

# bio.

## CLASSROOM

### BIO: Nelson Mandela Classroom Guide



#### **Introduction**

Forced to live in hiding and then ultimately imprisoned for thirty years, Nelson Mandela fought his entire life to end the oppressive apartheid regime and realize equality in his native South Africa. His journey to freedom, from his childhood in the rolling hills of the Transkei region to his election as President, is one of the world's greatest triumphs. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, Mandela continues to champion humanity and is an icon in civil rights movements across the globe.

*Nelson Mandela: Journey to Freedom* documents the life and ideals of this historic figure, exploring the people and places that stirred him into action and the events that defined him. This one-hour program features interviews with those who worked with Mandela in eradicating apartheid in South Africa, revealing new insights into his skillful approach to coalition-building and his enormous sacrifices during his 27-year imprisonment. With additional background commentary from biographers and historians, *Nelson Mandela: Journey to Freedom* provides a comprehensive look at one of the most influential leaders in world history.

#### **Objectives and Curriculum Links**

*Nelson Mandela: Journey to Freedom* would be an excellent addition to any middle school or high school class on Global Studies, World History and Social Studies. Furthermore, it would be a great addition to courses with units on civil rights, ethics, or global politics. It fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: (1) Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas and Institutions, (2) Conflict and Cooperation, and (3) Patterns of Social and Political Interaction.

## Vocabulary

Using the dictionary at [www.merriamwebster.com](http://www.merriamwebster.com), an Internet resource such as [www.history.com](http://www.history.com), or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

- Adversarial
- Gamut
- Grandeur
- Idyllic
- Magistrate
- Mecca
- Odious
- Pariah
- Politicized
- Regent
- Watershed

## Critical Viewing Questions

1. The world that Nelson Mandela grew up in is referred to as an “African World”. What do you think this term means?
2. What does the name “Rolihlahla” mean? Why do you think Mandela’s parents called him this? What were the circumstances by which Rolihlahla was renamed Nelson, and why is this name change significant?
3. In Johannesburg, Mandela saw himself for the first time as a “black man in a white society.” What were the conditions of the city that led him to this realization?
4. What was the African National Congress (ANC)? How was Mandela first introduced to this group, and how was he affected by it?
5. What is the actual definition of apartheid? How do you think the South African government was able to enact and enforce laws that alienated a majority of the population?
6. What was the Defiance Campaign? What was Nelson Mandela’s role within it? How did the government respond to this movement?
7. What happened in the town of Sharpeville in 1960? What were the reactions and counter reactions to this violent event? What happened to Mandela as a result?
8. When Mandela and the other ANC leaders were finally apprehended, what were the charges brought against them? Why did these defiant figures plead guilty and refuse to mount a defense?
9. What were the conditions on Robben Island? Why do you think the ANC leaders were sent here, as opposed to given a death sentence?
10. What happened in Soweto in 1976? What effects did these events have on national and global opinions of apartheid?
11. Why did the government offer to release Mandela in 1985? What were the conditions of this release, and why did Mandela refuse?
12. After almost thirty years in prison, Nelson Mandela was released in 1990. Chosen to lead the newly restored ANC, how did Mandela approach the South African government that had imprisoned him for three decades?
13. What was significant about the election of 1994?
14. What did Mandela accomplish as President of South Africa? What personal qualities made him such an effective and respected leader?

## **Extended Activities**

### **South Africa's Long History**

From the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, South Africa was dominated by colonialism and racism. Many consider this to be the definitive period of South African history. In reality, the history of this region is thousands of years old, and is as diverse and fascinating as any place on earth. Students should break up into small groups, each assigned a different period in South Africa's history (Pre-historic, the Iron Age, colonization, 20th century). Group members should research their period, pinpointing key developments and creating a timeline that highlights them. Timelines should include captions and visual supplements. When the activity is completed, the class will have a full timeline of South Africa's history, a great resource for future discussion and research projects.

### **Challenging Apartheid**

The ANC was one of the primary organizations committed to ending apartheid in South Africa. In small groups, ask students to research the history of the anti-apartheid movement online or at the library. Then, ask students to create posters or flyers that might have been created during this era as part of the movement to end apartheid.

### **A Varied Country**

South Africans are a diverse people. They are black and white, African, Afrikaner, and Indian. They speak Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, English, and many other languages. They are Christian, Hindu, and Muslim. For this exercise, students should break up into small groups, with each assigned an ethnic or cultural body represented in South Africa. Students should research the history and culture of their group, focusing not only on the group itself, but its relationships and interactions with other groups. Students should then organize their research into a presentation or short essay.

### **Long Road Ahead**

The election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in 1994 was a huge victory for the anti-apartheid African National Congress. His election, however, did not mean an immediate cure for this troubled country. In the aftermath of apartheid, poverty, poor education systems, and lack of healthcare were just a few of the problems that plagued South Africa. Unfortunately, many of these issues remain unresolved. Students should locate one or two newspaper articles documenting one of the many ongoing problems affecting the lives of South Africans. Students should then research the origins of the problem, and the political solutions proposed and implemented. In a brief newspaper article, students should write about an issue or concern in contemporary South Africa. Students can present these articles to the larger class or group in a short presentation.

### **Websites**

This official website of the African National Congress (ANC) offers extensive information on the history of the ANC and the liberation movement in South Africa, as well as updated reports on current issues. Resources include biographies, primary source documents, maps, and information about current ANC campaigns.

<http://www.anc.org.za/>

The Apartheid Museum's website examines the rise and fall of apartheid through interactive text and images. With extensive information on additional resources, this is a

great place to begin more in-depth research.

<http://www.apartheidmuseum.org>

The Nelson Mandela Foundation website features an extensive biography, photo essay, timeline, and many other resources covering his life and times. With information about additional resources, this site is an excellent starting point for further research on South Africa and its most famous leader.

<http://www.nelsonmandela.org>

The United Nations' Human Rights photo essay on apartheid provides both a brief history and evocative photographs of apartheid in South Africa.

<http://www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/apartheid.htm>

The AIDS Foundation, South Africa website documents the growing AIDS epidemic that is crippling South Africa. With information on the virus itself and also its specific and widespread effects on South Africa, this site provides a comprehensive look at one of the largest growing global crises.

<http://www.aids.org.za>

### **Books**

Coetzee, J.M. *Age of Iron*. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in New South Africa*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1995.

Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*. New York: Touchstone, 1998.

Sparks, Allister. *Tomorrow is Another Country*. Chicago: Chicago University Pres, 1996.