



Martin Luther King, *I Have a Dream*

Martin Luther King was born in Atlanta, Georgia. After completing a PhD in theology at Boston University, he moved to Alabama, in order to work as a Baptist pastor, and soon became involved in the civil rights movement. In 1960 M.L. King took his young family back to Atlanta where he joined his father as co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. The son devoted his energies almost entirely to civil rights issues, and it was his insistence on using Gandhian, non-violent protest methods which made the movement so effective. In 1964 the Civil Rights Bill was passed and Martin Luther King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; in 1965 the New Voting Rights Act was signed. He was assassinated on April 4th, 1968, while he was speaking in Memphis, Tennessee.



I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed¹: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. (...)

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.

I have a dream today. (...)

This will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with a new meaning, “My country, ‘tis of thee², sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim’s pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.”

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty³ mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening⁴ Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes⁵ of California! (...)

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet,⁶ from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

GLOSSARY

1 belief – 2 you (old form) – 3 great – 4 elevated – 5 hills – 6 small town

ACTIVITIES

1 Answer the following questions.

- 1 What was M.L. King’s dream?
- 2 Are all men created equal?
- 3 For whom should the freedom bell ring?
- 4 What should the sons of the slaves and the sons of the slave owners be able to do in the future?

2 Answer the following questions.

- 1 What is the key concept of Martin Luther King’s speech?
- 2 Is the text written in a personal or an impersonal style?
- 3 How do you think this influences the perception of the text?
- 4 What emotions does the text arouse in you?
- 5 Find and underline instances of biblical language in the text.

