MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION

KiDS

DISCOVER   COMPETITIONS   KIDS CLUB   GAMES

ALL   ANIMALS   SCIENCE   **HISTORY**   GEOGRAPHY

PRIMARY RESOURCES   DIRT IS GOOD
                         ACADEMY

THE LIFE OF NELSON MANDELA

Discover the world-famous human rights activist who became South Africa's first black president…

Discover the remarkable life and work of Nelson Mandela – who helped change the lives of millions of South African people – in our Nelson Mandela facts…

MORE LIKE GENERAL HISTORY

HOME IS GOOD

Get messy, explore and appreciate nat all from the safety of home!

Throughout history, lots of people around the world have faced **discrimination** – where they are treated differently because of their race, skin colour, gender, age and lots of other things, too.

Sadly, it still happens to this day! But there are some amazing people who have worked hard to make a change for the better, and helped us move towards a world where everyone is treated fairly and equally. One such person is **Nelson Mandela**…

Nelson Mandela facts

Who was Nelson Mandela?

Full name: Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela
Born: 18 July 1918
Hometown: Mvezo, South Africa
Occupation: President of South Africa and civil rights activist
Died: 5 December 2013
Best known for: Becoming the first black President of South Africa and a civil rights hero
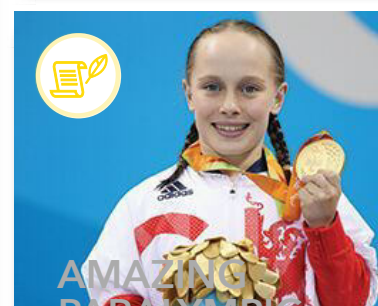**Also known as**: Madiba

Nelson Mandela's early life

15 FACTS ABOUT THE VICTORIANS

Head back in time to when Britain became the most powerful empire in world history…

AMAZING PARALYMPIC ATHLETES!

These sporting superstars are at the top of their game…

SKARA BRAE FACTS!

Discover one of Britain's most incredible pre-historic villages…

Nelson Mandela was born on the **18th July 1918** in the village of **Mvezo**, which is located in an area of South Africa called **Transkei**. His father's name was **Henry**, and his mother was called **Nosekeni Fanny**.

As a youngster, little Nelson was actually called **Rolihlahla** – it wasn't until he was seven that a teacher at school gave him the name '**Nelson**', and it stuck!

And check this out… Nelson was born into royalty! His father, Henry, was chief of a tribe in South Africa called the **Tembu**, and his great grandfather was the tribe's king! But sadly, Nelson was just twelve years old when his father died.

Nelson studied hard at school and later attended the **University of Fort Hare**, the **South African Native College**. He then moved to the city of **Johannesburg** to study law at the **University of the Witwatersrand**, before qualifying as a lawyer in **1942**, aged **24**.
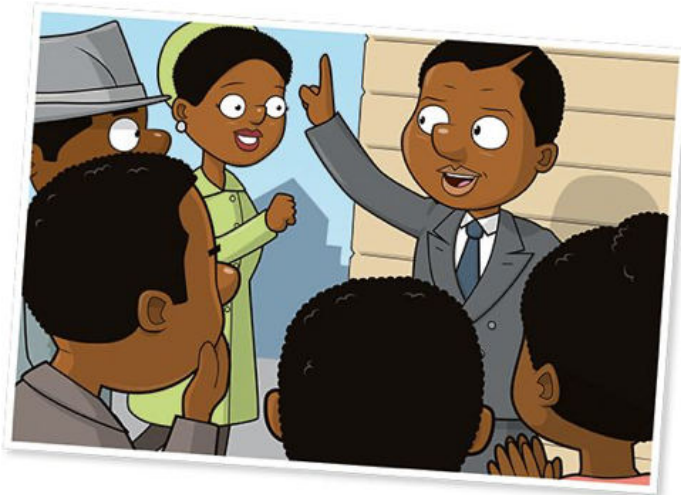
Inequality in South Africa

South Africa is home to many different **peoples** and **cultures** – so much so that it's been nicknamed the '**rainbow nation**'. But, sadly, at the time that Nelson Mandela was growing up, there was a huge **racial divide** in the country.

White people ran the country, and they generally led privileged lives with good jobs, nice homes and access to good schools and healthcare. Most black people, however, worked in low-paid jobs, and lived in poor communities with poor facilities. They had far **fewer rights**, too – they weren't even allowed to vote in elections!

Like many others, Nelson Mandela felt that everyone deserved to be treated the same, regardless of their skin colour. So, in **1944**, he joined the **African National Congress (ANC)** – a political group that strived for equal rights for whites and blacks.

In **1948** the South African government introduced a system called '**apartheid**', which furthered the country's racial divide even more. Under new racist laws, black people and white people were forced to lead **separate lives**. They weren't allowed to live in the same areas, share a table in a restaurant, attend the same schools or even sit together on a train or bus!

What did Nelson Mandela do?

Nelson Mandela became an important figure in the **ANC**, and he helped set up and lead a section for young people called the **ANC Youth League**. He later travelled the country to gain support for non-violent protests against the National Party's racist laws, too.

This activism made him very unpopular with the authorities, and Nelson was arrested for **treason** – the crime of betraying your country's government – several times.

While Nelson was under arrest in the late **1950s**, the **government banned anti-apartheid groups** such as the ANC. But that didn't stop

Nelson and his fellow activists – in fact, they felt more had to be done to bring about change.

So, even though they preferred using peaceful protests in their struggle for equality, in **1961** Nelson and other ANC leaders formed a **secret military group** called **Umkhonto we Sizwe**, or **Spear of the Nation**.

Why did Nelson Mandela go to prison?

Nelson knew he would be in big trouble if the authorities found out about the secret army and their plans, and so he kept a very low profile. He lived in hiding – and even dressed in disguise! But in **August 1962**, he was arrested on his return from a trip to **Algeria** in **Northern Africa**, and sentenced to **five years in prison**. From there, things only got worse for Nelson…

In **1963**, the police raided a farm near the city of Johannesburg and found **documents** belonging to the secret army, as well as **weapons**. The result? Nelson and seven other men were charged for plotting to overthrow the government and given **life sentences**. Nelson would spend the next **27 years behind bars**…

Nelson was first sent to a prison on **Robben Island**, seven miles off the coast of Cape Town, South Africa's capital city. He was moved to **Pretoria Local Prison** to appear in court, then returned to the Island prison for nearly ten years. In **1982**, Nelson was transferred to **Pollsmoor Prison**, and later in **1988**, he moved for a final time to **Victor Verster Prison** near a town called **Paarl**.

Throughout his time behind bars, Nelson Mandela didn't give up on what he believed in. He even **refused freedom** on two occasions, and instead chose to stand by his principles. He used his time to learn new things, including **Afrikaans** – a language of South Africa spoken mostly by white people – which earned him respect from the guards he spoke to.

When was Nelson Mandela freed from prison?

Over time, Nelson Mandela became a famous prisoner, and there were calls all around the world to '**Free Nelson Mandela!**'. For decades, countries around the world had put pressure on South Africa to end apartheid, but now the anti-apartheid movement had more support than ever.

Change for the better finally came in **1989**. The president of South Africa, **FW de Klerk**, met with Nelson Mandela and in **1990** set him free!

In **1991**, Nelson became **President** of the ANC and worked with FW de Klerk to bring an end to apartheid in a harmonious way, and introduce equal rights for everyone. Their work towards making South Africa a more peaceful place won the pair the **Nobel Peace Prize** in **1993**.

Come the **1994 general election**, all races in South Africa were allowed to vote. Nelson's hard work finally paid off – the ANC won, and Nelson Mandela became South Africa's **first black president**.

As President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela **improved the living standards** and facilities of South Africa's black population, who had suffered for decades under apartheid. He also worked hard to make South Africa a country of equality, where people of all race and colour could live together in peace.

In **1999**, Nelson Mandela retired as President and his successor was called **Mbeki**. But whilst he left politics behind, he continued to be an important figure around the world as a **symbol** of peace and equality. The same year that he retired, he founded the **Nelson Mandela Foundation**, an organisation that works to this day to promote the principals of equality, freedom and peace.

When did Nelson Mandela die?

From **2004**, he lived a quiet life with his wife **Graça**. Following a lung infection, Nelson Mandela sadly died in **December 2013**, aged 95 years old.

How is Nelson Mandela remembered?

Nelson Mandela's spirit and values are still very much alive to this day, and he will forever be remembered. He wrote a book called "**Long Walk to Freedom**", where people can read about the struggles he faced in his battle against discrimination and fight for equality. In **2009**, Nelson's birthday, **18 July**, was officially named '**Nelson Mandela Day**'. Every year on this day, people around the world honour his legacy by helping their communities and making the world a better place.

What did you think of our Nelson Mandela facts? Let us know by leaving a comment, below!

3,272 Likes

LEAVE A COMMENT

Customize your avatar ›

OK

COMMENTS

Cool!

Cool!

LOL!

Cool!

Let's take action!