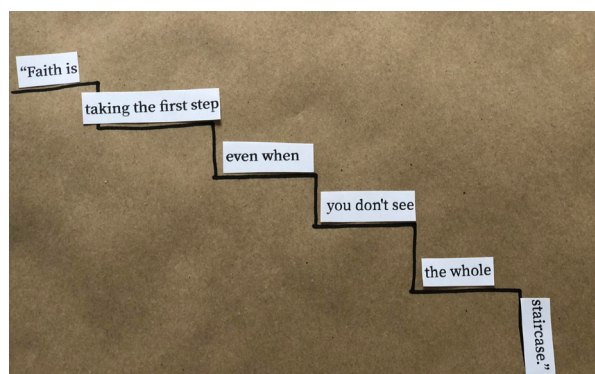
1. The illustrator of the book, Brian Collier, makes pictures using collage, or cut-up pieces of different kinds of paper. In the illustrator's note, he writes:

When I close my eyes and think about Dr. King's life, the main image that comes to me over and over again is that of stained-glass windows in a church. For me, the windows are metaphors in a lot of ways. In the dark, they blaze out at you like beams of light. The multi colors symbolize multi races. Stained-glass windows are also a vehicle to tell the story of Jesus. And, whether you're on the inside or the outside, windows allow you to look past where you are. I use metaphors throughout my work. The four candles in the last picture, for example, represent the four girls who were killed in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Their light shines on.



Make a collage of a stained-glass window that represents Martin Luther King's life.

2. Martin's big words helped and inspired people. Some might say they were like a bridge that connected people. Others might say they were like a house, bringing people together under one roof. How else would you describe Martin's words? Read more of Martin's words (see handout) and cut out the quotes you like best. Paste them on paper to make a bridge between people, a house that brings people together, or any other symbol to illustrate what Martin's words do.



3. Finish this poem by thinking of some words that would fit in the blanks. If you're working in a team, try a choral reading activity. You can assign different lines to different people, use loud or soft voices to highlight certain words, or clap or stomp or make gestures. You can do anything that brings the poem alive!

Martin said love when others said hate.

He said together when others said separate.

He said peace when others said war.

He said ____ when others said _____.

He said ____ when others said _____.

He said ____ when others said _____.

He said ____ when others said _____.

Additional Resources

Wittenstein, Barry. *A Place to Land: Martin Luther King and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. New York: Neal Porter Books, 2019.

Martin's Big Words Handout

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

"I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits."

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."

"The time is always right to do what is right."

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

"We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."

"We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies."



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