

What was the significance of MLK's assassination?

Learning Objectives: To explain the significance of MLK's death to the Civil Rights Movement

Key Terms, Events, Names: James Earl Ray, Poor People's campaign, Resurrection City

DR. KING SLAIN BY SNIPER IN MEMPHIS
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PostQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1987).
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DR. KING SLAIN BY SNIPER IN MEMPHIS



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. (center) with other leaders of the Memphis march on Tuesday, April 4, 1968. King was shot on the balcony of his hotel on the right.

White Man Sought in Killing of Noted Civil Rights Leader

By Associated Press Staff Writers
MEMPHIS, (AP) — A white man who was shot on the balcony of a hotel here Tuesday, the FBI said today, is the prime suspect in the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The FBI said it is looking for a white man, 30 to 40 years old, with a mustache, who was seen on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel on Tuesday night. The man was seen in a dark suit and a dark hat. He was seen walking on the balcony of the motel, which is on the corner of Beale and Poplar streets. The motel is a two-story building with a balcony on the second floor. The man was seen walking on the balcony of the motel, which is on the corner of Beale and Poplar streets. The motel is a two-story building with a balcony on the second floor. The man was seen walking on the balcony of the motel, which is on the corner of Beale and Poplar streets. The motel is a two-story building with a balcony on the second floor.



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Political Assassinations of the 1960s

During the 1960s, several important US political figures were **assassinated:**

- President Kennedy (November 1963)
- Malcolm X (February 1965)
- Martin Luther King (April 1968)
- Robert Kennedy (June 1968)

King was shot by a white gunman outside a motel in Memphis on 4th April 1968.



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Why was King so Important?

- **Good organiser** – Lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Created the SCLC, Organised the Washington Marches and others
- **Great Speaker** – Could persuade people easily. I have a dream speech etc...
- **Famous** – Was known worldwide for winning the Noble Peace Prize which attracted media attention to the movement.
- **Right Message** – His message of non-violent direct action protest with a Christian ethos inspired both black and white people to support the movement.

What quality is MLK remembered for the most?



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Consequences of his death

1. To many, King's death seemed like the end of the movement they felt he had held together. Civil Rights had **lost its greatest figurehead and organiser.**
2. His death caused **widespread mourning** all over the USA and worldwide.
3. It also **sparked off riots** across many US cities and towns, with the damage being huge – not only to the towns but to the image of the Civil Rights Movement itself.



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Consequences of his death

Civil Rights leaders like **Ralph Abernathy**, who had been working to keep things going, were seen as not being able to control the situation.

4 weeks after the assassination, leaders like Abernathy tried to keep up the momentum of the movement by leading a group of marchers to Washington to continue the **Poor People's campaign** that King had set up.

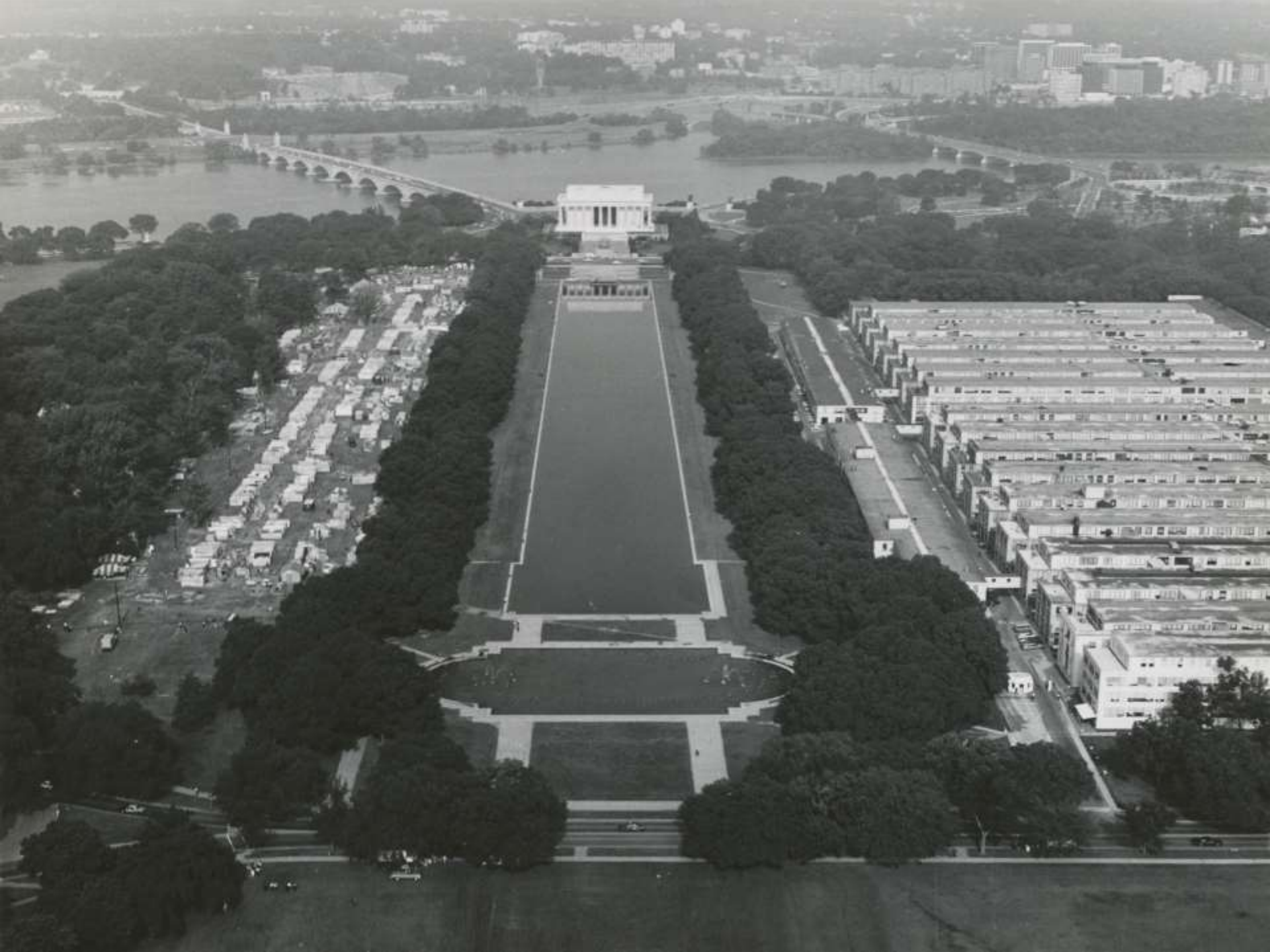


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Resurrection City

- They built a camp, **Resurrection City**, near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington to make the poor visible to the government.
- It ran for 2 months and it rained constantly. The atmosphere was disorganised and despairing.
- People fought amongst themselves and in the end, the National Guard broke the camp up with tear gas attacks.





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Decline in Support

- Various groups poured money into keeping the camp going but **few were now willing** to give money to the movement.
- This was not just because of the death of MLK. The **changing image** of black civil rights – the use of violence and unwillingness to accept help from whites – **put people off** from supporting it.



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End of the Movement?

- King had always stressed **non-violence** and it seemed like he was being proved right.
- As support dropped, groups were **less able** to stage big demonstrations.
- Civil rights just became another issue of US politics. By the end of the 1960s, protest over the **Vietnam War** was starting to take prominence.



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End of the Movement?

Complete questions 1 and 2 on page 71.

*'Why was the assassination of Martin Luther King such a blow to the civil rights movement?' **Explain your answer.** (8 marks)*

