

# Nelson Mandela

From 1948 to 1994, South Africa was run using a system of apartheid. This meant that there were laws to keep Black people and White people apart. Nelson Mandela was a key figure in ending apartheid and bringing more equality to South Africa.



## Childhood



Nelson Mandela was born on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1918 in Mvezo, South Africa. The village where he lived is in a grassy valley. From the age of five, he was a herdboys and helped on the land, herding cattle and sheep. He enjoyed playing hide-and-seek and sliding down rocks near his home. He attended the village school and learnt to read and write, later going away to boarding school. At the age of seven, his schoolteacher gave him the name Nelson – he had been born Rolihlahla Mandela but it was usual for a new name to be given at school.

## Politics and Prison

At university, Nelson often stood up for what he believed in. He protested about the poor quality of university food (for which he was expelled from his first university). He later took part in a march to protest about bus fares and then joined the African National Congress (ANC). This was a political group which campaigned for South Africa to become an independent country and not part of the British Empire. The ANC went on to protest against apartheid laws.

There were more Black people than White people in South Africa but the country was run by White people. Only White people were allowed to vote. In 1948, apartheid laws began to be introduced to further separate Black people and White people: they were not allowed to marry each other, they were not allowed to eat together and Black people were eventually sent to live in separate parts of the country.



Nelson became increasingly passionate in his belief that everyone should be treated equally. As part of the ANC, he campaigned by making speeches, holding meetings, organising rallies and making plans for a better government. The ANC used peaceful protests but when these didn't work, government property was sometimes destroyed—always with the intention that nobody would be hurt. The government banned the ANC and arrested Nelson twice, finally imprisoning him with a life sentence in 1962.

## Freedom

Nelson Mandela was in prison for 27 years. Meanwhile, people around the world united in campaigning for Nelson's release. In the UK, the number one single 'Free Nelson Mandela' was played around the world.

In 1990, a new president, FW de Klerk, finally released Nelson from prison. The two men began to negotiate and work together. They were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. This is a very important award given only once a year for contributions to world peace.

In 1994, apartheid ended and, for the first time, Black people were allowed to vote in the national elections. Nelson Mandela was voted in: the first Black president of South Africa. As president, Nelson fought against poverty and inequality.

Nelson Mandela used sport to unite the nation: he encouraged all South Africans to come together to support their national rugby team, who were called the Springboks. In 1995, South Africa hosted the Rugby World Cup. Nelson famously wore the Springboks' jersey and South Africa won the tournament.

## Legacy

Nelson Mandela lived to the age of 95. Many people remember him as a hero whose actions helped to make life fairer for thousands of people. Each year on his birthday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, Mandela Day is celebrated around the world. People remember how he devoted his life to fighting for freedom and are often inspired to take action to make the world a better place.



# Questions

1. What was apartheid? Tick one.

- a rugby team
- a system of laws to separate Black people and White people
- a place in South Africa
- a prize

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- Nelson was imprisoned.
- Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Nelson joined the ANC.
- Apartheid ended in South Africa.

3. Find and copy **one** sentence that shows that people from different countries helped to free Nelson from prison.

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4. **Nelson Mandela used sport to unite the nation...**

What does 'unite' mean?

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5. What were the **two** issues Nelson protested about while at university?

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- \_\_\_\_\_

6. Compare Nelson's childhood with his time in prison. How were they different?

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7. **Nelson famously wore the Springboks' jersey...**

Why do you think Nelson chose to wear the South Africa rugby team's shirt at the Rugby World Cup?

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8. Describe how the author has organised this biography to make it easy to read and understand.

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9. Why do you think Nelson Mandela was finally released from prison?

Use evidence from the text.

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