

Chautauqua Summer Institute  
July 2-6, 2008

**Lesson Plan**



JOYFUL NOISE  
*Poems for Two Voices*

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*illustrated by Eric Beddows*

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N O T E

The following poems were written to be read aloud by two readers at once, one taking the left-hand part, the other taking the right hand part. The poems should be read from top to bottom, the two parts meshing as in a musical duet. When both readers have lines at the same horizontal level, those lines are to be spoken simultaneously.

**Lesson Plan**



## *Grasshoppers*

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Sap's rising

Grasshoppers are  
hatching out

Autumn-laid eggs

Young stepping

Ground's warming

Grasshoppers are  
hatching out

splitting

into spring

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Grasshoppers  
hopping  
high  
Grassjumpers  
jumping  
  
Vaulting from  
leaf to leaf  
stem to stem  
plant to plant  
  
leapers  
Grass-  
bounders  
  
springers  
Grass-  
soarers  
Leapfrogging  
longjumping  
grasshoppers.

Grasshoppers  
hopping  
  
Grassjumpers  
jumping  
far  
  
leaf to leaf  
stem to stem  
Grass-  
leapers  
  
bounders  
Grass-  
springers  
  
soarers  
Leapfrogging  
longjumping  
grasshoppers.

## Background Information on Malcolm X

1.

Malcolm X was born on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska. The fourth of eight children, his birth name was Malcolm Little. When Malcolm was six years old, his father was murdered by a group of white men. These men were strongly opposed to Mr. Little's activities in a group called the Universal Negro Improvement Association, or UNIA. The UNIA was founded by a man named Marcus Garvey and preached a philosophy of "black separatism" and black pride. Its goal was to get millions of African Americans to return to Africa because, as Garvey stated, blacks could never be treated justly in a country ruled by whites.

His father's death destroyed Malcolm's home life. His mother went insane, and all of her children were placed, Malcolm included, in different foster homes. Malcolm was a very bright student, but he was an angry and bitter child. As he grew older, he lost interest in school. At the age of 15, he left school and went to live with an older half-sister in Roxbury, Massachusetts, the black section of Boston. For the next several years, Malcolm lived the life of a street hustler. He held a few legitimate jobs, but got fired from them. Instead, he made money illegally, and he also took drugs. Finally, in 1945 his lifestyle and the law caught up with him. Malcolm was arrested in Boston for a series of burglaries of wealthy people's homes. He was sentenced to seven years in prison. He wasn't even 21 years old.



- **How and why was Malcolm Little's father killed?**
- **How might Malcolm's father's association with the UNIA have influenced young Malcolm's development?**
- **Describe Malcolm's late teen years after his father was killed.**

While he was in prison, Malcolm learned that two of his brothers had joined a religious group called the Nation of Islam. The members of this group were called Black Muslims. They were led by a man named Elijah Muhammad, and they preached a philosophy similar to Marcus Garvey's UNIA. They favored a path of racial separation for black Americans and a belief in black self-determination. The group viewed white Americans with suspicion, if not outright hatred, and had no interest in integration with white society. The Black Muslims operated their own stores, restaurants, and farms. The group also preached a strict code of member behavior. Eating pork and using alcohol, tobacco, and drugs was prohibited. Malcolm wrote Elijah Muhammad from prison inquiring about the Nation of Islam, and received a warm reply.

In 1952, he was released from prison and went directly to Detroit to join the Nation of Islam. As other Black Muslims had done, Malcolm changed his last name. Black Muslims considered their family names to be part of their slave past, so they rejected them in favor of the suffix "X." Malcolm Little was reborn as Malcolm X.

Malcolm rose quickly within the Black Muslim movement. By 1954, he had become the Muslim minister in charge of a temple in Harlem, New York. He built a strong following there, and before long he had become the group's most effective and well-known spokesperson. By the early 1960s, Malcolm had begun to openly condemn white racism, and to advocate any means necessary to retaliate against that racism—including violence. At the same time, he publicly criticized any African American who favored cooperating with the "white establishment" in America, including those who were seeking to integrate blacks into all segments of white society.



- **What were the beliefs of Elijah Muhammad and Black Muslims?**
- **What do you think drew Malcolm Little to the Black Muslims?**
- **How did Malcolm X's involvement with the Black Muslims change his beliefs?**
- **What were Malcolm's opinions on the use of violence?**

This philosophy put Malcolm in opposition to African-American leaders, such as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who were fighting for civil rights for blacks through integration. Dr. King advocated nonviolent protests to push Americans to remove segregation where it still existed. He also believed in cooperating with white politicians who were sympathetic to the civil rights cause to pass laws ensuring that African Americans achieved equality and justice.

By 1964, Malcolm had become the most famous Black Muslim in America. He continued to push his radical civil rights views, which had begun to catch on in urban black ghettos across the country. Malcolm's popularity caused some resentment within the Nation of Islam, and a rift developed between him and Elijah Muhammad. As a result, Malcolm left the group in March 1964. However, he stated he would remain a Muslim and continue to preach his separatist racial views.

In April, Malcolm made a pilgrimage to the Middle East and Africa. In Mecca, the spiritual home of Islam, he was impressed by the harmony he saw among the various racial groups who visited there. Despite this experience, Malcolm continued to preach the philosophy of black separatism. However, he did modify his feelings about cooperating with white people. Late in 1964 he stated "we will work with anyone, any group, no matter what their color is, as long as they are genuinely interested in taking the types of steps necessary to bring an end to the injustices that black people in this country are afflicted by."

3.

By early 1965, Malcolm had become extremely unpopular with a segment of his old group, the Nation of Islam. He received death threats. His house was burned down. Finally, on February 21, 1965, he was assassinated by three men, two of whom were Nation of Islam members. All three men were convicted of murder and sentenced to prison. The question of who, if anyone, had ordered Malcolm's assassination remained unanswered.



- **What were Malcolm X's views about Martin Luther King Jr.?**
- **What impact did Malcolm X's trip to Mecca have on his beliefs?**
- **How did Malcolm X die? Who was responsible for his death?**

## Quotes from Malcolm X

*Independence comes only by two ways-by ballots or bullets. Historically you'll find that everyone who gets freedom gets it through ballots or bullets. Now naturally everyone prefers ballots, and even I prefer ballots, but I don't discount bullets. I'm not interested in either ballots or bullets; I'm interested in freedom.*

- Interview with Claude Lewis (December 1964)

*We are taught by Mr. Muhammad that it is very important to improve the black man's economy, and his thrift. But to do this, we must have land of our own. The brainwashed black man can never learn to stand on his own two feet until he is on his own.*

- Interview in *Playboy* magazine  
(May 1963)

*I don't see how you could call the strides being made in the field of integration rapid when you don't have one city in this country that can honestly say it is an example of sincere integration.*

- Interview with station WUST  
(May 1963)

*Dr. King wants the same thing I want - freedom. Now his method of going about getting it is the nonviolent way. We may differ in method, but that does not mean we differ in objective.*

- Panel with Louis Lomax (April 1964)

*Every time I hear Martin [Luther King] has a dream, I think Negro leaders have to come out of the clouds and wake up and stop dreaming and start facing reality.*

- Interview with Claude Lewis (December 1964)

*I think if there S going to be a flowing of blood, it should be reciprocal. Black people shouldn't be willing to bleed unless white people are willing to bleed. And black people shouldn't be willing to be nonviolent unless white people are going to be nonviolent.*

- Interview with Claude Lewis  
(December 1964)

*Our goal is to bring about the complete independence of people of African descent, in the Western Hemisphere and here in the United States, and to bring about the freedom of these people ... by any means necessary.*

- Speech to his supporters (June 1964)



## Background Information on Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. Because Martin's father, as well as his maternal grandfather, were Baptist preachers, Christianity played an important role in Martin's life. As a young boy, Martin read aloud from the Bible every day. His grandmother often entertained him with Bible stories. From an early age, the family expected Martin to follow his father and grandfather and become a preacher. Consequently, after he attended college, Martin enrolled at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania to study for the ministry.

While he was at Crozer, King became familiar with the philosophy and teachings of the Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi had led India's struggle to become independent of British rule. Throughout his crusade, Gandhi had preached a message of love and nonviolent resistance, and he had won independence for India through peaceful acts of civil disobedience, not violent rebellion. In Gandhi's philosophy, King felt he had found the key to helping his own people overcome the racial injustices he saw in the United States. As a young boy growing up in the South during the 1930s and 1940s, King witnessed racial prejudice first-hand. By the time he graduated from Crozer as a minister in 1951, he knew that he wanted to spend his life fighting for civil rights and social justice for his fellow African Americans.



- **What role did religion play in Martin Luther King Jr.'s youth?**
- **How did Gandhi's ideas influence King? What was Gandhi's appeal?**
- **What motivated King to become active in seeking civil rights?**

In 1953, King married Coretta Scott, a music student he had met while he was studying for his doctoral degree. They moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where King became a pastor of a black Baptist Church. It was here that he began his struggle for civil rights. In December 1955, an African-American woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to obey a city law that forced black people to give up their seats to white people on public buses. In protest, King helped lead a black boycott of the city bus system. During the boycott, blacks refused to ride the buses until the law was changed. As the leader of the movement, King earned the hatred of many white people in town. He was eventually arrested and thrown in jail, and his house was bombed. Throughout the year-long boycott, he continued to urge his followers not to respond with violence to any threats or mistreatment they might receive. Ultimately, the Rosa Parks case went before the Supreme Court. In late 1956, the court ruled that the Montgomery law—as well as all of Alabama's state laws on segregated busing—was unconstitutional, and ordered the city to integrate the buses. King and his supporters had won an enormous victory in the fight for civil rights for African Americans.



- **How did Rosa Park's actions affect the course of King's life?**
- **What discrimination did King face in the Montgomery bus boycott?**
- **How do you think King felt about the outcome of the boycott?**

In 1957, King and other black clergymen formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The group's aim was to spread and coordinate nonviolent civil rights protests across the South. After moving back to Atlanta in late 1959, King set out on several campaigns to desegregate all-white establishments in Southern cities.

By 1963, the movement for civil rights had become very powerful. Thousands of African Americans-and many sympathetic white people as well-had participated in sit-ins, marches, and other demonstrations demanding an end to segregation and other unfair racial practices. However, King had become disappointed in the lack of federal government support in the civil rights effort. He became convinced that a massive action was needed to bring the cause to the attention of the whole nation. He called for a "March on Washington." On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people attended a march and rally in the nation's capital to show their support for civil rights. At the rally, King gave the most memorable speech of his life. In words that rang with spirit and forcefulness, he declared, "I have a dream today." His dream was that blacks and whites could live together in peace, and that African Americans would be able to fully participate in all aspects of American society without fear or prejudice.

For the next five years, Martin Luther King Jr. was the unquestioned leader of the civil rights movement in the United States. In 1964, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work. His activities brought about major changes in federal law, including passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Yet for many African Americans who were still facing prejudice in their daily lives, progress was too slow. Some African American leaders complained that King's insistence on nonviolent protest, when protesters were often beaten and even killed, sent the wrong message to a mostly white America. African Americans such as Malcolm X constantly criticized King for his nonviolent stance. Still, through all this criticism, King never changed his views. He maintained that the best and the only-way to effect change was by peaceful means.

In April 1968, King was in Memphis, Tennessee, supporting a strike by black garbage workers. On the night of April 4, King was shot as he stood on his hotel balcony. He died a short time later at a local hospital. Many people believed that his killer, a man named James Earl Ray, was hired by other people who wanted to see King dead. That theory was never proven, and Ray was sent to prison for life. Like his hero, Mohandas Gandhi, this man of nonviolence was struck down in the most violent of ways. And, just as with Gandhi, millions of people around the world mourned the death of Martin Luther King Jr.



- **Describe the types of protests that King and the SCLC organized.**
- **What accomplishments could King be proud of? What conditions frustrated him?**
- **What were the circumstances of King's death? What was sadly ironic about the way he died?**

## Quotes from Martin Luther King Jr.

*Now, let us say that we are not calling for violence. We have overcome that. The only weapon we have in our hands is the weapon of protest .... We will be guided by the highest principles of law and order. In spite of our mistreatment, we must not become bitter and end up hating our white brothers.*

-Speech to supporters at the start of the Montgomery bus boycott (December 1955)

*For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "Wait!" has almost always meant "Never. "*

-*"Letter from a Birmingham Jail"* (April 1963)

*An unjust law is no law at all. It is better to go to jail with dignity than to accept segregation in humility .... We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom.*

-*"Letter from a Birmingham Jail"* (April 1963)

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ... that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day ... sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.*

-Speech at the March on Washington (August 1963)

*I conclude that this award ... is a profound recognition of the need for man to overcome oppression without resorting to violence.*

-Speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize (December 1964)

*Today, I want to tell the city of Selma, today I want to tell the state of Alabama, today I want to say to the people of America and the nations of the world that we are not about to turn around. We are on the move now ... and no wave of racism can stop us.*

-Speech to supporters at an antiviolence rally at the Alabama state capitol (March 1965)

*Violence is not going to solve our problem ... in his litany of articulating the despair of the Negro without offering any positive, creative alternative, I feel that Malcolm has done himself and our people a great disservice ... urging Negroes to arm themselves and prepare to engage in violence, as he has done, can reap nothing but grief.*

-Interview with Robert Penn Warren (March 1964)

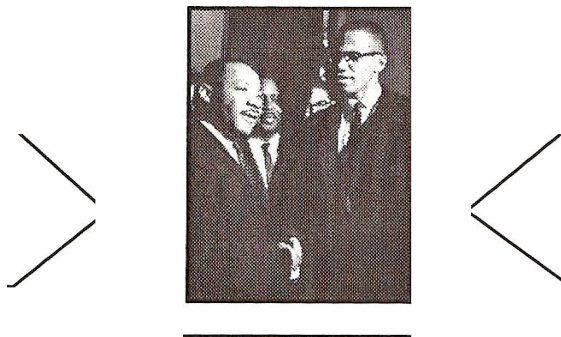
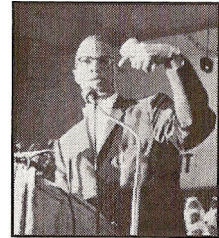
# Venn Diagram of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X

**Directions:** In your group, discuss the information you have read about Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Then complete the Venn diagram below by writing unique characteristics of each leader in the corresponding section and characteristics common to both leaders in the section at the center of the diagram.

**Martin Luther King Jr.**



**Malcolm X**



## Prompts for Discussing Methods to Achieve Equal Rights

1. **Malcolm X:** Your "nonviolence" results in more blacks being beaten and killed.
2. **Martin Luther King Jr.:** Your ideas of self-defense will provoke more violence against blacks.
3. **Malcolm X:** Integration into a racist system won't work.
4. **Martin Luther King Jr.:** Separation is no different from segregation.
5. **Malcolm X:** Nothing will change until black people start fighting back.
6. **Martin Luther King Jr.:** We must not resort to the tactics that they use against us.
7. **Malcolm X:** Why waste time trying to change white people's minds?
8. **Martin Luther King Jr.:** Why should we create an image of blacks for whites to fear and hate?
9. **Malcolm X:** I can't love a group that has oppressed my people for over 300 years.
10. **Martin Luther King Jr.:** "An eye for an eye" will only make the whole world blind.