**A Monk Rebels Name:**

**Date: Block:**

**Directions:**

1. READ the introduction and the story.
2. ANNOTATE while you read the introduction AND the story (circle unknown words, underline important phrases, “talk back” by writing your thoughts)
3. ANSWER the questions at the end of the reading.

Talk Back Below!

During the Renaissance, the Catholic Church was being questioned. **Martin Luther** was a monk who seriously felt that many things in the Church were wrong and had to be changed or reformed. For example, he thought that the sale of **indulgences** (getting a pardon for your sin) should be stopped. He believed that a person could not buy their forgiveness from God. In October 1517, he nailed 95 theses (ideas/arguments) to the door of the church at Wittenberg, Germany. These theses were printed USING **GUTENBERG**’S INVENTION THE **PRINTING PRESS** and read all over Europe. People were excited and upset. The authority of the Church was challenged. Perhaps the Church did not have absolute control over everything that was right and true. Those who complained and wished to make changes and reforms in the Catholic Church were called protestors, or protestants. This movement was called the **Protestant Reformation.**

Martin Luther was **excommunicated** (basically kicked out of the Church) in 1521. In the letter that follows, Martin Luther expresses to a friend his feelings about religion and the Church .

**Dear Kurt,**

**I am terribly sorry that I have not been able to answer your letter of several months ago until today. You can guess that I have been very busy. You ask me many questions that are difficult to answer.**

**Why did I leave the Church and become its enemy? There is so much to say and so much to explain that I would never finish this letter to you. I know that you are unhappy with what I have done, but they left me no choice. Believe me, Kurt, when I say that all I wanted to do was to make a few changes. My Church had strayed from the path of true religion. My job was to reform it, to bring it back to its real purpose. All I wanted was that people be saved from sin and find salvation by having faith in God. Faith was the answer, but they would not listen to me, a poor monk!**

**When I was studying law, I never intended to follow a religious life. Then it happened! In July 1505, I was thrown to the ground by a bolt of lightning! For the first time, I saw death. I was afraid that this was the end for me. I cried out, “Saint Anne, help me! I will become a monk.” That promise saved my life, I could not back away. My father protested, he cried and argued, but it was no use. I had to join the Augustines!**

**I was happy with the simple, harsh life of the monastery. I thought it was God’s will that this was where I would spend the rest of my days. But it was not to be. I was ordered to teach Bible classes at the University of Wittenberg. As I prepared for my first lecture, I asked myself, ‘How can common people read and understand His divine words?’ They are written in Latin! Most people cannot read Latin. The answer came to me at last: Translate the words of God into the language of the people (vernacular). I knew then that I must rewrite the Bible in German! Each person must be able to read and understand the meaning of the Bible as he or she wishes. No one needs the help of a priest to understand the Bible!**

**I knew something else. I knew that God did not want the money of sinners. Salvation cannot be bought. I saw Tetzel selling indulgences, and I exploded. What right did he have to sell salvation? What right did he have to speak for the pope and the Catholic Church? Then I realized – Tetzel was their appointed representative!**

**I understood then that people do not need priests to speak to God for them. God speaks and listens to all. Why should a person ask forgiveness for sins through a priest? Worst of all, why should we pay someone to be forgiven by God? This is not the way of God, you cannot sell religion!**

**I went up to the church and hammered a list of 95 theses onto the front door. You did not approve, you felt that I was going too far too fast. I must disagree with you, dear friend. The holy Church and its leaders have gone too far. They have lost sight of the true meaning of God and religion. They forgot that they must be absolutely pure, honest, and sincere.**

**You write that my attacks on the Church have led to war and bloodshed. You wonder how I can justify all of this fighting when I saw that I am a man of peace. This is an excellent question about a situation that I hate. You know that I detest killing. The fighting must and will stop. First, princes and kings will have to stop hiding behind the pope and the Church. They must stop using the Church as an excuse for fighting against the Protestant nobles. These Catholic princes want the Protestants’ land and money. Soon, I hope, all people will understand the importance of a simple life. Fighting will stop, and peace will be with us.**

**No, I do not feel that I am a rebel. All I want is a church that will help people to develop faith in our God. Someday, the Catholic Church will realize that it is not the only voice of God. There are other voices and other ways.**

**My wife, Kathie, joins me in sending our sincerest wishes for your peace and happiness.**

**Your friend, Martin Luther**

At this time, many German peasants were unhappy with the Church and their noble lords. Taxes were high and much of the land was owned by the Church or nobles. Peasants revolted in 1524, but Luther refused to support them after they burned castles and monasteries. The revolt was crushed, but about half of the Germans became Protestants. Luther’s ideas then spread across Europe, gaining more supporters. His followers insisted that they should have the right to explain the Bible and choose their own priests. Others joined them, for religious, political, or economic reasons. The absolute authority of the Church over people’s lives was questioned in many lands.

**Understanding the Story: Martin Luther had strong feelings about many things. CIRCLE the statements that Martin Luther made or might have made.**

1. Salvation cannot be bought.
2. People need priests to speak to God for them.
3. People need priests to ask for God’s forgiveness for their sins.
4. While all priests cannot be saints, they must be honest and sincere.
5. Religion must help people think more of God and other people’s needs.
6. The Catholic Church is the one true Christian Church.

**Questions for Review: Answer the following on a separate sheet of paper.**

1. Why did Martin Luther insist on stopping the sale of indulgences?
2. What made Luther decide to change his studies from law to religion?
3. Why did Luther translate the Bible from Latin into German?
4. Did Luther support bloodshed by protesters? Why or why not?
5. How were Luther’s ideas able to spread so far, so fast?
6. Imagine that you are Luther’s friend Kurt, a loyal Catholic. Write a paragraph response to his letter.