

SELMA

Reading

A: Read the biography of Martin Luther King Jr. and match the titles to the paragraphs.

	Birmingham campaign
	Death
	'I have a dream'
	Move to Chicago
	National awareness

B: Read the text again. Make a timeline of Martin Luther King's life and write down the most important events in his life.

Author: BBC

Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/martin_luther_king.shtml

Vocabulary:

minister	
to ordain	
civil rights	
tangible	
struggle	
to resist	
imprisoned	
solitary confinement	
to defy	
injunction	
to spark	
outrage	
equality	
to disenfranchise	
plight	
to wane	
to inhibit	
to combat poverty	
mourning	

Martin Luther King	Timeline Key events
<p>Martin Luther King was born on 15 January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia (US). Originally named Michael, he was later renamed Martin, like his father, a Baptist minister. His mother, Alberta Williams King, was a schoolteacher. He entered Morehouse College in 1944 [...] He was ordained in his last semester. He graduated from Morehouse in 1948 and undertook postgraduate study first at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania and then, in 1951, at Boston University's School of Theology. Once there he completed his dissertation which, it was later revealed, had been partially plagiarised, and won his doctorate in 1955. It was in Boston that he met his wife Coretta Scott, who he married in 1953. In 1954, he became pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, where Rosa Parks was famously arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus.</p>	
1.	
<p>After Parks' arrest, King came to national prominence in the US. He was a leading figure in organising the boycott by African Americans of buses in Montgomery. [...] In 1957, King established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with fellow activists C.K. Steele, Fred Shuttlesworth and T.J. Jemison. As SCLC president, King was tasked with the coordination of civil rights activity across the region. However, he was not immediately successful. "People were wondering if he was qualified to be the national leader in the late 1950s," says Prof Kirk. "There was disillusionment with King to turn his words into a tangible programme."</p>	
2.	
<p>That changed in 1963. "King reasserted his pre-eminence within the African American freedom struggle through his leadership of the Birmingham campaign," [...] "The Birmingham demonstrations were the most massive civil rights protests that had yet occurred." In Birmingham, Alabama, desegregation was being violently resisted by the white population. The city was dubbed 'Bombingham', due to the frequency of attacks on black homes and activists. Imprisoned and held in solitary confinement after defying an injunction against the protests, Martin Luther King wrote his 'Letter from Birmingham Jail'. In response to criticism from local white clergymen, he set out his reasons for action in Birmingham and elsewhere. "For years now," he wrote, "I have heard the word 'Wait!' This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never'." After his release, in May, the Children's Crusade was launched. Thousands of school children and students staged marches in Birmingham. Television images of police using batons,</p>	

<p>dogs and high-pressure fire hoses against the young protesters sparked global outrage and won public support for King's cause.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	
<p>Success in Birmingham provided further impetus to the movement. This culminated in the massive March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on 28 August 1963. More than 200,000 people were in attendance at the Lincoln Memorial when King delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech, predicting a day when the promise of freedom and equality for all would become a reality in America. However, less than a month after King delivered his speech a blast killed four young girls in a Birmingham church. There was much work to be done if his dream was to be realised. In 1964, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. That same year, a significant step forward was made with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act followed in 1965, removing many of the barriers which had ensured African Americans could be disenfranchised in some states.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	
<p>He turned his attention to the plight of the urban poor in the north. With his family, he moved to an apartment in Chicago's black ghetto in 1966. Though not legally endorsed, segregation was an economic reality and the Chicago Campaign sought to combat this. However, King found that tactics which had worked in the South were less effective in the North. There was also growing support from within the movement for more militant methods of opposition. King found his message of non-violent action increasingly marginalised and his popularity waning. His opposition to America's involvement in the Vietnam War further inhibited his influence on national policy.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	
<p>The Poor People's Campaign was established in December 1967. SCLC lobbied the government to improve their efforts in combating poverty. On 3 April 1968, he arrived in Memphis, Tennessee to prepare for a march in support of striking sanitation workers. The following day, he was shot dead on his hotel balcony. The President, Lyndon B. Johnson, called for a national day of mourning. At his funeral, King's old friend Benjamin Mays delivered the eulogy: "Martin Luther King Jr. believed in a united America. He believed that the walls of separation brought on by legal and de facto segregation, and discrimination based on race and colour, could be eradicated. As he said in his Washington Monument address: 'I have a dream'."</p>	