

Coloring Our World:

• Keep 'em Reading •

Grades
K-4

by | Suzanne Driscoll

Luminaries of the 1960s

If there ever was a decade representing change, it was the 1960s. This year, the 40th anniversaries of the lunar landing and the Woodstock Music Festival remind us of those years and all the people who fought for a better world in the areas of race relations, women's rights, environmental responsibility, and the promotion of peace.

In addition to well-known luminaries of the 1960s such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Neil Armstrong, it may be interesting for students to learn about Rachel Carson, whose efforts led to the ban on DDT in growing crops, or Ralph Nader, who was among the first people to use the law as a weapon to help save the environment and promote automobile safety. Betty Friedan worked for equal educational and employment opportunities for women, and Cesar Chavez organized migrant farm workers to fight for better working conditions. The efforts of people like these colored our world—for the better.

The key to getting children to understand the challenges of working for change in the 1960s is to encourage them to put themselves in the place of someone who lived during this turbulent time. For example, what did it feel like for Rosa Parks to be arrested for not giving up her seat on the bus? What must it have been like for first-grader Ruby Bridges, who entered a previously all-white school, surrounded by guards and lots of angry parents shouting at her? What were the working conditions like for a young Mexican migrant laborer in California during the 1960s? How would you feel if you wanted to be an astronaut and were told you couldn't because you were a girl?

There are many fine biographies for children of all ages to learn about the luminaries who worked hard for change during the 1960s. Whether you are planning activities for Black History or Women's History months, or want to develop a completely integrated unit of language arts, math, science, social studies, music, and art to learn about this colorful time in U.S. history, resources are plentiful. A bibliography is provided at the end of this article; here are activities that can be adapted to many of them.

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Gather a collection of biographies on leaders from the 1960s and ask students to choose one to read and research. Then have them prepare a first-person biographical presentation for the class. Ask them to dress up or bring props to aid them in "becoming" the person.
- Choose a book about Rosa Parks to read to the class and ask students to write a first-person account of what it felt like to be arrested, and then to witness the start of the bus boycott.
- On a similar note, notify parents ahead of time that you are going to have a "discrimination day." Give students either a red or blue sticker to wear on their shirts. Treat students differently according to what color they are wearing. For example, students with blue stickers could get longer recess time, better snacks, less homework, etc. After lunch (where students with red stickers and students with blue stickers sit separately), switch things around and give students with red stickers privileges. The next day, ask students to write about what it felt like to be discriminated against based solely upon color.

- Read *Calling the Doves* (Children's Book Press, 2001) by Juan Felipe Herrera and as a class, brainstorm words to describe the movement for better working conditions for migrant farm workers. Then, individually or as a class, write a poem that incorporates many of the words.
- Read all or part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech found at www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm. Then ask students to write their own speech for how they envision an improved world for the future.
- There are many Web sites that can be used for finding pen pals throughout the world to foster understanding of those from different cultures. For opportunities for teachers to connect classes, visit www.zen.org/~brendan/kids-pen.html to get started.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Create a Web scavenger hunt on the Civil Rights Movement. Form student teams and give each team a list of questions about activists such as Viola Gregg Liuzzo, John Lewis, Roy Wilkins, Elizabeth Eckford, Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Ask students to write three facts about each person and describe the work they did. The first team to answer all their questions thoroughly wins.
- Provide a map of the southern states and have students locate the major cities where civil rights protests took place, including Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma, Alabama; Washington, DC; Atlanta, Georgia; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Philadelphia, Mississippi. Put students into groups, and assign each group a city. Have them research the event that took place there, present their research to the class, and label the location on the map with the event that occurred.
- Make a timeline of the events of the Civil Rights Movement, starting with Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat in 1955. The Website www.infoplease.com/spot/civilright-stimeline1.html is an excellent source.

SCIENCE

- Choose a book about Rachel Carson and then discuss water pollution. What are some types of liquids that should not be dumped into our waterways? What happens if they are? (Fish will be poisoned, we cannot drink polluted water, etc.). Demonstrate that there are some pollutants that mix with water, making them harder to detect than pollutants that do not mix with water. Fill a clear, 2-liter bottle with water and pour a small amount of cooking oil in it. Give each student a chance to agitate the bottle. Do the same with another 2-liter bottle and a small amount of dish soap. Does the oil combine with the water, or float to the top? How does this compare to oil spills in the ocean? What about the dish soap? Does it float to the top, or does the water incorporate it? Once any bubbles subside, can we see the soap?

MATH

- What was the economy like during the 1960s? It will be interesting for students to compare today's prices to those of 40–50 years ago. Devise a price listing of items such as the average house, gallon of gas, annual salary, etc. from the 1960s and today (sites such as www.thepeople-history.com/1960s.html may be helpful to you). Ask students if they think the overall economic environment was better, worse, or about the same as today. Have older students calculate the percent increase from 1969–2009 and then project what things will cost in the year 2049.



MUSIC

Music was a highlight during the 1960s with numerous folk singers writing songs to protest war and racial inequality. Here are just a few suggestions to share with your class:

- “This Little Light of Mine (I’m Going to Make it Shine)” by Harry Dixon Loes
www.songsforteaching.com/billharley/thislittle-lightofmine.htm
- “If I Had a Hammer” by Pete Seeger
www.lyricsfreak.com/p/peter.+paul+&+mary/if+i+had+a+hammer_20107670.html
- “Blowin’ in the Wind” by Bob Dylan
www.lyricsfreak.com/b/bob+dylan/blowin+in+the+wind_20021159.html
- “We Shall Overcome” by Charles Tindley
www.ksu.ksu.edu/english/nelp/american.studies.s98/we.shall.overcome.html
- “Imagine” by John Lennon
www.metrolyrics.com/imagine-lyrics-john-lennon.html

ART

- Think of all the symbolism that originated in the 1960s: a clenched fist, the peace symbol, the Woodstock logo, the women’s liberation circle with a cross underneath. Ask students to look through your collection of books on the 1960s or to do an Internet search, and then make posters of a symbol of their choice. The symbol could also be one of their own design to represent peace, love, unity, equality, etc. Be sure to get out the Dayglo colors!
- A celebration of the 1960s would not be complete without making tie dye T-shirts. For complete instructions, visit <http://jas.familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts?page=CraftDisplay&craftid=11004>.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Racial Equality

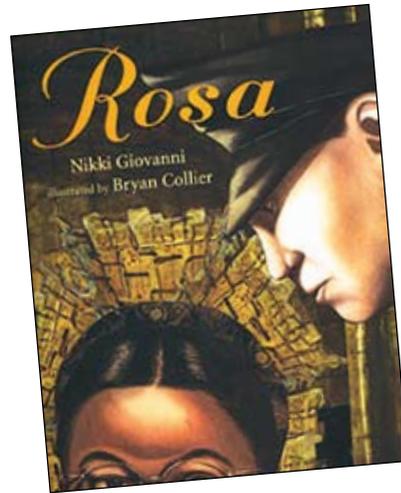
Martin Luther King Jr.

- *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* by David Adler. Holiday House, 2001. 2-4.
An easy-to-read book for the lower elementary school level.
- *Dreams: The Story of Martin Luther King Jr.* by Peter Murray. The Child’s World, 1999. 2-5.
Good history of this heroic leader with an excellent study guide at the end.
- *I’ve Seen the Promised Land* by Walter Dean Myers. Harper Collins, 2004. 2-5.
Beautiful illustrations and uncomplicated text describe the work of Martin Luther King Jr. to achieve racial equality using non-violent means.
- *A Lesson for Martin Luther King Jr.* by Denise Lewis Patrick Aladdin, 2003. 1-2.
An easy-to-read book for children about King’s childhood.
- *Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Christine King Farris. Simon Schuster, 2003. 3-6.
Written by Martin Luther King Jr.’s older sister, she describes growing up and facing discrimination as children.
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. Journey to Freedom* by Andrew Santella. The Child’s World, 2004. 3-6.
Part of the African American Library series, an excellent biography with glossy black and white photos.
- *Martin’s Big Words* by Doreen Rappaport. Hyperion, 2001. K-3.
Caldecott-winning picture book with quotations by Martin Luther King Jr. integrated into the text.

Rosa Parks

- *The Bus Ride That Changed History* by Pamela Edwards. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 1-3.
Nicely illustrated picture book with the message, “Sometimes it just takes one person to be brave.”
- *I Am Rosa Parks* by Rosa Parks and Jim Haskins. Penguin Putnam, 1997. 1-3.
An easy to read book where Rosa explains what she did and why. Nice illustrations hold the reader’s interest.

- *If a Bus Could Talk* by Faith Ringgold. Simon & Schuster, 1999. K-3.
Picture book with lovely illustrations and text.
- *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni. Henry Holt and Co., 2005. K-3.
Caldecott-winning illustrations help make the story of Rosa Parks easy to understand.
- *Rosa Parks* by Michelle Levine. Compass Point Books, 2005. 1-3.
Part of an early biography series, the book provides photos, uncomplicated text, a glossary, and timeline.
- *Rosa Parks* by Muriel Dubois. Capstone Press, 2003. 1-4.
Easily understood text accompanied by numerous photos.
- *Rosa Parks* by Jill Wheeler. ABDO Publishing Co., 2003. 4-6.
Comprehensive biography with numerous black and white photographs as well as a glossary and timeline.



Ruby Bridges

- *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges. Scholastic Press, 1999. 3-6.
The autobiography of Ruby Bridges who, at the age of six, was chosen to spend first grade in what had been an all-white elementary school. Includes a comprehensive history of the civil rights movement with photographs.

Thurgood Marshall

- *A Picture Book of Thurgood Marshall* by David Adler. Holiday House, 1997. 2-4.
Beautiful illustrations and text hold the reader's interest.
- *Thurgood Marshall: Champion for Civil Rights* by Will Mara. Franklin Watts, 2004. 4-6.
Comprehensive biography with easy-to-understand text. Photos cover much of the civil rights movement.

Other Luminaries

- *Arthur Ashe: Athlete and Activist* by Kevin Cunningham. The Child's World, 2005. 2-5.
Comprehensive biography with easy-to-understand text, black and white photos, glossary and timeline.

- *Jazz: My Music, My People* by Morgan Monceaux. Alfred Knopf, 1994. 3-6.
Nice illustrations, personal recollections and biographies of famous African American jazz musicians from the beginning of jazz through the present.
- *Women of Hope: African American Women Who Made a Difference* by Joyce Hansen. Scholastic Press, 1998. 4-6.
Stories of African American women who became leaders in journalism, politics, education, law, science and the arts throughout the last century.

Politics

John F. Kennedy

- *A Picture Book of John F. Kennedy* by David Adler. Holiday House, 1991. 1-3.
Nice illustrations and easy to understand text on the life of JFK.
- *The Assassination of John F. Kennedy* by R. Conrad Stein. Children's Press, 1992. 3-5.
With color and black and white photographs, the book describes the assassination in 1963 and the various theories connected with it.
- *High Hopes A Photobiography of John F. Kennedy* by Deborah Heiligman. National Geographic, 2003. 4-6.
Comprehensive biography with excellent black and white photographs.
- *John F. Kennedy Encyclopedia of Presidents* by Kiernan Doherty. Children's Press, 2005. 4-6.
Comprehensive biography with photographs, glossary, timelines and other sources of information.

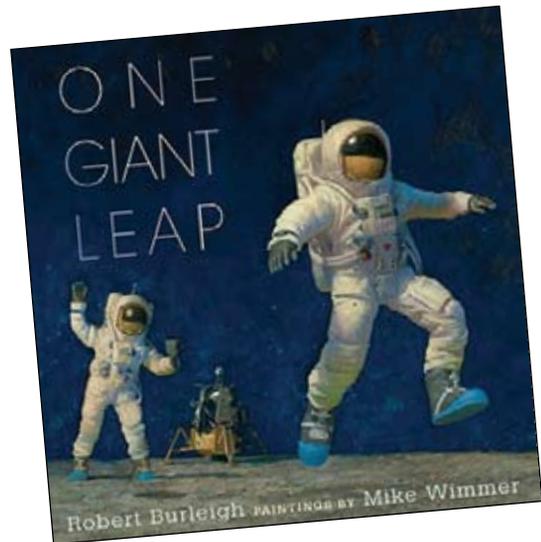
Keep 'em Reading

Lyndon Johnson

- *Lyndon B. Johnson* by Paul Joseph. ABDO Publishing Co., 2000. 2-5.
Easy-to-understand text with photos and glossary.
- *Lyndon Baines Johnson* by Melissa Maupin. The Child's World, 2002. 3-6.
Comprehensive biography with color photos, timeline and glossary.

Space

- *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream* by Tanya Lee Stone. Candlewick Press, 2009. 4-6.
The story of the "Mercury 13" women who worked for the rights of women to become astronauts.
- *Buzz Aldrin: Reaching for the Moon* by Buzz Aldrin. Harper Collins, 2006. 1-3.
Excellent autobiography with amazing color illustrations by Wendell Minor, one of six American artists selected to cover the *Discovery* space shuttle launch in 1988.
- *John Glenn: Astronaut and U.S. Senator* by Robert Green. Ferguson Publishing Co., 2000. 4-6.
Comprehensive biography with black and white photos and suggestions for further research.
- *John Glenn: Space Pioneer* by Carmen Bredeson. Millbrook Press, 2000. 3-6.
Comprehensive biography with color photos.
- *Mission Control, This is Apollo. The Story of the First Voyages to the Moon* by Andrew Chaikin. Viking, 2009. 4-6.
From *Mercury* to *Apollo 17*, color photos and illustrations help describe each mission.
- *Neil Armstrong* by Tim Goss. World Almanac Library, 2002. 3-6.
Comprehensive biography filled with color photos.
- *Neil Armstrong: A Space Biography* by Carmen Bredeson. Enslow Publishers, 1998. 3-6.
Comprehensive biography with photos.
- *One Giant Leap* by Robert Burleigh. Philomel Books, 2009. 2-5.
Beautiful illustrations transport readers across space and onto the surface of the moon as Armstrong and Aldrin did.



- *One Giant Leap: The Story of Neil Armstrong* by Don Brown. Houghton Mifflin, 1998. K-2.
Picture book with uncomplicated text.
- *Voices From the Moon: Apollo Astronauts Describe Their Lunar Experiences* by Andrew Chaikin. Viking, 2009. 4-6.
Twenty-three astronauts' recollections with 160 color photos.

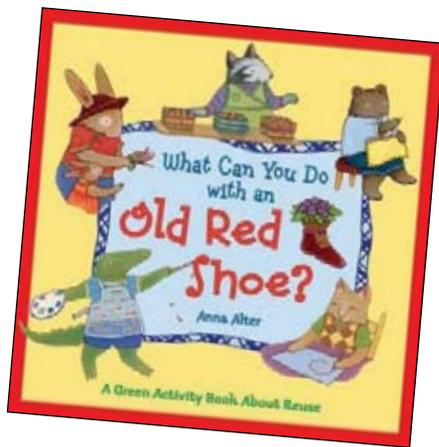
Cesar Chavez

- *Calling the Doves* by Juan Felipe Herrera. Children's Book Press, 1995. 2-5.
Includes the Spanish translation of the text that describes the author's migrant farm worker childhood.
- *Cesar Yes, We Can!* By Carmen Bernier-Grand. Marshall Cavendish, 2004. 2-5.
Award-winning picture book enables the reader to relate to what Cesar Chavez and migrant workers experienced. Spanish words interspersed.
- *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull. Harcourt, 2003. 1-4.
Lovely illustrations and an excellent history of the work of Cesar Chavez to improve the lives of migrant workers.

The Environment

- *Rachel Carson: Caring for the Earth* by Elizabeth Ring. The Millbrook Press, 1992. 3-6.
Comprehensive biography with color photos.
- *Rachel Carson and the Environmental Movement* by Elaine Landau. Children's Press, 2004. 3-6.
Easy-to-understand text filled with color photos.

- *Ralph Nader: Battling for Democracy* by Kevin Graham. Windom Publishing Co., 2000. 4-6. Inspiring biography of the man who works tirelessly for safer cars and cleaning up the environment. Includes numerous black and white photos.
- *What Can You Do With an Old Red Shoe?* by Anna Alter. Henry Holt, 2009. K-3. Easy craft projects that reuse household items help to teach children about the importance of recycling. Each page shows an animal character that comes into contact with a reusable item.



The Women's Movement

- *Gloria Steinem: The Women's Movement* by Mark Hoff. Agincourt Press, 1991. 5-6. Good synopsis with black and white photos of the life of one of the main leaders of the women's movement.
- *Woman's Work: The Story of Betty Friedan* by Lisa Bohannon. Morgan Reynolds, 2004. 5-6. Easy-to-understand text on the life of Betty Friedan, one of the original leaders of the women's movement. Includes black and white photos.

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