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# FREE PREVIEWS

READERS THEATER OR STAGE PERFORMANCE - GRADES 3 - 8

# Martin Luther King's Plays

**Aligns to  
Common  
Core**

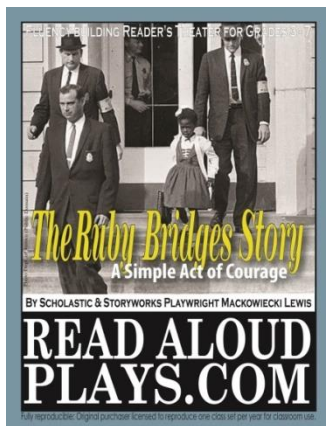
BY SCHOLASTIC & STORYWORKS PLAYWRIGHT MACKOWIECKI LEWIS

# READ ALOUD PLAYS.COM

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# MLK Reader's Theater Free Preview Pack

Here are some top MLK and Civil Rights reader's theater scripts. The first page of each appears on pages 5-11. You'll find complete versions at the *Mackowiecki Lewis* store on TpT or the *ReadAloudPlays* store on Etsy. Most were originally published in Scholastic classroom magazines such as *Storyworks* and *Scope*, so they've been professionally vetted and edited. Visit *ReadAloudPlays.com* for details. Happy directing!



## Ruby Bridges: A Simple Act of Courage

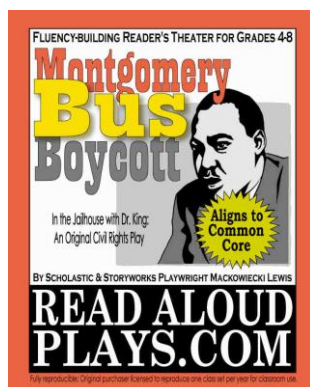
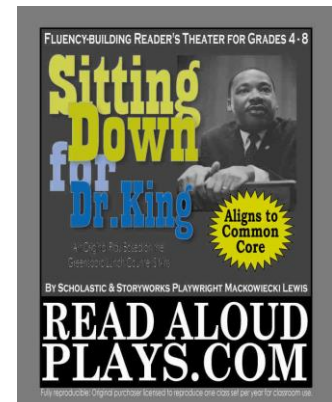
“Nothing can be more moving than watching a small black child climbing the steps of her elementary school that historically and legally did not welcome her presence,” said actor and civil rights crusader Harry Belafonte. This play is based on the events of 1960 depicted in Ruby’s own book, *Through My Eyes*.

Parts for from 12 to 24 students. Suitable for reader’s theater, podcast, or full stage production. Includes two comprehension activities (CCSS *Literature items 1, 2, 3, 4, 10; RI 1,2, 8*). Available on TpT.

## Sitting Down for Dr. King: The Greensboro Sit-ins

Originally published in the January 2003 issue of *Storyworks* magazine, *Sitting Down for Dr. King’s* dramatic conclusion has made it one of the most frequently republished in the Civil Rights series. Set during the Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-ins of 1960, the event is viewed through the eyes of a middle class white boy who gets angry when the protests prevents him from enjoying his family celebration at the Woolworth.

For grades 4 - 8. Parts for 7 to 14 students. Ten pages including comprehension activity and key; CCSs *Literature items #s 1,4, and 10*. Available on TpT.



## In the Jailhouse with Dr. King

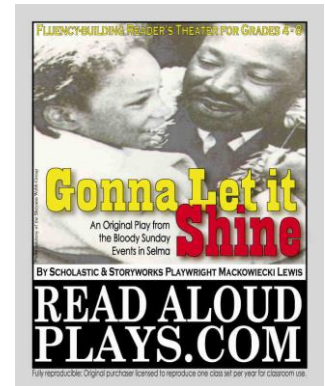
Historical fiction. Set during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, “Jailhouse” tells the story of a angry black teen who finds himself in jail with Dr. King. The teen is there because he has lashed out at oppressive society, but he soon learns about and sees Dr. King’s commitment to non-violence first hand.

Ideal for grades 5-7. Parts for 9 to 14 students plus innumerable extras. Eight pages including comprehension activity; CCSs *Literature items 1, 3, 4, and 10*. Available on Etsy.

## Gonna Let it Shine

Non-fiction from the Jan. 2012 issue of *Storyworks*. Based on 8-year-old Sheyann Webb's firsthand account of her involvement in the "Bloody Sunday" events of 1965 in Selma, Alabama. Sheyann is historically regarded as MLK's "youngest freedom fighter."

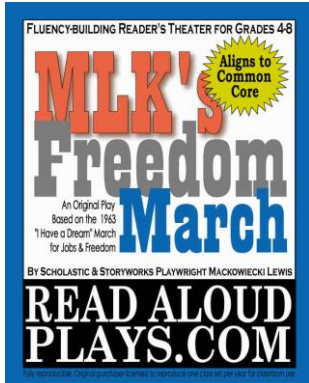
For grades 3-7. Parts for 10 to 14 students plus innumerable non-speaking extras. Eleven pages including comprehension activity and key; CCSs Literature items #1,2,3,6, 9, and 10 and Information Text items #1,2,3, and 10. Available on Etsy.



## MLK's Freedom March

Historical fiction originally published in the Feb./Mar. 2010 issue of Scholastic's *Storyworks* magazine. Tells the story of a family who overcome their struggles to gather together at the 1968 March for Jobs and Freedom in Washington D.C. where Dr. King delivers his I Have a Dream speech.

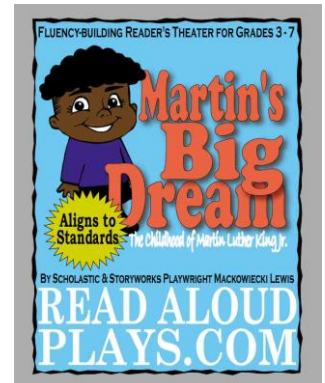
For grades 3-7. Parts for 11 students. Ten pages. Includes comprehension activity and key; CCSs 1,2,3,4, 10). Available on Etsy.



## Martin's Big Dream: The Childhood of Martin Luther King

Originally published in the Jan. 2000 issue of *Storyworks* and reprinted in the Jan./Feb. 2003 issue of *Instructor* magazine. Historical fiction based on King's own writing. Reveals an incident from King's childhood in which he was denied being able to play baseball with his white friends. According to King's autobiography, this was a factor in his becoming a Civil Right Crusader.

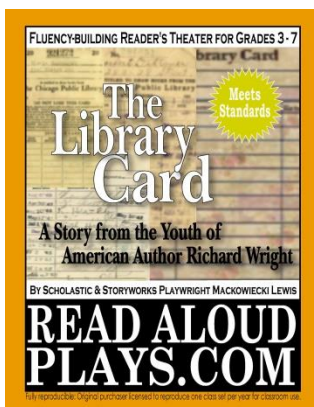
For grades 3-7. Parts for 10 to 12 students. Ten pages including comprehension activity and key; CCSs Literature items #s 1,4, and 10. Available on Etsy.



## The Library Card

Based on an incident from author Richard Wright's youth in which he was denied access to the public library due to his race. The story was popularized in William Miller's inspiring picture book, "Richard Wright and the Library Card" (Lee & Low, 1997), but was originally told in Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy*.

Parts for 9 actors and suitable for reader's theater, podcast, or stage performance in grades 3 – 7. Eight pages including comprehension activity; CCSs Literature items 1, 3, 4, and 10. Available on Etsy.



*All plays include public school performance rights and license to print a full class set every year for use in the original purchaser's classroom. Visit [ReadAloudPlays.com](http://ReadAloudPlays.com) for details and a couple tiny limitations.*

# Reader's Theater by Mack Lewis from *ReadAloudPlays.com*



## Civil Rights Plays

**Claudette Colvin:** The Girl Who Got Arrested  
**Gonna Let it Shine:** Selma to Montgomery March  
**How Jackie Robinson Changed America**  
**Martin's Big Dream:** The Childhood of MLK  
**In the Jailhouse with Dr. King--**Montgomery  
**MLK's Freedom March—1963**  
March on Washington  
**The Library Card:** Richard  
Wright  
**Ruby Bridges:** A Simple Act of  
Courage  
**Sitting Down for Dr. King:** The  
Greensboro Lunch Counter  
Sit-ins  
**We Shall Overcome:** The  
Birmingham Children's Crusade

## Classic Short Stories

**A Piece of String** -- Maupassant  
**A Retrieved Reformation** – O.Henry  
**A Christmas Carol** -- Dickens  
**Cyclops: The Monster in the Cave**  
**Gabriel Grub** – Dickens' Gothic Christmas tale  
**Rikki Tikki Tavi** – Kipling  
**Sleepy Hollow** -- Irving  
**The Birthmark** –Hawthorne  
**The Gift of the Magi** – O.Henry  
**The Monkey's Paw** – Jacobs  
**The Necklace** -- Maupassant  
**The Open Window** – Saki  
**The Tell-Tale Heart** -- Poe  
**The Nose** – Gogol  
**How the Elephant Got its Trunk** – Just So Stories

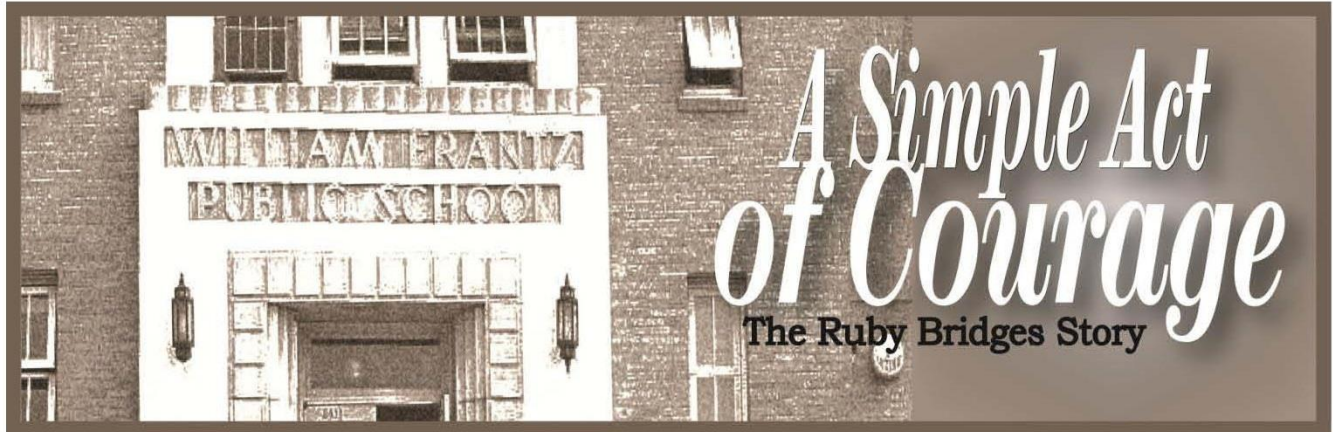
## American History

**President Lincoln's Spies & Rebels**  
**Box Brown's Freedom Crate**  
**Fly Me to the Moon:** The Apollo Moon Landing  
**Juneteenth:** Freedom for the First Time  
**Girl. Fighter. Hero:** Sybil Ludington  
**Lewis & Clark and Bird Girl**  
**Ponce de Leon:** The Fountain of  
Youth  
**Stolen Childhoods:** Crusade to End  
Child Labor  
**The Legend of Betsy Ross:** Fact or  
Fiction  
**The Secret Soldier:** The American  
Revolution  
**Two Plays from the American  
Revolution**  
**Newsies:** The Newsboy Strike of  
1898  
**The Newsies Musical** (Not your Disney version!)  
**The War of 1812**  
**As American as Apple Pie** – Independence Day  
**War Stories:** Honoring Vets on Veterans' Day  
**Argument at Mount Rushmore**  
**President's Day Dream** – The meaning of  
President's Day



## Still Others!

**Pip & the Prisoner**—from *Great Expectations*  
**Peter Rabbit**  
**Escape from the Blacking House**—the Youth of  
Charles Dickens  
**Penelope Ann Poe's Amazing Cell Phone:**  
Modernized Tell-Tale Heart  
**King Edward & the Siege of Calais**



***In 1960, African-Americans faced discriminated in every walk of life, even in schools. That's why a six year old girl named Ruby had to risk her health and happiness in a simple act of courage.***

*Play Script by Mack Lewis • Based on real events as described in Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges*



## **Characters:**

**Narrators 1 & 2 • Historians 1 & 2**

**Ruby Bridges • Mr. & Mrs. Bridges** – *Ruby's parents*

**Visitors 1 & 2** – *men from the NAACP* • **Protestors 1, 2, & 3** • **Marshals 1 & 2**

**Principal** • **Parents 1 & 2** • **Mrs. Henry** – *Ruby's teacher*

**Yolanda & Pamela** – *Ruby's friends* • **Boy** • **Classmates 1, 2, & 3** (*non-speaking*)

## **Scene One: Nov. 14, 1960**



**H1:** Desegregation hit New Orleans like a hurricane.

**H2:** Police sirens blew through town as if gale-force winds.

**H1:** Angry mobs and motorcycle cops thundered through the streets.

**H2:** And in the middle of it all stood a six year old girl named Ruby.

**Marshal 1:** Stay between us, Ruby. Look straight ahead.

**Marshal 2:** Pay no attention to the crowd.

**N1:** Ruby is surrounded by Federal marshals, but there is no ignoring the fury.

**N2:** From behind barricades, protestors hurl jeers—nasty insults directed at Ruby.



# Sitting Down for Dr. King

Based on the Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit-in of 1960



## Cast:

### HISTORIAN

**ADULT DAVID** – *the Narrator*

**DAVID NICHOLSON** – *a twelve year old boy*

**MRS. NICHOLSON** – *David's mother*

**GRANDMA** – *David's grandmother*

**BINK** – *David's six year old sister*

**PROTESTER #1**

**PROTESTER #2**

**PROTESTER #3**

**WAITRESS**

**MAN #1**

**MAN #2**

**POLICEMAN**

**HISTORIAN:** In the 1960's, Woolworth's was one of many large department store chains with lunch counters.

**WAITRESS:** Boy howdy. If it isn't the Nicholson family back again. Weren't you in here just last week?

**DAVID:** Yes, ma'am. I've been getting' good marks in school, so we aim to celebrate!

**WAITRESS:** Well what'll it be? Rhubarb pie? Banana split?

**DAVID:** Nope, we'll have the usual.

**BINK:** That's right. The usual.

**ADULT DAVID:** My little sister's name is Emily, but we all call her Bink.

**MRS. NICHOLSON:** Make that three, Gladys.



## Scene One

**ADULT DAVID:** When I was a kid growing up in North Carolina, my mom would sometimes take us to the Woolworth for a special treat.

An original play set during the Montgomery Bus Boycott of '56

# In the Jailhouse with Dr. King



By Mack Lewis ♦ ReadAloudPlays.com



## Cast of Characters:

- ♦ **Emmitt**—a 13 year old African-American ♦ **Voice**—Emmitt's voice later in life
- ♦ **Historian**—the historical narrative ♦ **Dr. King**
- ♦ **Bus Driver** ♦ **Shop Owner** ♦ **Stranger** ♦ **Policeman**
- ♦ **Detainee 1, 2, and 3** ♦ **Mayor** ♦ **Man** ♦ **Woman**



## Prologue

*Montgomery, Alabama*

VOICE: Truth is, folks been colorin' me bad since the day I was born. It didn't seem to matter where I went or what I did, people always got to hollerin' at me.

BUS DRIVER: Get outta there, boy! Those seats are for whites only. You know the rules.

SHOP OWNER: Are you lookin' for trouble? How many times do ya have to be told to come in through the back?!

HISTORIAN: Racial prejudice made Alabama in the 1950s frustrating for everyone. But it may have been especially confusing for black children.

VOICE: I got to hearin' how bad I was so much, well, I guess I started believin' it.

STRANGER: You there. Get away from that drinking fountain! You know it's not for your kind!

POLICEMAN: Can't you read the sign? This park is for whites only!

VOICE: I couldn't read much, but I could read that. It seemed to me there were only two words a black boy needed to know: *whites only*. By the time I turned thirteen, I'd had it with "whites only."

What does this line suggest about Emmitt's attitude?

During a dangerous time in America, a young girl  
joins the fight for freedom



## The Selma to Montgomery March & the 1965 Voting Rights Act



### *Cast:*

- ◆ Sheyann Webb – *an eight-year-old girl*     ◆ Rachel West – *her nine-year-old friend*
- ◆ Adult Sheyann   ◆ Historian   ◆ Narrator
- ◆ Dr. King   ◆ Rev. Hosea Williams
- ◆ Mr. Webb   ◆ Mrs. Webb – *Sheyann's parents*
- ◆ Clerk – *at the courthouse*   ◆ Lady   ◆ Marcher   ◆ Lawman   ◆ Farmer



### *Scene One - Selma, Alabama, 1965*

**Adult Shey:** The 15th Amendment gave African-Americans the right to vote way back in 1870.

**Historian:** But nearly one hundred years later, black people were still being denied access to the polls.

**Narrator:** Three hundred people have marched to the courthouse in Selma, Alabama, to register to vote. Most in line won't be allowed inside.

**Adult Shey:** I was there when Amelia Boynton and other Civil Rights leaders led these marches. These events often ended with all the marchers being arrested.

**Narrator:** An old farmer is trying to register, but he's required to take a "literacy test."

**Historian:** Literacy tests were rigged for failure. White people didn't have to take them.

**Farmer (reading):** 'Who was Zachary Taylor's vice-president?' Why, that it'd be...





An Original Play by Mack Lewis

# MLK's Freedom March

Based on the 1963 "I Have a Dream" March for Jobs & Freedom



## Cast:

- Historians 1 & 2   ★ Adult Lucy – *the Narrator*   ▪ Lucy – *an eleven year old girl*
- James – *Lucy's teenaged brother*   ▪ Mom & Dad – *their parents*   ★ Grandma
- Clayton – *a young man from California*   ▪ Erik – *a young man from Ohio*
- ★ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



## Scene One

### *The Dinner Table*

ADULT LUCY: I was still just a kid in 1963, but even I could see America was still divided.

HISTORIAN 1: In many communities black people were still denied the right to vote.

HISTORIAN 2: They also had a hard time finding jobs, and even when they did, they were often paid less money for doing the same work.

HISTORIAN 1: There were marches and protests, with participants demanding an end to **segregation** and for **equality** in housing opportunities and education.

HISTORIAN 2: The March on Washington was about jobs—about black people getting fair and equal pay.

ADULT LUCY: My family and I were gathered around the dinner table when my brother James brought up the March.

DAD: I don't know how they expect a man to take care of his family on less than \$2 an hour.

MOM: Your father asked for a raise, but his boss said no.

JAMES: That isn't fair.

DAD: That's just how it is.

An Original Play by Mack Lewis



# Martin's Big Dream

How Martin Luther King's Childhood Influenced his Mission

## *Characters:*

**Martin**--Martin Luther King, Jr. as a boy    **Clark and Wallace**--the sons of the local grocer  
**Daddy King**--Martin's father    **Medgar**--Martin's friend    **Mrs. King**--Martin's mother  
**Narrators 1 and 2**    **Viola and Lorraine**--older women in Martin's church  
**Mrs. Conner**--the grocer's wife    **Adult Martin**--Martin Luther King, Jr. as an adult



## Scene 1 *the sandlot*

NARRATOR 1: Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up in Georgia back in the days when Babe Ruth was still hitting homeruns and movies were always filmed in black and white.

CLARK: Pitch it, Wallace.

MARTIN: Can I play, too?

NARRATOR 2: Martin enjoyed singing and riding his bike. He delivered newspapers. And he loved to play baseball with two white boys in the neighborhood.

WALLACE: Hey, yeah! Martin is on my team!

CLARK: Nuh uh! I get him. He played on your team last time.

WALLACE: So? I called it! He's on my team.



# The Library Card

A Story from the Youth of American Author Richard Wright

Originally adapted for and published in *Storyworks Magazine* under the title "Richard Wright & The Library Card"



## Cast of Characters:

- Richard Wright – *an African-American boy*
- Roxie and Maggie – *Richard's childhood friends and the story's narrators*
  - Grandpa – *Richard's grandfather*
- Mr. Falk, Mr. Gerald, and Mr. Olin – *Richard's bosses at the clinic*
  - Librarian
  - Woman



## Scene 1 – The Deep South

**Roxie:** Our friend Richard used to always say he was glad he was born in 1908 'stead of 1808.

**Maggie:** But even though slavery was gone, life in the Deep South was still tough for *colored* folk.

**Roxie:** That's right. If you were black like Richard, you couldn't vote, you couldn't go to a good school ...

**Maggie:** You couldn't even get a library card.



**Roxie:** It's no wonder Richard was still dreamin' of being free.

**Richard:** What's that you're thinkin' about, Grandpa?

**Grandpa:** I was just thinkin' how when I was your age I was a slave runnin' away from my master.

**Richard:** Didn't he come after you?

**Grandpa:** Sure he did, but by then I was fightin' in the war so that all slaves could be free. I may have been just a boy, but I fought as hard as any man. I fought in the rain and the mud.

**Richard:** Weren't you scared?