

HOLIDAY HOUSE



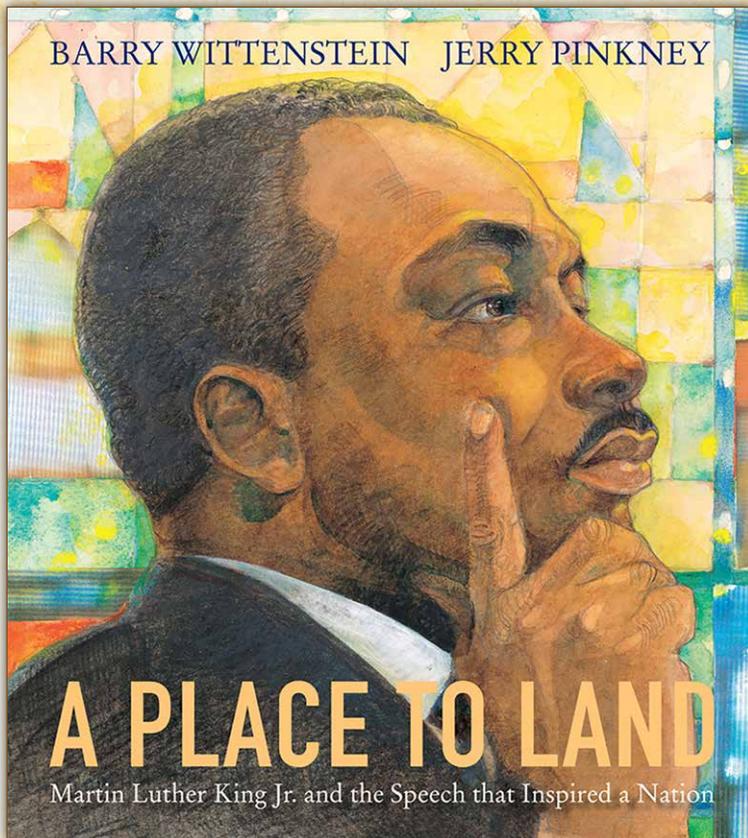
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Grades 2–5

A PLACE TO LAND

Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation

by Barry Wittenstein illustrated by Jerry Pinkney



HC: 978-0-8234-4331-4 • E-book: 978-0-8234-4374-1

NEAL PORTER BOOKS

Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding
Nonfiction for Children

Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List

- ★ “Essential American history . . . One of the most powerful picture books of the year.”
—*The Horn Book*, Starred Review
- ★ “Wittenstein’s free verse, beautifully subdued, flows crisp and clear, leaving room for Pinkney to shine.”
—*Booklist*, starred review
- ★ “An invaluable addition to the shelf of King biographies.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review
- ★ “A moving portrait of undeterred determination and conviction.”
—*School Library Journal*, Starred Review
- ★ “Gives readers a fresh and thrilling sense of what it took to make history.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review

ABOUT THE BOOK

Much has been written about Martin Luther King Jr. and the 1963 March on Washington. But there’s little on how he came to write his legendary “I Have a Dream” speech.

Martin Luther King Jr. was once asked if the hardest part of preaching was knowing where to begin. “No,” he said. “The hardest part is knowing where to end. It’s terrible to be circling up there without a place to land.”

Award-winning author Barry Wittenstein teams up with legendary illustrator and Caldecott Medalist Jerry Pinkney to tell the story of how, against all odds, Martin found his place to land.



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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to write a paragraph about what they know about Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Allow time for them to share their writing. How many students mentioned the “I Have a Dream” speech? Then tell them that *A Place to Land* is about the writing of this famous speech. How does the cover illustration suggest that King is contemplating the speech?
- Read aloud Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech (archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf). It’s clear that the first part of the speech was written using the advice of his advisors, who were prominent civil rights activists. How does the last part of the speech, when King talks about his dream, reveal his background as a preacher? Remind students that a metaphor is an indirect comparison of two things. How does King use metaphor in the “I Have a Dream” portion of the speech? Ask students to write a paragraph that explains the mountain metaphor.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Reading Literature in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.2.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

The discussion questions are designed to use after the entire book has been read. This enables readers to understand the thought and hard work that it takes to write and deliver a speech that moves people. Since the book is appropriate for both younger and older readers, the questions are layered to encourage critical thought at many different levels.

- Explain the title of the book. How does any speech need “a place to land?” Discuss how Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gives people hope when he finds his “place to land” with his speech at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963.
- Pinkney uses drawing, watercolor, and collage to illustrate Wittenstein’s powerful and compelling text. Identify the items used in the collages throughout the book. How do these items provide a sense of place? What is the purpose of the music used in the collages? Explain how the music sets the tone for the march. Why does Pinkney use words from the Declaration of Independence in the collage?
- Barry Wittenstein writes:
Painting with a preacher’s fine brush,
a light shade of wisdom here,
a darker shade of frustration there.

Describe King’s frustration the night before the March on Washington when he couldn’t find the right words for his speech. Debate whether there were too many ideas thrown at him by his advisors. Ask readers to discuss how Pinkney uses a “fine brush” to illustrate wisdom and frustration within King as he struggles to write the speech.
- Explain why Clarence Jones feels that King need a new metaphor, something like “a bad check.” Discuss how this metaphor describes the “jobs and freedom” mission of the march. How can there be good jobs without freedom? Discuss how this remains a focus in our society today.
- Some of the advisors thought that King had spoken too much about his dream. Yet, Rev. Ralph Abernathy says, “Most of the folks coming tomorrow are coming to hear you preach.” Sometimes a speaker must read the crowd. How does Mahalia Jackson understand what the crowd is asking for? What happens when King thrusts aside his speech and begins preaching?
- Wittenstein says that part of what made Martin Luther King Jr. so great is that he knew how to listen. How do the illustrations and text work in tandem to reveal this quality in King? When is it most apparent that King is listening?
- Take a look at the hands in the illustrations. Explain how Pinkney uses line to depict motion. Study the illustration that accompanies the first page of text. Then look at the illustration when Mahalia Jackson shouts for the second time, “Tell them about the dream, Martin.” What do King’s hands reveal?



- Study the illustration where King is thinking about some of the heroes of the civil rights movement. Why do you think some of these heroes have their eyes closed? How does the reader know that King's words are coming from his very soul? Discuss the symbolism of the splash of bright yellow around King's head as he gives the speech.
- Explain what Wittenstein means when he writes, "Martin stepped up to the lectern, and stepped down on the other side of history." Discuss King's role in history. Explain how Shirley Chisholm, John Lewis, and Barack Obama represent "the other side of history." Discuss the importance of including cameo portraits of them at the end of the book.
- In "A Note from the Artist" at the end of the book, Pinkney says that his task was to "dramatize King's process in drafting his remarks." How does Pinkney capture King's emotions? Discuss how Pinkney illustrates the drama of the events leading up to that day. There are many people advising King. Explain how Pinkney includes these people, while making King the focus.
- Discuss the meaning of "bittersweet." Then explain why King's meeting with President Kennedy is "bittersweet." How does King's willingness to go to the White House reveal his character and his leadership as a civil rights activist?
- The Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, is significant because it was the site of Bloody Sunday that took place on March 7, 1965, two years after King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Explain the significance of including an illustration of this event in *A Place to Land*. How does it foreshadow other events in the civil rights movement? Describe the people walking across the bridge. Why are some wearing leis? Explain the symbolism of the linked arms. Discuss the meaning of the lyrics in the music included in the illustration. How does this illustration further interpret King's "dream?"
- Discuss the elements of poetry. How might the text of *A Place to Land* be classed as poetry? Wittenstein uses metaphor throughout the text. Explain the "invading army" metaphor. What is the "Promised Land?" Identify other metaphors in the book.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Reading Literature: Comprehension & Collaboration RL. 2-5.1, RL. 2-4-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 2-5.5; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 2-5.7; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 2-4.1; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 2-5.5; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 2-5.1; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 2-5.4. Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Reading Literature: Comprehension & Collaboration RL. 2-5.1, RL. 2-4-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 2-5.5; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 2-5.7; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 2-4.1; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 2-5.5; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 2-5.1; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 2-5.4.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- More than 250,000 people attended the March on Washington, prompting newspapers to run front-page articles with the headlines: "They're Pouring in from All Over." Find out 10 interesting facts about the March on Washington and write a front-page article about the historic event. Remember to include who, what, when, where, and how.
- As Martin Luther King Jr. was preparing his speech, he thought of Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, and the children of Birmingham. Why were these people in King's thoughts? Ask readers to find out the role of each of these people in the civil rights movement. Select one of these personalities or events, like the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, and write a one-page entry that could be included in a social studies textbook. Include a concluding paragraph that speaks to the heroism of the people.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-5.8; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-5.1, L. 2-5.2.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-5.8; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-5.1, L. 2-5.2.



- Martin Luther King Jr. delivered what became known as his “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Ask readers to take a virtual field trip of the Lincoln Memorial (nps.gov/linc/learn/historyculture/index.htm) and take note of the words inscribed on the walls. Then write a brief paper that explains why the Lincoln Memorial was the appropriate place for King’s speech.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.1; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-5.8; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-5.1, L 2-5.2.

- Jerry Pinkney uses watercolor and collage to interpret Wittenstein’s words in *A Place to Land*. Study the quotations engraved on the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. (nps.gov/mlkm/learn/quotations.htm). Ask readers to think about the relevance of these quotes for today’s society. Create a collage that interprets one of the quotes for twenty-first-century America.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-5.7.

- Edmund Winston Pettus was head of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan and a U.S. senator. Consider this fact and write a one-page paper that explains why this was an appropriate starting point for the Selma to Montgomery March that took place in 1965.

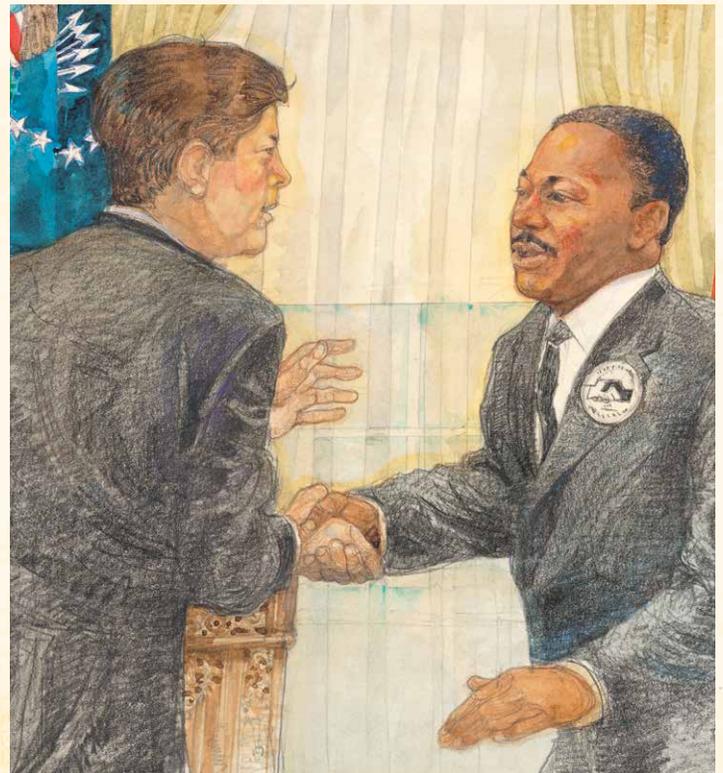
Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.1; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-5.8; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-5.1, L 2-5.2.

- Read “I Dream a World” by Langston Hughes (poemhunter.com/poem/i-dream-a-world-2/). Ask readers to work in small groups and draw a parallel between the poem and the last part of King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Allow time for groups to share their thoughts.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 2-5.9.

- Teachers who have access to YouTube may have students listen to Pete Seeger sing “We Shall Overcome” (youtube.com/watch?v=QhnPVP23zo) or have them read the lyrics (songfacts.com/facts/pete-seeger/we-shall-overcome). Ask readers to write a one-page paper about why the song became an anthem for the civil rights movement. Include a concluding paragraph that discusses why the song is appropriate for current social justice movements like MeToo, Never Again MSD, and Black Lives Matter.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Reading Literature in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.1; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 2-5.9; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 2-5.1, L 2-5.2.



VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

Ask readers to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them by taking clues from context. Such words may include: emancipator, alliterations, fedoras, silhouetted, crescendo, and optimism.

Correlates to CCSS in English Language Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 2-5.4.

INTERNET RESOURCES

NAACP

naacp.org/nmaahc-film-march-washington-history/

This is the official site for the NAACP, with a short film that shows highlights from the March on Washington.

National Archives

archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf

The official website for the National archives includes an original copy of King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site

nps.gov/malu/index.htm

This is the official website for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR



BARRY WITTENSTEIN is the author of several picture books, including *Waiting for Pumpsie* and *The Boo-Boos That Changed the World: A True Story About an Accidental Invention (Really!)*. He is pursuing a master's degree in Childhood Education at Hunter College and lives in New York City.

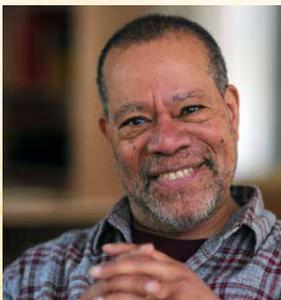


Photo Credit: Thomas Kristich

Legendary author and illustrator **JERRY PINKNEY**'s many accolades include the Caldecott Medal, ten Coretta Scott King Awards and Honors, four *New York Times* Best Illustrated Books, and four gold medals from the Society of Illustrators. He served on the National Council of the Arts, is a Trustee Emeritus of the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, and has taught at Pratt Institute, the University of Delaware, and the University of Buffalo. He lives in Westchester, New York.



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