



Injustice and Inequality

Learning Targets/Objectives:

- Reflect on how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. experienced injustice at an early age.
- Analyze how the church helped Dr. King cope with the inequalities and injustices.

Success Criteria:

- Students should be able to identify a current/present-day injustice or inequality.

Lesson Content Overview:

Dr. King was exposed to the brutal nature of racism at age six when one of his white playmates was forbidden to play with him. The boy was the son of white owners of a grocery store located near the King home on Auburn Road in Atlanta. The boys were best friends until 1935 when segregation forced them to enter different schools. The painful experience directly impacted his attitudes and perceptions of white people. King said, reflecting on his childhood experience, “I will never forget what a shock this was to me.” Although he initially wanted to “hate every white person,” his parents, Martin Luther Sr. and Alberta King, reminded him of his “Christian duty to love.”

King thrived in school. He skipped two grades and competed on the public speaking team. He heeded his parents' guidance for all his time in Atlanta schools but was tested once more at fourteen years old. After winning an oratory contest in Dublin, Georgia, where his speech was about “The Negro and the Constitution,” King, his teacher Mrs. Bradley, and other Black students returning on a bus to Atlanta reluctantly gave up their seats and stood so white patrons could have a place to sit upon the insistence of the white driver. “I intended to stay right in that seat,” King writes in his memoir. At the insistence of Mrs. Bradley, King and the other students eventually yielded. “It was the angriest I have ever been in my life,” King later recollected.¹ Below is the speech King delivered at the Dublin oratorical competition. He was 14 years old.

We cannot have an enlightened democracy with one great group living in ignorance. We cannot have a healthy nation with one-tenth of the people ill-nourished, sick, harboring germs of disease which recognize no color lines—obey no Jim Crow laws. We cannot have a nation orderly and sound with one group so ground down and thwarted that it is almost forced into unsocial attitudes and crime. We cannot be truly Christian people so long as we flout the central teachings of Jesus: brotherly love and the Golden Rule. We cannot come to full prosperity with one great group so ill-delayed that it cannot buy goods. So as we gird ourselves to defend democracy from foreign attack, let us see to it that increasingly at home we give fair play and free opportunity for all people.

Today thirteen million black sons and daughters of our forefathers continue the fight for the translation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments from writing on the printed page to an actuality. We believe with them that “if freedom is good for any it is good for all,” that we may conquer Southern armies by the sword, but it is another thing to conquer Southern hate, that if the franchise is

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. quoted in Clarence Clayborne (ed.) *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*



given to Negroes, they will be vigilant and defend, even with their arms, the ark of federal liberty from treason and destruction by her enemies.²

SEL Opener:

- 1) Provide each student/small group with the [Emoji Cards](#).
- 2) Read the following statements aloud:
 - *How do you feel when you play with your best friend?*
 - *How would you feel if your best friend told you that they cannot play with you anymore because of how you look?*
 - *How do you feel when you are in school?*
 - *How would you feel if your parents told you that you cannot go to this school anymore because of how you look?*
 - *How would you feel if we took a field trip to the zoo?*
 - *How would you feel if the bus driver told you that you have to stand and not sit because of how you look?*
- 3) Have the students decide how they feel by raising the associated Emoji Card.
 - **Discussion Questions:** *What does it mean to be fair? What does it mean to be equal?*

Instructional Activities:

- Activity 1: Read *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Doreen Rappaport
 - Discuss the characters, plot, feelings, vocabulary, summary, and themes.
- Activity 2: Listen to [Dr. King's Fun Town Speech Excerpt at Zion Hill](#) / [YouTube Audio](#)
 - Have the students look at the flashback images of [Fun Town Amusement Park](#).
 - **Discussion questions:**
 - *Which amusement park do you want to visit?*
 - *What if you were told you could not go to that park because of how you look?*
 - *How do you think Dr. King's daughter felt when she was told she could not go to Fun Town because of her skin color?*
 - *How does "fair" and "equal" relate to this?*
- Activity 3: Read and Discuss the [Young MLK Injustice and Inequity Facts \(K-2\)](#)
 - Use the [Emoji Cards](#) to react to the facts: *How do you think Martin felt?*
 - *Large Group Discussion: What would make it fair? What would make things better?*

² Ibid.



- Activity 4: Read and Discuss the [Young MLK Injustice and Inequity Facts \(3-5\)](#)
 - *Small Group/Individual Work:* Complete the [Reflection of Injustice and Inequality Worksheet](#)
 - *Large Group Discussion:* Review the vocabulary terms and student reflections.
 - **Discussion Questions:** *What would make it fair? What would make things better? Is it possible to live in a world where people are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content (quality) of their character (who they are as a person)?*
 - Acknowledge the themes among students' answers.

Assessments:

- **OPTION 1:** Complete the [Fair or Unfair Worksheet](#).
- **OPTION 2:** Complete the [Injustices and Inequalities of YOUR World Worksheet](#).

Adaptations for Student Needs

IEP

- Sizes of student groups range
- Students team up with a peer partner, while others would prefer to work individually.
- There is a variety of small-group work
- Chunking information
- Visual cues and wait time
- Visual supports (maps, images, PowerPoint slides, handouts)
- Assessments will be modified, and students given extra time

ELD/ELL/ESL

- Modified/simplified reading material
- Content-related lists/handouts of key terms
- Text is supported by visuals and connected to real-life experiences