

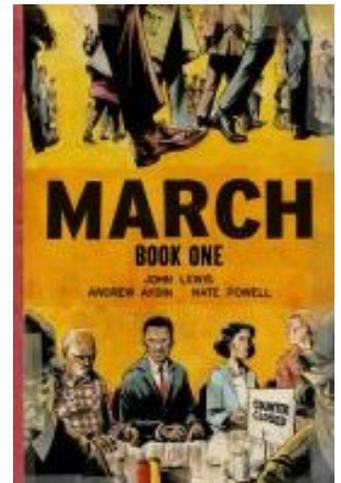


March. Book One

John Lewis

Discussion Questions

1. Why might this trilogy be entitled "March"? How many marches can you find depicted or mentioned in *March: Book One* (front and back covers, pp. 5–9, 19–20, 88, 90–91, 96, 110, 116, 117)? Analyze the multiple meanings, and connotations, of the word march with respect to the “how far we’ve come” theme (p. 19) that runs throughout the frame story. Specifically, how do the actions of Lewis and his comrades exemplify the defining characteristics of marching, such as being resolute, unified, and steady? If the word is usually used to describe the movement of an army, what is the significance of nonviolent groups doing the same? Finally, how might John Lewis’ line “We have to march,” in response to the bombing of the Loobys’ house (p. 116), signal the climax of the book?
2. How does nonviolent resistance as espoused by Gandhi, King, and Lawson (pp. 76–77) work to bring about social change, and how does it compare to other methods? Contrast the violence which opens the book with the emphasis on the “peaceful transition to power” in the 2009 television’s broadcast (p. 14) and the similarly peaceful, largely silent pages (pp. 10-12) that precede it. What is the historical message implied by this contrast?
3. In what ways do Lewis’s religious background and values influence his approach to the struggle for civil rights as well as the movement as a whole (e.g., pp. 8, 27–28, 56, 104)? Do you feel that love of one’s attacker is a requirement for effective nonviolent resistance (p.82), and are there any signs of it in the book (p. 95)?
4. History is often considered to be made up of recorded facts. In contrast, what important role might subjective factors such “dreams” and “fate” play in history, according to *March*? Trace the theme of wishes, dreams, and the “spirit of history” during the course of the book (pp. 19, 25–26, 50, 73, 87, 113). When the alarm clock on page 13 goes off, in what ways might it signify the end of a nightmare, or the transition from a dream to a reality, in terms of national race relations? Does the inauguration of Barack Obama represent the complete fulfillment of Dr. King’s dream, or merely a step?
5. The phrase “law and order” seems to imply that maintaining social order is an important function of police and other law enforcement authorities. But what happens when preserving the existing status quo makes such authorities the instigators of violence rather than those who protect citizens from it (pp. 6, 101)? How should individuals and groups respond when the justice system itself is bent to serve certain positions and interests (p. 107)?





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About the Author

Congressman John Lewis first joined the civil rights movement as a college student in Nashville, organizing sit-ins and participating in the first Freedom Rides. He soon became the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and one of the “Big Six” national leaders of the movement, alongside such figures as Martin Luther King, Jr. and A. Philip Randolph.

He was the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington and a leader of the 1965 Selma–Montgomery March (known as “Bloody Sunday”), where police brutality spurred national outrage and hastened passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. His subsequent career has included voter registration activism, service on the Atlanta City Council, and over 25 years in Congress.

Lewis received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011, and was the first recipient of the John F. Kennedy “Profile in Courage” Lifetime Achievement Award.

His 1998 book *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, called “the definitive account of the civil rights movement” (*Washington Post*), won numerous honors, including the Robert F. Kennedy, Lillian Smith, and Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, and was named “Top of the List” by the American Library Association’s *Booklist*.

His most recent book, *Across that Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change*, received the NAACP Image Award.