

# Nelson Mandela

Coleen Degnan-Veness



## Summary

In February 1990, the world's media gathered outside Victor Verster Prison in South Africa to see a man released after 10,000 days in prison. This was no ordinary man, and this was the end of a long campaign to secure his release.

Nelson Mandela came slowly to political activism. He grew up as a reasonably privileged child and was not exposed to racial discrimination until he was at university. But once he saw the injustices, he did not remain silent. He became the first black student at the University of Witwatersrand, where he studied law.

He joined the African National Congress (ANC) which fought for a multi-racial society. But when the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948, it introduced a policy of forced separation of races, which became known as apartheid. By 1952 the ANC was encouraging protesters to refuse to obey laws which aimed at segregating the races. However, Mandela urged the protesters not to use violence, even if violence was used against them.

Mandela opened a law practice in Johannesburg with his friend, Oliver Tambo, and continued to work there throughout his five-year long treason trial.

Mandela was acquitted but he realized his life had changed. He started accepting the need for violent protests, after an act of political repression: in March 1960, the South African police massacred 69 blacks in Sharpeville.

In 1957 he divorced his first wife, Evelyn Mase and one year later married a social worker, who became internationally famous as Winnie Mandela.

Mandela was arrested again in August 1962 and sentenced to five years in prison and then, following

the arrest of ANC colleagues at Rivonia, he was tried again, for treason and conspiracy and sentenced to life imprisonment in June 1964.

He spent 18 years on Robben Island. Mandela was moved to Pollsmoor Prison near Cape Town where conditions improved and finally to Victor Vester prison. By now, Mandela had become the icon for resistance to apartheid and finally, owing to international and domestic pressure, the South African government stopped the ban on the ANC and released Mandela in February 1990.

The happy ending for Mandela's political life was quite different from his family life. He and Winnie got a divorce, but Mandela found peace again with Graca Machel, the widower of the former President of Mozambique.

Meanwhile, Mandela and the President of South Africa, de Klerk, had won the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to resolve the conflict between races, and in 1994, Mandela became the new President.

**Introduction and Chapter 1:** Although there were many tribes in the Cape in South Africa, the Dutch went there in 1652 and took their land. After a war, the British got the land, but were not against the blacks. This did not happen in South Africa, where the whites made the laws. Black people needed a pass to go from one city to another and were arrested if they did not have one. This was the beginning of segregation. In those times, Mandela was a happy black boy who attended school. At the age of 16, he learnt about the white oppression. He went to university and got to know the ANC's protests.

**Chapter 2:** Mandela married for the first time and had three children. His political life was intense, which went against his family. As there were more apartheid laws, Mandela was determined to protest against them without using violence. Mandela started the Congress of the People to include blacks, Indians and coloured people. Mandela was first arrested in 1956, and his wife left him.

**Chapter 3:** Mandela married Winnie in 1957, who became a political protester. The Pan African Congress (PAC) was created, which Mandela did not like for it only accepted black people. Mandela was tried for treason. After 5 years of trial, he became a free man again.

**Chapter 4:** Mandela went back to his tribal clothes and habits. He thought violence had become necessary, so he started a new organisation, the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). He was arrested again and had to spend 5 years in prison, where he was humiliated. A second trial started,

## Nelson Mandela

which ended with life in prison for Mandela and other MK leaders. But Mandela was still strong.

**Chapter 5:** Mandela was in prison on Robben Island. He helped the weaker and looked to the future. He received visitors who showed the world how he lived in prison. He stayed there for over 20 years. In 1982, he was moved to another prison.

**Chapters 6–7:** Even though the conditions were not better in Pollsmore prison, Winnie could visit him more often. Six years later he was moved to Victor Verser, another prison. When de Klerk became president, things began to change, and Mandela finally left prison. Mandela worked with de Klerk, with whom he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He finally became the president of South Africa in 1994.

### Background and themes

**Freedom:** What is the real meaning of freedom? Why should there be people who have no right to be free? Who decides on who is to be free?

**Tolerance and respect for differences:** Mandela does not want to be treated better than other people, he wants to be treated the same.

**Respect for one's heritage:** Blacks, Indians and people who are not white, the origin of South Africa, are considered much less than the whites. This shows a total disregard for one's own roots.

**The power of communication and cooperation:** Mandela finds a way to start negotiations with white political leaders and together, they find a way to stop apartheid.

**Ignorance:** People who have fewer rights are not given equal opportunities to learn. Those in power know that knowledge can be dangerous for them.

**Pacifism:** Mandela shows how you can protest without being violent.

**Social responsibility:** Some people who are not discriminated against do nothing to change the situation of those who are oppressed.

**Violence:** Mandela's message is one of peace. However, because of the measures taken against him and his organisations, at one point he justifies the use of violence. This shows how discrimination can only lead to disaster.

**Racism:** Mandela tries hard to fight against it. He shows how detrimental it can be.

### Discussion activities

#### Before reading

- Discuss:** Talk about the book cover. Guide students with these questions.  
*What do you know about Mandela?*  
*Who's the man on the cover? How old is he? How is he feeling? Why?*
- Discuss:** Talk about a different world. Have students discuss what type of world they would like to live in.  
*Think about a beautiful world for you. Is it dangerous? Are people ever afraid in this world? Is there hunger? Are there racial differences? Do people get equal rights? What about freedom?*
- Discuss:** Talk about Nelson Mandela. Have students make a list of the information they have about Mandela. Put students into groups and ask each group to come up with a list of five things that they know about Nelson Mandela. Elicit the lists from each group and compile a list of at least ten 'facts'. Do not confirm or correct anything at this stage. Keep the list and refer to it after the students have read each section to see if the 'fact' has been confirmed or challenged in that section. A chart can help.

INFORMATION	✓	Chapter

- Read carefully:** Have students read the name of all the chapters and the lines in italics after the title. Students predict what the book is about. Students should write their predictions so as to be able to go back to them as they read each chapter.

#### Introduction

- Discuss:** Talk about good and bad jobs. Have students read the lines in italics after the title. *What jobs did whites have? What jobs did blacks have?*

#### After reading

- Discuss:** Talk about blacks' and whites' lives. Have students discuss further differences they think existed in those times.  
You can start the discussion with these questions:  
*Were their clothes the same?*  
*Where did they buy food and clothes?*  
*Did they go to church together?*  
*How did they spend their free time?*  
*What sports did they play?*

# Nelson Mandela

## Chapter 1

### Before reading

- 7 Guess:** Have students read the lines in italics after the title.

Ask them these questions:

*What did country boys do? Why didn't Mandela understand people from other places?* Students read and check their predictions.

### After reading

- 8 Research:** Look for information about Witwatersrand University. You can guide students with these questions.  
*Are there any black students at present? How many? Is there segregation? Are there any Indian or coloured students? What can people study at this university?*

## Chapter 2

### After reading

- 9 Write:** Students make a list of the apartheid laws. You can also have them do some research to include more information about these laws.
- 10 Discuss:** Talk about protests. Have students discuss non-violent ways of protesting.
- 11 Research:** Look for information about protests in the world. Students can answer these questions:  
*Why do people protest? How do they protest? Are they violent or not?*
- 12 Guess:** *What's going to happen? Is Mandela going to be in prison for a long time? Is his wife going to come back?*

## Chapter 3

### Before reading

- 13 Read carefully:** Have students read the lines in italics after the title of the chapter. Have students read the lines below the title. Ask them to go back to their predictions at the end of chapter 2.  
*Are your predictions true?*

### After reading

- 14 Check:** Students check their predictions. Go back to the questions you asked them and their answers to see if their predictions were right.
- 15 Write:** Have students write new titles for each of the sections in this chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Before reading

- 16 Guess:** Why does Mandela look different? Have students look at the picture on pages 20 and 21.  
*Who can you see? What is he wearing? Is his hair the same or different? Why is he wearing those clothes?*

### After reading

- 17 Check:** Have students check their predictions. Have students go back to their predictions about the picture on pages 20 and 21.  
*Were you right?*

## Chapter 5

### After reading

- 18 Read carefully:** Re-read Chapter 5. Tell students to re-read the chapter and make a list of all the humiliations that Mandela had to go through in prison.
- 19 Discuss:** Compare life in prison before the trial and after the trial. What changed?
- 20 Guess:** What's going to happen? Have students make predictions as to what changes there will be in Pollsmoor Prison  
*Will he be strong? Will he die in prison?*

## Chapters 6–7

### Before reading

- 21 Guess:** What's going on? Ask students to look at the picture on page 33. *How is Mandela feeling? What about his wife? Where are they? Why?*

### After reading

- 22 Check:** Have students check their predictions. Have students go back to their predictions about the picture on page 33.  
*Were you right?*
- 23 Discuss:** Talk about making a movie. Ask students to make a list of the most important characters. Then they should decide what actors can play each role.