

Comprehension

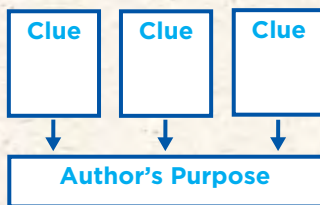
Genre

A **Biography** is a story about the life of a real person written by someone else.



Evaluate

Author's Purpose As you read, fill in your Author's Purpose Map.



Read to Find Out

What does Dr. Martin Luther King's sister want you to know about him?

my brother
MARTIN



***A SISTER REMEMBERS
GROWING UP WITH THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.***

BY CHRISTINE KING FARRIS
ILLUSTRATED BY CHRIS SOENTPIET



We were born in the same room, my brother Martin and I. I was an early baby, born sooner than expected. Mother Dear and Daddy placed me in the chifforobe drawer that stood in the corner of their upstairs bedroom. I got a crib a few days afterward. A year and a half later, Martin spent his first night in that hand-me-down crib in the very same room.

The house where we were born belonged to Mother Dear's parents, our grandparents, the Reverend and



Mrs. A. D. Williams. We lived there with them and our Aunt Ida, our grandmother's sister.

And not long after my brother Martin—who we called M. L. because he and Daddy had the same name—our baby brother was born. His name was Alfred Daniel, but we called him A. D., after our grandfather.

They called me Christine, and like three peas in one pod, we grew together. Our days and rooms were filled with adventure stories and Tinkertoys, with dolls and Monopoly and Chinese checkers.

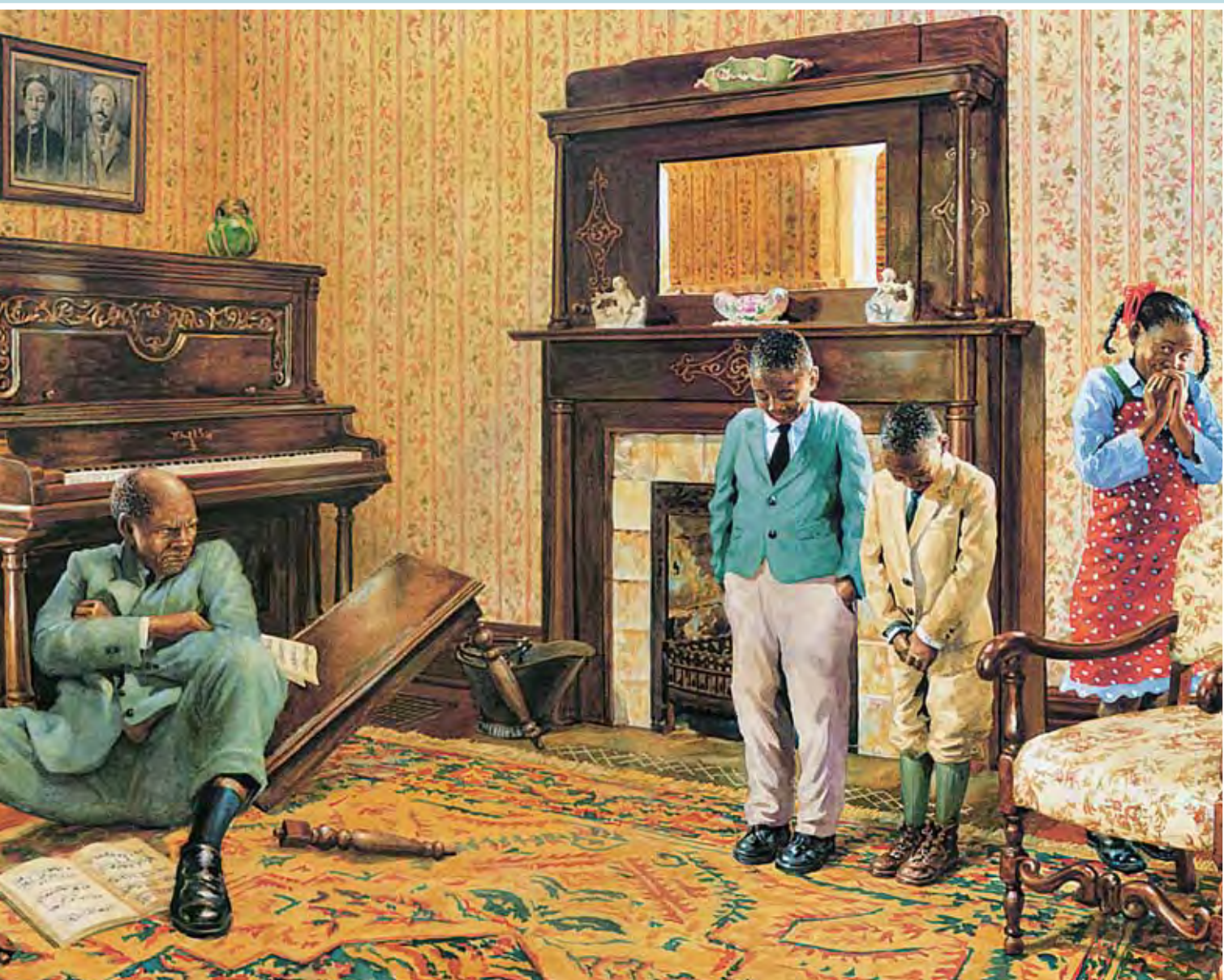
And although Daddy, who was an important minister, and Mother Dear, who was known far and wide as a musician, often had work that took them away from home, our grandmother was always there to take care of us. I remember days sitting at her feet, as she and Aunt Ida filled us with grand memories of their childhood and read to us about all the wonderful places in the world.

And of course, my brothers and I had each other. We three stuck together like the pages in a brand-new book. And being normal young children, we were almost *always* up to something.

Our best prank involved a fur piece that belonged to our grandmother. It looked almost alive, with its tiny feet and little head and gleaming glass eyes. So, every once in a while, in the waning light of evening, we'd tie that fur piece to a stick, and, hiding behind the hedge in front of our house, we would dangle it in front of **unsuspecting** passersby. Boy! You could hear the screams of fright all across the neighborhood!

Then there was the time Mother Dear decided that her children should all learn to play piano. I didn't mind too much, but M. L. and A. D. preferred being outside to being stuck inside with our piano teacher, Mr. Mann, who would rap your knuckles with a ruler just for playing the wrong notes. Well, one morning, M. L. and A. D. decided to loosen the legs on the piano bench so we wouldn't have to practice. We didn't tell Mr. Mann, and when he sat . . . *CRASH!* down he went.





But mostly we were good, obedient children, and M. L. did learn to play a few songs on the piano. He even went off to sing with our mother a time or two. Given his love for singing and music, I'm sure he could have become as good a musician as our mother had his life not called him down a different path.

But that's just what his life did.



Author's Purpose

Why does the author choose to tell so much about Martin's childhood?

My brothers and I grew up a long time ago. Back in a time when certain places in our country had **unfair** laws that said it was right to keep black people separate because our skin was darker and our **ancestors** had been captured in far-off Africa and brought to America as slaves.

Atlanta, Georgia, the city in which we were growing up, had those laws. Because of those laws, my family rarely went to the picture shows or visited Grant Park with its famous Cyclorama. In fact, to this very day I don't recall ever seeing my father on a streetcar. Because of those laws, and the indignity that went with them, Daddy preferred keeping M. L., A. D., and me close to home, where we'd be protected.

We lived in a neighborhood in Atlanta that's now called Sweet Auburn. It was named for Auburn Avenue, the street that ran in front of our house. On our side of the street stood two-story frame houses similar to the one we lived in. Across it crouched a line of one-story row houses and a store owned by a white family.

When we were young all the children along Auburn Avenue played together, even the two boys whose parents owned the store.





And since our house was a favorite gathering place, those boys played with us in our backyard and ran with M. L. and A. D. to the firehouse on the corner where they watched the engines and the firemen.

The thought of *not* playing with those kids because they were different, because they were white and we were black, never entered our minds.

Well, one day, M. L. and A. D. went to get their playmates from across the street just as they had done a hundred times before. But they came home alone. The boys had told my brothers that they couldn't play together anymore because A. D. and M. L. were Negroes.

And that was it. Shortly afterward the family sold the store and moved away. We never saw or heard from them again.



Looking back, I realize that it was only a matter of time before the generations of cruelty and **injustice** that Daddy and Mother Dear and Mama and Aunt Ida had been shielding us from finally broke through. But back then it was a crushing blow that seemed to come out of nowhere.

“Why do white people treat colored people so mean?” M. L. asked Mother Dear afterward. And with me and M. L. and A. D. standing in front of her trying our best to understand, Mother Dear gave the reason behind it all.



Her words explained the streetcars our family **avoided** and the WHITES ONLY sign that kept us off the elevator at City Hall. Her words told why there were parks and museums that black people could not visit and why some restaurants refused to serve us and why hotels wouldn't give us rooms and why theaters would only allow us to watch their picture shows from the balcony.

But her words also gave us hope.

She answered simply: "Because they just don't understand that everyone is the same, but someday, it will be better."

And my brother M. L. looked up into our mother's face and said the words I remember to this day.

He said, "Mother Dear, one day I'm going to turn this world upside down."

In the coming years there would be other reminders of the cruel system called **segregation** that sought to keep black people down. But it was Daddy who showed M. L. and A. D. and me how to speak out against hatred and bigotry and stand up for what's right.

Daddy was the minister at Ebenezer Baptist Church. And after losing our playmates, when M. L., A. D., and I heard our father speak from his pulpit, his words held new meaning.

And Daddy practiced what he preached. He always stood up for himself when confronted with hatred and bigotry, and each day he shared his encounters at the dinner table.

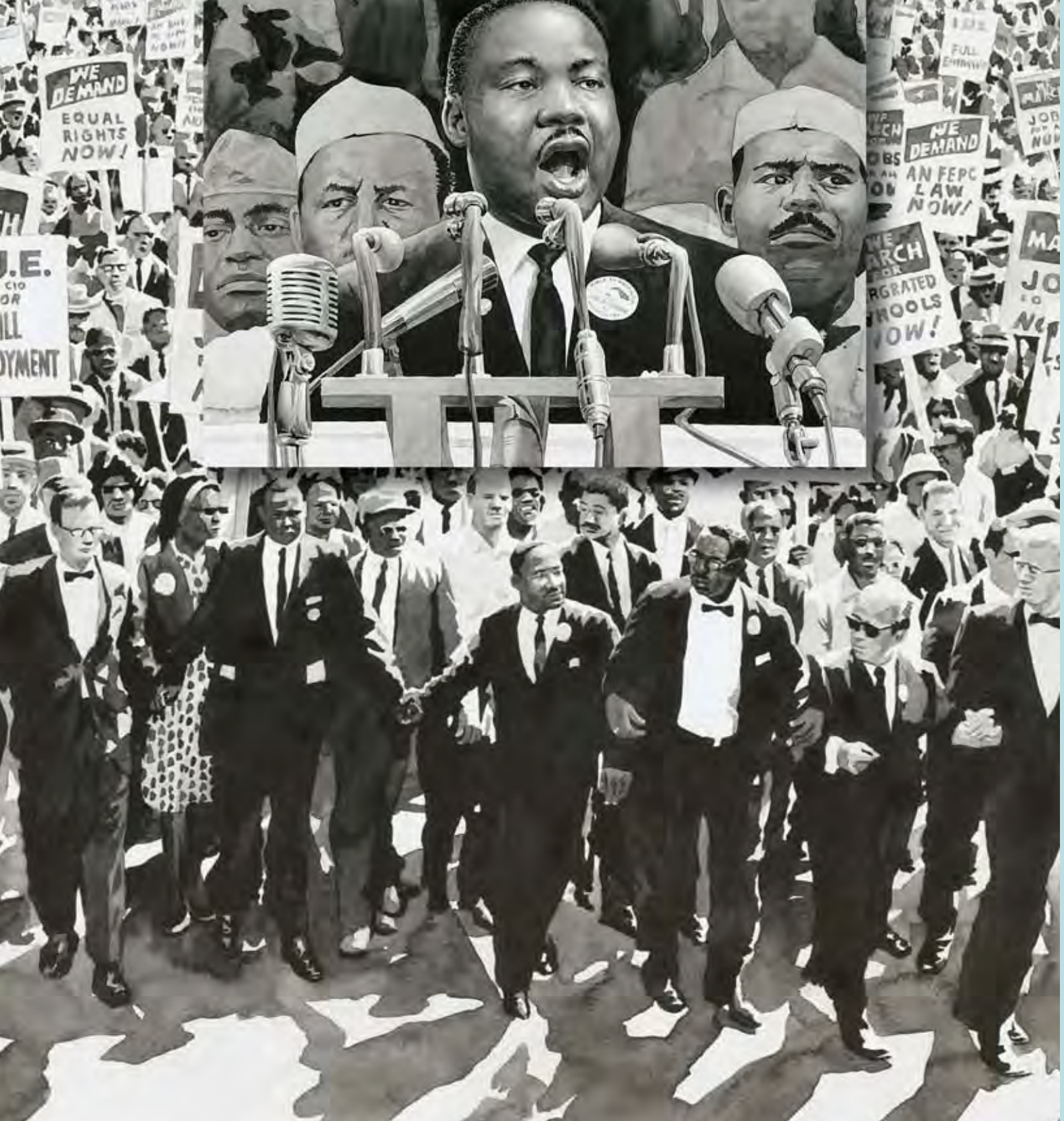
When a shoe salesman told Daddy and M. L. that he'd only serve them in the back of the store because they were black, Daddy took M. L. somewhere else to buy new shoes.





Another time, a police officer pulled Daddy over and called him “boy.” Daddy pointed to M. L. sitting next to him in the car and said, “This is a boy. I am a man, and until you call me one, I will not listen to you.”

These stories were as nourishing as the food that was set before us.



Years would pass, and many new lessons would be learned. There would be **numerous** speeches and marches and prizes. But my brother never forgot the example of our father, or the promise he had made to our mother on the day his friends turned him away.

And when he was much older, my brother
M. L. dreamed a dream . . . that turned the
world upside down.



Author's Purpose

Why does the author echo Martin's words,
"I'm going to turn this world upside down"?



The Stories of Christine and Chris



Christine King Farris wrote this story to show boys and girls that her famous brother was once a kid just like them. She saw firsthand how young Martin laughed, played, and sometimes got into trouble. Christine wants readers to see that ordinary people can grow up to do great things.



Chris Soentpiet does a lot of research when he illustrates historical stories like this one. He goes to the library to study what clothes people wore and how they lived. Sometimes he even visits the actual places where story events took place. That is why it often takes Chris up to a year to illustrate a book.

Other books illustrated by Chris Soentpiet



Find out more about Christine King Farris and Chris Soentpiet at www.macmillanmh.com

Author's Purpose

Did Christine King Farris write *My Brother Martin* to explain, inform, or persuade? How do you think the author's relationship with her brother influenced her purpose for writing? Give details.



Comprehension Check



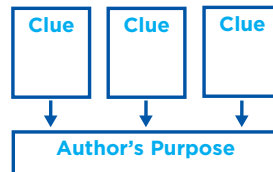
Summarize

Summarize *My Brother Martin*. State who is telling the story. Explain who Martin is and include the most important events of his childhood.

Think and Compare



1. Why do you think the author wrote about the childhood experiences of her brother? Use your Author's Purpose Map to answer.



Evaluate: Author's Purpose

2. Reread the last two pages of *My Brother Martin*. What does the author mean when she says her brother's dream "turned the world upside down"? **Analyze**
3. Suppose you had met Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he was a child. What character traits would you both have in common? Use story details in your answer. **Synthesize**
4. Why is it important to correct **injustice**? Use story details and your own experience to support your answer. **Evaluate**
5. Read "It Took Courage" on pages 306-307. Compare the experiences of Thurgood Marshall and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. How did segregation affect both men? What did they both accomplish? Use details from both selections in your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

