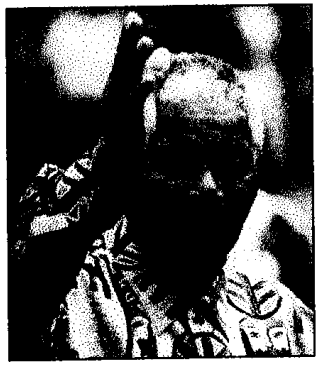
Nelson Mandela (1918–)

There was no particular day on which I said, From henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise.—From *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) by Nelson Mandela



Jailed from 1962 to 1990 because of his attempts to bring democracy to South Africa, Nelson Mandela has been both a martyr and a symbol of freedom for South Africa's black population.

Mandela was born the son of Chief Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa of the Thembu tribe. Mandela attended Methodist schools, where he was taught to identify with British colonial values. He continued his education and earned his law degree in 1942.

When he was 26 years old, Mandela joined the African National Congress and soon became one of its leaders. He strongly protested the official South African policy of apartheid, the laws requiring people to be registered by race, forcing them to live in segregated areas, and forbidding marriage between people of different races. In 1952 he and a partner formed the first black law firm in South Africa. Four years later, the government clamped down on black opposition leaders and indicted Mandela for treason. The trial lasted five years. Eventually, all the charges were dropped. During the long trial, Mandela married Nomzamo Winifred (Winnie Mandela).

In 1960 the police fired on unarmed black African demonstrators. In response, Mandela created the organization Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) to respond with equal violence. "It was wrong and immoral to subject people to armed attacks by the state without offering them some kind of alternative," he argued. Three years later, Mandela was found guilty of conspiracy to overthrow the government and was sentenced to life in prison. His first prison cell was seven feet square, with a single lightbulb and a sleeping mat. He was allowed only two letters and two visitors a year. In 1982 Mandela was finally transferred to a less brutal prison. During this time Mandela maintained his wide support among South Africa's black population and gained international support as well. Activists within South Africa and around the world demanded his release and an end to apartheid.

In 1990, after 28 years, Mandela was released from jail. The government legalized the African National Congress, ending apartheid. In 1993 Mandela won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work against apartheid, and in 1994 he became the first black president elected in South Africa's first all-race election.

1. HOW MANY YEARS DID MANDELA SPEND IN PRISON? _____
2. WHAT TITLE DID MANDELA'S FATHER HAVE? _____
3. WHAT IS THE NAME OF MANDELA'S COUNTRY? _____
4. WHO TAUGHT MANDELA AS A YOUNG BOY? _____
_____
5. 1942, WHAT PROFESSION DID MANDELA ENTER? _____
6. NAME THE POLITICAL PARTY MANDELA JOINED? _____
WHAT ARE THE INITIALS? _____
7. WHAT POLICY DID HE ATTACK? _____
8. LIST TWO IDEAS CONTAINED IN THIS POLICY THAT MANDELA TRIED TO END. _____ & _____
9. WHAT DID HE WIN IN 1990? _____
10. 1994 MANDELA WAS ELECTED AS THE _____
_____ _____

"Freedom Looming on the Horizon"

Excerpt from a Speech by Nelson Mandela, 1990

Nelson Mandela was a key player in the struggle to end the system of segregation called apartheid. In 1964 the South African government sentenced him to life imprisonment for treason. In 1990, bowing to pressure from within the country and around the world, the government released him. In 1994 Mandela was elected president of South Africa in that country's first multiracial elections. Read this excerpt from a speech he gave immediately after his release, then answer the questions that follow.

Our struggle has reached a decisive moment. We call on our people to seize this moment so that the process towards democracy is rapid and uninterrupted. We have waited too long for our freedom. We can no longer wait. Now is the time to intensify the struggle on all fronts.

To relax our efforts now would be a mistake which generations to come will not be able to forgive. The sight of freedom looming on the horizon would encourage us to redouble our efforts. It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured. . . .

In conclusion, I wish to go to my own words during my trial in 1964. They are as true today as they were then. I quote:

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Source: Steve Clark, ed., *Nelson Mandela Speaks: Forging a Democratic, Nonracial South Africa* (New York: Pathfinder, 1993), pp. 27–28.

1. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you suppose Mandela thought it necessary to warn his listeners not to relax their efforts to create a free society?

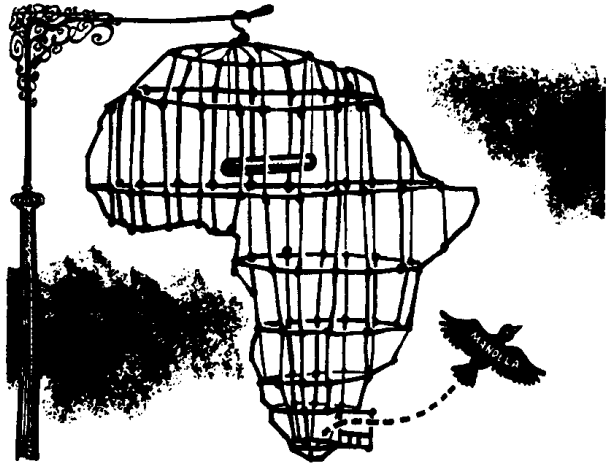
2. **Analyzing Motives** Why did Mandela oppose black domination as well as white domination?

3. **Forming and Supporting Opinions** For what ideals or goals would you risk your life? Give reasons for your choices.

Political Cartoons

Nelson Mandela: From Prisoner to President

The release of Nelson Mandela from prison and his later election to the president of South Africa made headlines around the world. Examine the two political cartoons and then answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.



Cartoon by Bob Englehart, *Hartford Courant*, 1990

INTERPRETING VISUALS

1. In your own words, summarize the message that each cartoon conveys. Cite details from the pictures to support your opinions.
2. Why do you think Englehart drew the birdcage in the shape of Africa
3. How does Aguila show the contrast between Mandela's status as prisoner and his status as president?
4. If you were going to draw a political cartoon dealing with the issue of freedom, what symbols would you use and why?

Cartoon by Dani Aguila, *Filipino Reporter*, 1994