

Name _____ Date _____

Malcolm X

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska. His mother, Louise Norton Little, was a homemaker. and his father, was an outspoken Baptist minister. They had a big family with eight children. Their family was forced to relocate twice before Malcolm's fourth birthday.

In 1929 their Lansing, Michigan home was burned to the ground. Two years later, Earl was killed and he was found lying across the town's trolley tracks. Louise became very sick after her husband died and was committed to a mental institution. Her children were split up amongst various foster homes and orphanages.

Malcolm was a smart, focused student. He graduated from junior high at the top of his class. However, when a favorite teacher told Malcolm his dream of becoming a lawyer was no realistic goal for an African American, Malcolm lost interest in school. He dropped out, spent some time in Boston, Massachusetts working various odd jobs, and then traveled to Harlem, New York where he committed petty crimes.

Eventually Malcolm and his buddy, Malcolm "Shorty" Jarvis, moved back to Boston. In 1946 they were arrested and sent to prison for 10 years. He used the time to further his education. Malcolm's brother Reginald would visit and discuss his conversion to the Muslim religion. Reginald belonged to the religious organization the Nation of Islam.

Malcolm began to study the teachings of The Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm changed his last name to "X" because he considered "Little" a slave name and chose the "X" to signify his lost tribal name.

While giving a speech in the Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom on February 21, 1965 three gunmen rushed Malcolm onstage. They shot him 15 times at close range. Malcolm X was only 39 years old when he was pronounced dead on arrival at New York's Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

Fifteen hundred people attended Malcolm's funeral in Harlem on February 27, 1965 at the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ. After the ceremony, friends took the shovels away from the waiting gravediggers and buried Malcolm themselves.