



# The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement

*Taylor Branch*

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**The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement** Taylor Branch  
**Taylor Branch, author of the acclaimed *America in the King Years*, introduces selections from the trilogy in clear context and gripping detail.**

*The King Years* delivers riveting tales of everyday heroes who achieved miracles in constructive purpose and yet poignantly fell short. Here is the full sweep of an era that still reverberates in national politics. Its legacy remains unsettled; there are further lessons to be discovered before free citizens can once again move officials to address the most intractable, fearful dilemmas. This vital primer amply fulfills its author's dedication: "For students of freedom and teachers of history."

This compact volume brings to life eighteen pivotal dramas, beginning with the impromptu speech that turned an untested, twenty-six-year-old Martin Luther King forever into a public figure on the first night of the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Five years later, minority students filled the jails in a 1960 sit-in movement, and, in 1961, the Freedom Riders seized national attention.

Branch interprets King's famous speech at the 1963 March on Washington, then relives the Birmingham church bombing that challenged his dream of equal souls and equal votes. We see student leader Bob Moses mobilize college volunteers for Mississippi's 1964 Freedom Summer, and a decade-long movement at last secures the first of several landmark laws for equal rights. At the same time, the presidential nominating conventions were drawn into sharp and unprecedented party realignment.

In "King, J. Edgar Hoover, and the Nobel Peace Prize," Branch details the covert use of state power for a personal vendetta. "Crossroads in Selma" describes King's ordeal to steer the battered citizen's movement through hopes and threats from every level of government. "Crossroads in Vietnam" glimpses the ominous wartime split between King and President Lyndon Johnson. As backlash shadowed a Chicago campaign to expose northern prejudice, and the Black Power slogan of Stokely Carmichael captivated a world grown weary of nonviolent protest, King grew ever more isolated. As Branch writes, King "pushed downward into lonelier causes until he wound up among the sanitation workers of Memphis." A requiem chapter leads to his fateful assassination.

## The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement Details

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## From Reader Review The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement for online ebook

### Eddie says

#### The 'Years' just flew by.

One would be hard-pressed attempting to condense a 2300+ page trilogy down to a 290 page paperback, but that's what author, Taylor Branch, did. According to Branch, The King Years "...is a condensation, a short distillation, of the 18 most essential moments in the Civil Rights movement between [19]54 and 1968. It's kind of like a re-introduction and re-interpretation of a transformative era in our history." You would probably agree that it is always good idea to get reacquainted with Dr. King, his words and his deeds; and The King Years gives you a chance to do that without a huge commitment. The King Years, providing highlights from Birmingham to Selma to Memphis, just to name a few, offers enough moments of the movement to satisfy but yet leaves you yearning for much, much more.

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### Anna says

Uncle Tom recommended Taylor Branch's work.

Very good read. Look forward to reading the complete works. So many fascinating and inspiring people. So much tragedy. A lot unresolved. Puts everything in perspective.

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### Ray says

"*The King Years*", by Taylor Branch, extracts a lot of material from the author's earlier and more complete works on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's public life (*Parting the Waters*, *Pillar of Fire*, and *At Caanan's Edge*). Therefore, by its nature, it's a little more broken up and segmented than a complete continuous narrative would be. But it highlights many of the most important features of "the King Years", from his early days preaching non-violence in 1954 through his fight for civil rights in the early sixties, until his assassination in 1968.

For those not old enough to remember those times, it's a powerful and moving story of overcoming racial injustice of that era, and of the fight for the right to vote. It's hard to accept that sixty or so years ago, many blacks, especially in the deep south, were prevented from voting and from receiving full civil rights under the law. Moving from that era to an era of full freedom and justice was a struggle, told well in this book.

A sad aspect of the book is not simply in hearing of the injustice of the time, of hearing of so many who risked injury and death to fight for equality under the law, and who struggled to attain the right to vote. A sad part also is in thinking that the children and grandchildren of those freedom fighters today seem to take the vote for granted. Young voters under the age of 30, and young blacks in particular, do not seem to be exercising their right to vote in many local elections. Polls tell us that people are generally dissatisfied with their elected officials, but if people simply leave the voting to a minority of the most committed ideologues, then I guess we all get what we deserve.

To those who read and enjoyed this Taylor Branch book, other related books worth trying which I'd recommend include:

Devil in the Grove, by Gilbert King;  
Freedom Summer, by Doug McAdam;  
The New Jim Crow, by Michelle Alexander;  
The Port Chicago 50, by Steve Sheinkin.

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### **Jeb says**

Good but incomplete history of the civil rights movement, centering MLK and obscuring many of the other important players as extras in the MLK story. I often found myself wanting to know more about those men and women and frustrated to see them continually cast as bit players only. Relatedly, the book severely understates the importance of women as being central to the success of the CRM. Worth a read, but only as a jumping off point.

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### **Crystal says**

Disappointing. I think you are probably better off reading the three-volume set.

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### **Eli says**

To be completely honest, I didn't finish this. But I read so much of it (50 pages from the end) that I couldn't bear shelving it as DNF.

So this is basically highlight moments from Branch's King Years trilogy. I would recommend reading the trilogy if you're interested because I'm sure there's more to get out of it. This edition moves so fast that I barely absorbed anything and I didn't think it was all explained very well. As a scholar, Branch seems wonderful. But this book really wasn't my cup of tea.

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### **Joeydag says**

I enjoyed reading this author's narrative history. He is lucid and compassionate. I may have time one day to read the full three volume history he has written to absorb all the detail he researched but this short (190 pages) book composed of 19 pieces snipped from the three volumes with short introductions gives a sense of the arc of the story. Here are some small items that I remember from this read. King made his first speech on the civil rights issues at the age of 26 and he died 12 years later. What a short life. In discussing the Watts riots (1965?) there is a quote from the LA Police chief about the end of the rioting "We are on top. They are on the bottom." Talk about community relations!

### **Fadillah says**

Before you read this book, please pick up any complete history of Martin Luther King Jr. and read it. Some of the reviews here did state that this book is too short. I somehow enjoyed this book because it's compiled of major events that eventually turned him into one of the greatest orators and incredible figures at some point. The author did construct some of the events in his writing and portrayed how MLK handled it. What a great way to invite reader to dig deep in MLK's life.

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### **Kenneth Barber says**

I enjoyed this book. It pulled major events of the civil rights era from the authors 3 volume work on the King years. A good introduction to MLK and events that defined an era

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### **Lucinda says**

I was very glad I read this book. It is comprised of selections from the author's trilogy "America in the King Years". While I lived through the events depicted, I found I had a new and better understanding of the events. I was only vaguely aware of what was going on during my college years. Later events were much more familiar. I heard Taylor Branch speak at a library luncheon and the book was included in the fee. He was an excellent speaker who certainly had a comprehensive knowledge of the events he wrote about. It was interesting, too, that the leaders of the movement are not uniformly idolized, but are presented with all their human failings and doubts. Good read.

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### **Lindaellen says**

I hate giving this three stars because I know it is an historically significant book - and because for years I have wanted to read the Taylor Branch books about Dr. King. I didn't dislike this book, but there just was not enough there for me - I guess I wanted more detail, more first-person accounts, etc. That being said, I guess I should have read the unabridged book(s) if that's what I want! I do think the story of this era in which I was a child/teenager is compelling, and Branch is a wonderful historian. Probably should be a must-read everyone who wants a quick overview of an important era in American history.

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### **Barbara says**

While Branch created this 200 pages distillation of his nearly 3,000 page trilogy on the Civil Rights Movement for those who can't handle the entire series, it stands on its own. It has inspired me to read the entire trilogy though I am not sure when I will find the time. It was eye-opening in ways I didn't expect. Though I knew J. Edgar Hoover spied on Dr. King, I had no idea that the FBI engaged in a misinformation campaign, including mailings, to undermine his organizing. I knew the various presidents weren't always fully behind the movement, but I had no idea how much Kennedy and Johnson resented Dr. King at times.

This slim volume belongs in every US history course, and does much to inform readers of the profound challenges in waging a non-violent resistance to the violence that faced African Americans in that era.

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### **Angie says**

I generally liked the book and recognize that it was an attempt to boil three impressive works down into one manageable piece. However, the editing left me often confused and I found myself having to re-read and ultimately seek out other resources to fill in the blanks left within a few chapters. This was definitely a manageable piece and I wish the editing team had done a better job. Another 50 pages wouldn't have been unbearable, but may have helped make this piece better capture the story.

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### **Anne says**

I wanted to like this book. I never studied Civil Rights Movement in school so I have had to get my information from books I read and documentaries I've watched. I listened to Taylor Branch speak at a seminar last spring and bought the book to learn more. Unfortunately, *The King Years* is too truncated. Branch has picked excerpts from his three volume set on Civil Rights which weighs in at over 2000 pages. This book at 200 pages was just too short, yet the excerpts were too dense. The worst of both worlds.

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### **Craig Kannel says**

I read the first volume of the American During the King Years, *Parting the Waters*, which took me about six months of insomniac kindle effort, so I decided to try a short cut, reading the last two thirds of this instead of parts 2 and 3 of the trilogy. It was like going from a fire hose to a barely adequate water fountain; too much detail to too little. Nonetheless, a worthwhile review of some of the highlights of the civil rights movement.

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