



School Days

Learning Targets/Objectives:

- Recognize Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s educational history: Booker T. Washington High School, Morehouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary, and Boston University
- Analyze how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. viewed the purpose of education.

Success Criteria:

- Students should be able to identify Dr. King's educational path and his view on education.

Lesson Content Overview:

Dr. King never limited himself to his grades or what teachers and professors said about his academic performance. In many respects, King's life and legacy should inspire those who have not done their best in school to know that they are greater than their circumstances and that they too can achieve greatness. King cemented his academic foundation at Morehouse College, a historically Black, all-male institution in Atlanta. Morehouse exposed King to some of the greatest thinkers of his time, as well as the life and leadership of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, who became King's mentor. His leadership and view of the role of education continued to evolve while he was a student at Morehouse College. The following article, written by King, appeared in the January-February 1947 campus newspaper, *The Maroon Tiger*.

As I engage in the so-called 'bull sessions' around and about the school, I too often find that most college men have a misconception of the purpose of education. Most of the "brethren" think that education should equip them with the proper instruments of exploitation so that they can forever trample over the masses. Still others think that education should furnish them with noble ends rather than a means to an end. It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life.

Education must also train one for quick, resolute and effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for one's self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half-truths, prejudices, and propaganda. At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically.

Even the press, the classroom, the platform, and the pulpit in many instances do not give us objective and unbiased truths. To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.



The late Eugene Talmadge, in my opinion, possessed one of the better minds of Georgia, or even America. Moreover, he wore the Phi Beta Kappa key. By all measuring rods, Mr. Talmadge could think critically and intensively; yet he contends that I am an inferior being. Are those the types of men we call educated?

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. 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. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race but also the accumulated experience of social living.

If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, brethren!; Be careful, teachers!

After graduating from Morehouse College, King attended Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. He excelled so much at Crozer that upon graduating from the seminary, the Dean wrote that he was “undoubtedly one of the best men in our entire student body . . . [one of Crozer’s] most brilliant students.” On September 13, 1951, King entered Boston University’s School of Theology. He decided to attend Boston University on a desire to teach at a college or religious institution.

Overall, his desire to “eliminate social evil” through nonviolence was inspired by each level of his higher education experience. It was at Boston, however, where King chose the pulpit over the lectern. One of King’s professors, John Cartwright, who would later become the university’s Martin Luther King Jr. professor emeritus of social ethics, remembered that it was at Boston University where “[King] really embraced the teachings of Gandhi and the principles of nonviolence – an idea that was, at that time, unheard of as a formal ideological concept.” King first learned of Gandhi’s teachings years before when he attended a speech by Mordecai Johnson, the President of Howard University, and when King still attended Crozer. But it was really a mentor at Boston University that cemented King’s interest in Gandhi. That mentor was Howard Thurman, the Dean of Marsh Chapel and a friend of King’s parents, who mentored King.

It was also in Boston where King met his future wife, Coretta Scott, a student at the New England Conservatory of Music in the city. Cartwright claimed King would not have become the civil rights icon he’s remembered to be if he hadn’t met Coretta.

King later wrote: “I ended my formal training with divergent intellectual forces converging into a positive social philosophy. One of the main tenets of this philosophy was the conviction that nonviolent resistance was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their question for social justice.”

SEL Opener:

- **OPTION 1:** Host a [School Days by Chuck Berry](#) Dance Party
- **OPTION 2:** Play [School Days by Chuck Berry](#)
 - Students complete the [Favorite Part of School Worksheet](#)



Instructional Activities:

- Activity 1: Have the students put the [School Flashcards](#) in order.
 - Make connections to and discuss the schools and colleges in your town and/or nearby.
- Activity 2: Read *I Am Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Brad Meltzer
 - Discuss the characters, plot, feelings, vocabulary, summary, and themes.
- Activity 3: Watch and Discuss the themes from [The Education of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. video](#).
 - *How do you think the “fight” for educational justice still lives on today?*
 - *Do you see anything that seems “unfair” at school?*
 - *Do you see anything that seems “unfair” when you look at your school versus another?*
- Activity 4: Review and Discuss the [Schools Days of MLK Presentation](#)
 - *Individual Work:* [School Days Worksheet](#)
 - *Large Group Discussion:* Have each student present their School Days worksheets.
- Activity 5: Complete the [MLK Educational Quotes Worksheet](#).
 - **Discussion:** Review the educational quotes and student reflections.

Assessments:

- **OPTION 1:** Complete the [Educated Like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Worksheet](#).
- **OPTION 2:** Read the purpose highlighted section in Dr. King’s [The Purpose of Education](#).
 - Write a [letter](#) to your “20 years from now” self about how you plan to:
 - *Be serious about school.*
 - *Think deeply in school.*
 - *Think, reason, and understand.*
 - *Maintain your standards of behavior and beliefs.*

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