

# The Impact of Leadership on the Civil Rights Movement

## Rationale

This 50-minute lesson follows the lesson “What Was the Civil Rights Movement?”. In this lesson, students will build on their background knowledge of the civil rights movement of the 1950’s and 1960’s to learn of the impact of leadership on the movement.

## Guiding Questions

Who were some of the leaders of the civil rights movement?

What impact did the assassination of these leaders have on the civil rights movement?

## Mastery Objectives

Students will be able to identify some of the leaders of the civil rights movement.

Students will be able to justify their opinion about the impact of assassinations of leaders of the civil rights movement.

## Standards Addressed (from the National Council for the Social Studies)

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions (interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions)

Power, Authority, and Governance (how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance)

## Vocabulary

- Abraham Lincoln
- John F. Kennedy
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Robert Kennedy
- assassination

## Materials

Attached word splash of assassinated leaders

Attached background reading defining assassination

Attached lyrics of “Abraham, Martin, and John”

Audio and/or video file of “Abraham, Martin, and John” as performed by Marvin Gaye

Attached biographies of Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy.

## Procedures

### 1. Activator:

Display a word splash with the names Julius Caesar, Mahatma Gandhi, Rafik Hariri (Prime Minister of Lebanon), John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Malcolm X, Montezuma (Aztec Emperor), Yitzhak Rabin (Prime Minister of Israel), Anwar Sadat (President of Egypt).

Ask students to describe what all of the people have in common. Guide the discussion to make the point that all of these men were assassinated.

Review the definition of assassination.

2. Guided instruction:

Distribute the lyrics to “Abraham, Martin, and John” as performed by Marvin Gaye. Play an audio and/or video file of the song.

Ask students, “Who are Abraham, John, Martin, and Bobby?” and “According to the song, what was their impact on the civil rights movement?”

3. Individual Practice/Assessment

Divide the class into four groups. Distribute the biography of one of the civil rights leader to each group. Ask students to read the biography of their assigned leader and take notes on the graphic organizer.

Ask a member(s) of each group to share what they learned. Students should record the information presented on their graphic organizer. Once all four groups have shared, each student should have a completed graphic organizer.

As a summarizer, ask students to choose one civil rights leader. Have them draw a picture or create a graphic organizer that illustrates the leader’s impact on the civil rights movement.

**Assessment**

Illustration or graphic organizer highlighting the impact of Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Robert Kennedy on the civil rights movement.

## Activator--Word Splash

Directions: What do these people have in common? (Think beyond the fact that they are all men and they are all dead)

Montezuma  
Caesar  
Hariri  
Rabin  
Saber  
Malcolm X  
Kennedy  
King  
Gandhi

## Assassination Defined

The murder of a public figure is called **assassination**. Usually, the term refers to the killing of government leaders and other important people for political purposes—such as to seize power, to start a revolution, to draw attention to a cause, to exact revenge, or to undermine a regime or its critics. Such politically motivated murders have taken place in all parts of the world and in every period of history.

Heads of state or government, such as presidents, prime ministers, and monarchs, have often been the target of assassinations. Four United States presidents (Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, William McKinley, and John F. Kennedy) have been assassinated.

Other victims of assassination have included ministers, legislators, judges, and other government officials, members of the military or police, members of political parties and factions, and religious leaders. Assassins have also killed leaders of social and political movements, such as Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi (1948) and American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968).

The motives for assassination are varied, and often complex and multiple. In some cases, assassins want to force a change in leadership or the form of government. Another type of assassination, often called “propaganda by the deed,” is designed to gain publicity for a worldview. In some cases, an assassin seeks retaliation for real or imagined wrongs.

adapted from “**assassination** .” *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9272981>>

## Abraham, Martin and John

as performed by Marvin Gaye

Has anyone here seen my old friend Abraham?  
Can you tell me where he's gone?  
Oh, he freed a lot of people  
but it seems the good die young, yeah.  
I just looked around and he was gone.  
Hmmm

Has anyone here seen my old friend John?  
Can you tell me where he's gone?  
You know, he freed a lot of people  
but it seems the good die young, yeah.  
I just looked around and he was gone.  
Oh yeah

Has anyone here seen my old friend Martin?  
Can you tell me where he's gone?  
He freed a lot of people  
but it seems the good die young, yeah.  
I just looked around and he was gone.

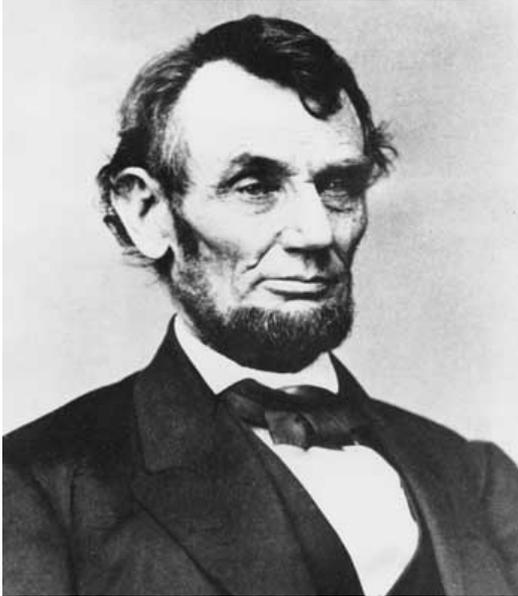
Has anyone here seen my friend Bobby?  
Can you tell me where he's gone?  
You know, he freed a lot of people  
but the good, they die young, yeah.  
I just looked around and he was gone.

Oh, I just looked around and they were gone, oh yes

[http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/marvin\\_gaye/abraham\\_martin\\_and\\_john.html](http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/marvin_gaye/abraham_martin_and_john.html)

to hear the song use above link OR <http://www.jango.com/music/Marvin+Gaye?l=0>

## Abraham Lincoln and Civil Rights



**Abraham Lincoln (1801-1863)**

*Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States and served from 1860-1865. Apart from his historical role as savior of the Union and the Great Emancipator of the slaves, he has been celebrated for his remarkable life story and his fundamental humanity. Born in a log cabin on the frontier, Lincoln made his own way in life to rise to the country's highest office.

Lincoln was deeply devoted to the cause of personal freedom. Yet, as president, he was at first reluctant to adopt an abolitionist policy (a policy of ending slavery). He was concerned about the possible difficulties of incorporating nearly 4 million African Americans, once they had been freed, into the country's social and political life.

As antislavery sentiment rose, Lincoln worked out a plan to emancipate, or free, the slaves. On January 1, 1863, while the Civil War was raging, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It was a landmark moment that transformed the Civil War from a struggle to preserve the Union into a crusade for human freedom.

Had nothing else been done to confirm their freedom, the slaves freed by the proclamation could have possibly been enslaved again after the war was over. But something else was done. In 1865 Lincoln urged Congress to approve the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which outlawed slavery in the United States.

To celebrate the end of the war, Lincoln took his wife Mary and two guests to Ford's Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865. During the third act of the play, John Wilkes Booth, a young actor who was proslavery, crept into the presidential box and shot Lincoln in the head. The President died the next day.

The assassination of United States' President Abraham Lincoln in 1865 is an example of a vengeance killing. It has been assumed that the assassin, a fanatic proslavery advocate, was attempting to avenge the South's defeat in the American Civil War.

adapted from "**Lincoln, Abraham** ." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9275480>> and "**assassination** ." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9272981>>.



## John F. Kennedy and Civil Rights



**John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)**  
*White House Collection*

In November 1960, at the age of 43, John F. Kennedy became the youngest man ever elected President of the United States. He served until his assassination in 1963. Prior to being elected President, Kennedy served as a United States Representative and then Senator from the state of Massachusetts.

As President, Kennedy observed clashes between the police and demonstrating African Americans in 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama, and elsewhere, especially in the South. These events induced the president to stress civil rights legislation. Kennedy's new civil rights message included bills to ban discrimination in places of business, to speed up desegregation of public schools, and to end discrimination in the hiring of workers on federal construction projects.

On November 22, 1963, Kennedy and his wife went to visit Dallas, Texas. A large and enthusiastic crowd greeted the presidential party when it arrived. Along the route of the motorcade into downtown Dallas the people stood 10 to 12 deep, applauding warmly. Suddenly, three shots rang out. The President had been shot through the throat and head. He was pronounced dead thirty minutes later.

The motives for assassination of John F. Kennedy are not clear. The general assumption is that a lone gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald, killed Kennedy because of some unknown personal motive. Oswald was shot and killed before a trial was held to learn more about his motives.

adapted from "**Kennedy, John F.**." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9275246>>.and **assassination** ." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9272981>>.

## Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights



**Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–68)**

*Julian Wasser*

Inspired by the belief that love and peaceful protest could eliminate social injustice, Martin Luther King, Jr., became an outstanding leader in the United States. He encouraged whites and blacks alike to protest racial discrimination, poverty, and war.

In 1954, he became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. In December 1955 King was chosen to head the Montgomery Improvement Association, formed by the black community to lead a boycott of the segregated city buses. During the boycott King's home was bombed, but he persuaded his followers to remain nonviolent despite

threats to their lives and property. King and the Montgomery Improvement Association's boycott was a success. In 1956, the United States Supreme Court forced desegregation of the buses.

In 1958 King became president of a group later known as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), formed to carry on civil rights activities in the South. King inspired blacks throughout the South to hold peaceful sit-ins and freedom rides to protest segregation. In 1964, King became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. He regarded it not only as a personal honor but also as an international tribute to the nonviolent civil-rights movement.

In 1965, King led a drive to register black voters in Selma, Alabama. The drive met with violent resistance. In protest of this treatment, thousands of demonstrators conducted a five-day march from Selma to the capital in Montgomery.

Continuing his work against discrimination, King inspired and planned a march on Washington, D.C., in 1968 to highlight the relationship of poverty and urban violence. But he did not live to take part in it. Early in 1968 he traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to support a strike of poorly paid sanitation workers. There, on April 4, he was assassinated by a sniper, James Earl Ray. King's death shocked the nation.

King's brief career greatly advanced the cause of civil rights in the United States. His efforts spurred the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. His energetic personality and persuasive oratory helped unite many blacks in a search for peaceful solutions to racial oppression.

adapted from "**King, Martin Luther, Jr.** ." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-203438>> and "**assassination** ." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9272981>>

## Robert F. Kennedy and Civil Rights



**Robert F. Kennedy (1925-1968)**

*Warren K. Leffler*

Young, energetic, and tough-minded, Robert Kennedy emerged from the shadow of his older brother, President John Kennedy, to become a forceful political figure during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Following his enlistment in the navy during World War II, a job with a Boston newspaper, and law school, Kennedy accepted a post as an attorney in the United States Justice Department in 1951. Not yet 30 years old, Robert Kennedy had already established himself as a strong-willed and gifted attorney with a kind outward demeanor and an unbending and forceful will.

After his brother John Kennedy was elected President in 1960, Robert was selected to become the Attorney General of the United States. Robert, or “Bobby” as he was affectionately known, became John Kennedy's most trusted adviser and confidante and was often described as the second most powerful person in the United States. Among his numerous accomplishments, Robert Kennedy played a prominent role in engineering the Kennedy Administration's civil rights initiatives.

In November 1964, he won a seat in the United States Senate in a landslide victory. From 1964 until 1968, Kennedy also solidified his position as one of Congress' most vocal supporters of the civil rights movement. On March 16, 1968, he announced his candidacy for the presidency.

Backed by a coalition of working class citizens, younger voters, and African Americans, Kennedy immediately became the leading democratic candidate. But on June, after delivering a speech at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, California, Kennedy was shot by Sirhan Sirhan and died the following day.

adapted from “**Kennedy, Robert F.**.” *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 10 Jan. 2010 <<http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9311974>>.

Curriculum created for The GRAMMY Museum® by Beth Shevitz, Newport Mill Middle School, Kensington, Maryland



### Photo Sources

*Lincoln, Abraham.* Photograph. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Web. 10 Jan. 2010  
<<http://school.eb.com/ebi/art-124151>>.

*Kennedy, John F..* Photograph. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Web. 10 Jan. 2010  
<<http://school.eb.com/ebi/art-126870>>.

*King, Martin Luther, Jr..* Photograph. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Web. 10 Jan. 2010  
<<http://school.eb.com/ebi/art-12356>>.

*Kennedy, Robert F..* Photograph. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Web. 10 Jan. 2010  
<<http://school.eb.com/ebi/art-111206>>. *U.S. News & World Report Magazine; photograph, Warren K. Leffler/Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (digital file no. 03685u)*

# The Impact of Leadership on the Civil Rights Movement--Biographies



## Graphic Organizer

Directions: Read the biography of a civil rights leader. Take notes in the appropriate section of the graphic organizer.

Name of Leader	Dates of Life	Job(s) Held	What did he do for the Civil Rights Movement?
 <p><b>Abraham Lincoln</b></p>			
 <p><b>John F. Kennedy</b></p>			
 <p><b>Martin Luther King, Jr.</b></p>			
 <p><b>Robert F. Kennedy</b></p>			

