



THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CENTER
FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.

BELOVED COMMUNITY TEACH-IN

FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



2026 LESSON PLAN: 6-8



MLK Holiday Teach-In 2026

Grade Level: Grades 6-8

Lesson Title: Blueprints for a Nonviolent Nation

Theme: Mission Possible II: Uniting a Nation. Building a Future. The Nonviolent Way.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s *“What Is Your Life’s Blueprint?”* and connect it to themes of justice, peace, and identity.
- Create a personal and collective “Blueprint for a Better Nation” showing how the individual choice of nonviolent action contributes to building unity.
- Practice citing textual evidence on real-world youth-led movements for justice in both the past and present.

Success Criteria

Students will:

- Interpret King’s message about dignity and nonviolence in their own words.
- Identify one systemic or social issue they want to help change.
- Contribute to a shared class vision that promotes unity or justice in their school.
- Design a visual or written plan that reflects the values of peaceful change.

Curriculum Connections

- **ELA:** Citing textual evidence, personal narrative, argumentative writing
- **Social Studies/Civics:** Civil rights, civic engagement, leadership
- **Character-Based Learning:** Self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making



Primary Source Texts

1. Excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “What Is Your Life’s Blueprint?” (1967):

“Number one in your life’s blueprint should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your worth, and your own somebody-ness. Don’t allow anybody to make you feel that you are nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.”

2. Martin Luther King Jr.: “What is Your Life’s Blueprint,” (2:29), <https://youtu.be/Q9spMeeBPPY?si=PT27krOXGR-WI1j3>

Instructional Steps (50–55 minutes)

1. Activity 1 - Hook: Quick Write (5 minutes)

Prompt: *What do you think it means to “build a better nation”? What would you include in your plan?*
Invite a few volunteers to share.

Then introduce today’s focus: designing blueprints for peace, justice, and unity.

2. Activity 2 - Close Reading and Discussion (10–12 minutes)

- Read King’s quote aloud.
- Facilitate discussion with the following questions:
 - Why does Dr. King call it a *blueprint*?
 - What does ‘somebody-ness’ mean to you?
 - How does dignity connect to building a better nation?
- Chart student responses under *Self-Respect*, *Civic Action*, and *Nonviolence*.
 - Self-Respect: Believing in your worth
 - Civic Action: Using your voice to help others
 - Nonviolence: Creating change without hate
- Teachers may choose to show a video of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “What is Your Life’s Blueprint,” (2:29), <https://youtu.be/Q9spMeeBPPY?si=PT27krOXGR-WI1j3>



3. Activity 3 - Context Connection (5-7 minutes)

Briefly explain the following to students:

- King gave this speech to middle school students in 1967.
- He believed that young people are *builders of the future*.
- Tie this to peaceful movements today (e.g., community organizers, student-led change).

“Use this Teacher Script: “Dr. King gave this speech in 1967 to middle school students just like you. This was a time of great unrest — cities were on fire from racial injustice, young people were protesting the Vietnam War, and many feared the country was falling apart. But Dr. King didn’t give up. He spoke to students your age to say: You are the future builders of this nation. He believed change came not just from big dreams but careful planning. That’s why he called it a blueprint.

And still today, young people lead peaceful change:

- Students organizing an anti-bullying initiative
- Teens advocating for clean water or fair immigration policies
- Young voices testifying before city councils to end gun violence

You’re never too young to plan, speak out, and lead.”
(See the Appendix for a longer script)

4. Activity 4 - Create a “Blueprint for a Better Nation” (20-25 minutes)

Students draft and design a blueprint that includes:

- **My Strengths** (What I bring to the world)
- **My Values** (What I stand for)
- **My Nonviolent Actions** (What I will do to promote unity)
- **My Dream for the Future** (How I want the world to change)



Students may:

- Write it as a letter, draw it as a diagram, or build it as a collage
- Use a teacher-created handout for structure (optional)

5. Share and Reflect (5-7 minutes)

- Invite students to present or gallery walk.
- Post blueprints on a class “Unity Wall” or hallway display.
- Close with a unifying phrase (e.g., “We are the blueprint!”)

Reflection Questions

- Why does King say our life needs a “blueprint”?
- What does it mean to believe in your “somebody-ness”?
- What is one system or issue you want to improve with nonviolence?
- How can we work together to build a better nation?

Optional Extensions

- Read more from the full *Blueprint* speech and discuss it.
- Research examples of youth-led nonviolent movements.
- Write a speech or poem inspired by the blueprint theme.

Accommodations & Supports

Supports for IEP and 504 Plans

- Pre-read the quotes/reading in small groups prior to the lesson.
- Provide sentence starters and paragraph frames.
- Offer copies of the text with vocabulary glosses and simplified options.
- Allow extra processing time for reading and written tasks.
- Offer the option to draw or record their blueprint instead of writing it.



Supports for Reading Differences

- Read excerpts aloud and chunk into manageable sections.
- Offer text in audio format if needed.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary: dignity, blueprint, nonviolence, justice, purpose.
- Use graphic organizers to structure responses.

Supports for English Language Learners

- Highlight and define key terms in advance.
- Offer visual supports and translated keywords when possible.
- Allow collaborative work or partner discussions before individual tasks.
- Encourage drawing or labeling blueprints in any language.

Supports for Character-Based Learning Needs

- Provide clear expectations and time limits for sharing.
- Create space for quiet reflection or journaling.
- Encourage discussion of emotions connected to justice, exclusion, or hope.

Key Vocabulary

- **Blueprint** - a detailed plan for how to build something
- **Nonviolence** - a love-centered way of thinking, speaking, acting, and engaging that leads to personal, cultural and societal transformation
- **Justice** - fairness and equal treatment under the law
- **Dignity** - the belief that every person has value and deserves respect
- **Unity** - coming together for a common cause



FOR TEACHER USE

Possible Student Responses during “Activity 2 - Close Reading and Discussion”

Question 1: “Why does King call it a blueprint?”

Student Responses Might Include:

- “Because a blueprint is a plan for building something, and he wants us to build our lives the right way.”
- “It shows you need to think ahead and be intentional about your future.”
- “Just like buildings need a strong foundation, people need strong values.”
- “Without a blueprint, you might build something messy. Same with your life.”
- “He’s saying our choices matter when building a fair world.”

Charting:

- **Self-Respect:** “I need a strong foundation”; “My values guide me”
- **Civic Action:** “Helps build a better world”; “Blueprints affect others too”
- **Nonviolence:** “Planning peaceful change”; “You build better with care”

Question 2: “What does ‘somebody-ness’ mean to you?”

Student Responses Might Include:

- “It means believing that I matter.”
- “Everyone has value, no matter who they are.”
- “Even if others try to bring you down, you still know you’re important.”
- “It’s like confidence and pride in who you are.”
- “Knowing you can make a difference.”

Charting:

- **Self-Respect:** “I matter”; “I’m important even when others say I’m not”
- **Civic Action:** “I can make a difference”; “My voice counts”
- **Nonviolence:** “Respecting others’ worth too”; “Even people we disagree with have dignity”



Question 3: “How does dignity connect to building a better nation?”

Student Responses Might Include:

- “If people respect each other, they fight less.”
- “A better country treats everyone fairly.”
- “When people feel important, they help others more.”
- “Without dignity, people feel hopeless or angry.”
- “It helps us work together even if we’re different.”

Charting:

- **Self-Respect:** “Feeling proud of who you are”
- **Civic Action:** “Helping others”; “Fighting for fairness”
- **Nonviolence:** “Solving problems without hate”; “Respecting differences”

Teacher Script – Activity 3: Context Connection

“Before we move into creating our own blueprints, I want to give you a little context about this speech from Dr. King.”

“In 1967, Dr. King gave this speech to a group of middle school students at Barratt Junior High in Philadelphia. He wasn’t speaking to famous adults, politicians, or even high schoolers. He was talking directly to students your age.”

“He told them that even though they were young, they were already builders of the future. He believed that young people could lead change; not later, but *right now*.”

“Dr. King didn’t just believe in dreams. He believed in planning. That’s why he used the word “blueprint.” He wanted students to see their lives like something they were building with care, intention, and purpose.”

“And this connects to what we see today. Young people are still stepping up to lead peaceful change:

- Students have hosted anti-bullying initiatives.
- Teens have started community gardens and anti-violence clubs.
- Some even helped pass laws by testifying in front of city councils.

“So when you think about your own blueprint, remember: you’re not too young to lead.



Sample Student Project - Blueprint for a Better Nation

By: XXXX XXXXXXXXXXX, Grade 7

Title: *Peace Starts With Me*

My Strengths

I'm a good listener, and people often come to me for advice or when they're upset. I also enjoy drawing and making posters for school events. I care deeply about fairness and speak up when someone is treated unfairly. I'm not afraid to be kind, even when others are not.

My Values

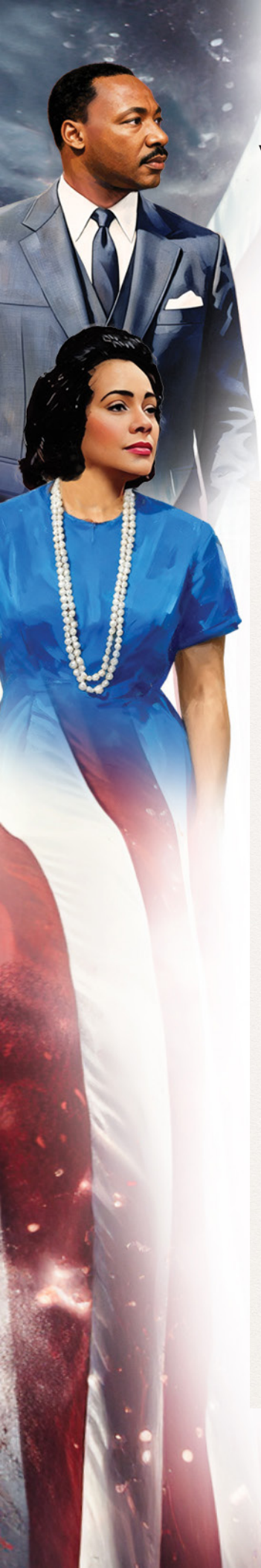
- **Respect** - Every person deserves to be heard.
- **Kindness** - Small acts can change someone's whole day.
- **Justice** - I believe everyone should be treated equally, no matter their background.
- **Responsibility** - I want to be the kind of person people can count on.

My Nonviolent Actions

- Start a "Unity Club" at my school to celebrate different cultures.
- Write letters to our local school board about fair policies.
- Create posters that promote kindness and understanding.
- Step in (peacefully) when I see someone being bullied.
- Invite people sitting alone at lunch to join my group.

My Dream for the Future

I want to live in a country where people don't judge each other by race, religion, or where they're from. I dream of a future where every student feels safe and accepted.



Visual Component (student might draw - see below):

- A house labeled "Better Nation"
 - **Foundation:** Kindness & Justice
 - **Walls:** Listening & Respect
 - **Roof:** Unity
 - **Door:** Open to All
 - Inside: Smiling people from different backgrounds holding hands under a rainbow that reads "The Dream Lives On."

My Strengths

- I am a good listener
- I speak up for others
- I am creative

My Values

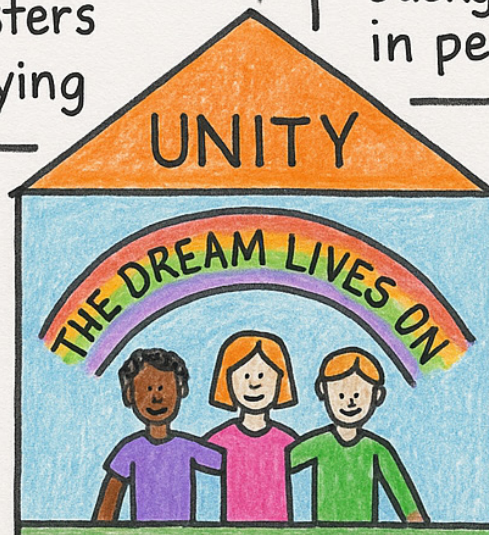
- Respect
- Kindness
- Justice
- Responsibility

My Nonviolent Actions

- Start a Unity Club
- Write to school board
- Make posters
- Stop bullying

My Dream for the Future

People from all backgrounds living in peace ❤️



People from all backgrounds living in peace