

The March on Washington



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The March on Washington

On August 28th, 1963, one of the most well-known protest events in United States' history took place in Washington DC. Why is this event so famous? And what were they protesting?

The event that has become known as the March on Washington was officially known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. It was organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the NAACP, and other leading Civil Rights groups.

Their purpose was to bring the issues of racial inequality and injustice to the forefront of the American political scene.

On August 28th, 1963, thousands of buses, trains, planes, and cars flooded into the nation's capital. The spectacle was held on the National Mall, with the speakers stationed in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

An estimated 250,000 people turned out for the event, which featured fiery speeches from civil rights leaders and songs from popular entertainers such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez.



Television and radio outlets sent more than five hundred members of the media to give the march the attention it deserved. The national news exposure the proceedings received helped to propel the topic of civil rights into the American consciousness.

While there were more than ten speakers at the March on Washington, no one's speech was more highly anticipated than the leader of the SCLC, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King delivered a speech that is remembered as the "I Have a Dream" speech. In the speech, he stated:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."... 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 that one day, down in Alabama...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

He then concluded his speech with:

...when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, 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!"

Dr. King's speech at the March on Washington is regarded as one of the finest examples of oratory ever delivered and was voted the greatest American speech of the 20th Century.

Multiple Choice: *Select the choice that completes the statement or answers the question.*

1. _____ Which of the following groups was not responsible for organizing the March on Washington?
 - a. SCLC
 - b. NAACP
 - c. SNCC
 - d. ACLU

2. _____ It is estimated that how many people attended the March on Washington?
 - a. 50,000
 - b. 100,000
 - c. 1,000
 - d. 250,000

3. _____ The most anticipated speaker at the March on Washington was?
 - a. James Farmer
 - b. Martin Luther King Jr.
 - c. Malcolm X
 - d. Eldridge Cleaver

4. _____ The speech Martin Luther King Jr. delivered at the March on Washington is known by what name?
 - a. The “Quest for Peace and Justice” Speech
 - b. The “I Have a Dream” Speech
 - c. The “We Shall Overcome” Speech
 - d. The “Give Us the Ballot” Speech

5. _____ Which of these is a quotation from the “I Have a Dream” speech?
 - a. Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.
 - b. Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!
 - c. Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation.
 - d. The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself.

Student Response: *Write a paragraph addressing the questions raised below. A thorough response should consist of at least five complete sentences.*

6. Why do you suppose the message Dr. King and the other speakers delivered at the March on Washington received so much attention from the media and eager spectators? Why would popular artists also agree to perform there?

Guided Reading: *Fill in the blanks below to create complete sentences.*

1. The _____ was officially known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

2. The purpose of the protest was to bring the issues of _____ and injustice to the forefront of the American political scene.

3. Speakers at the event were stationed in front of the _____.

4. The number of people who attended the event has been placed at _____.

5. Aside from an assortment of popular speakers, _____ and Joan Baez also performed.

6. National news exposure of the march helped to propel the topic of _____ to the forefront of the American consciousness.

7. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech was the most _____ event of the protest.

8. Dr. King's address to the audience is known as the _____ speech.

9. In his speech, Dr. King stated that he hoped America would one day live up to the true meaning of its _____.

10. Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech is regarded as one of the finest examples of _____ ever delivered.

TRUE/FALSE: *Indicate whether the statement is true or false. If the statement is false, write the correct word in the space provided to make the statement true.*

1. _____ The March on Washington occurred in August of 1963.

2. _____ The event actually took place in Landover, Maryland.

3. _____ The Northern Christian Leadership Conference was one of the key organizers of the event. _____
4. _____ Organizers of the march hoped to bring the issues of racial inequality and injustice to the forefront of the American political scene.

5. _____ An estimated 25,000 people turned out for the event. _____
6. _____ More than five hundred members of the media were sent to cover the event. _____
7. _____ Bob Dylan was the leader of the SCLC who spoke at the event.

8. _____ During his speech, Dr. King stated that he hoped for his children to be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. _____
9. _____ Martin Luther King Jr. began his speech with the line "*Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!*" _____
10. _____ Dr. King's speech at the March on Washington was voted the greatest American speech of the 20th Century. _____

Answer Key:

The March on Washington Multiple Choice:

- 1) D
- 2) D
- 3) B
- 4) B
- 5) B

Student Response for The March on Washington:

- 6) Student responses will vary, but both questions should be addressed. They might mention media ratings, support for the cause, or gaining national exposure as possible motives.

Guided Reading for The March on Washington:

- 1) March on Washington
- 2) Racial inequality
- 3) Lincoln Memorial
- 4) 250,000
- 5) Bob Dylan
- 6) Civil Rights
- 7) Anticipated
- 8) "I Have a Dream"
- 9) Creed
- 10) Oratory

True/False:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1) T | 6) T |
| 2) F – Washington DC | 7) F – Martin Luther King Jr. |
| 3) F – Southern Christian Leadership Conference | 8) T |
| 4) T | 9) F - concluded |
| 5) F – 250,000 | 10) T |