

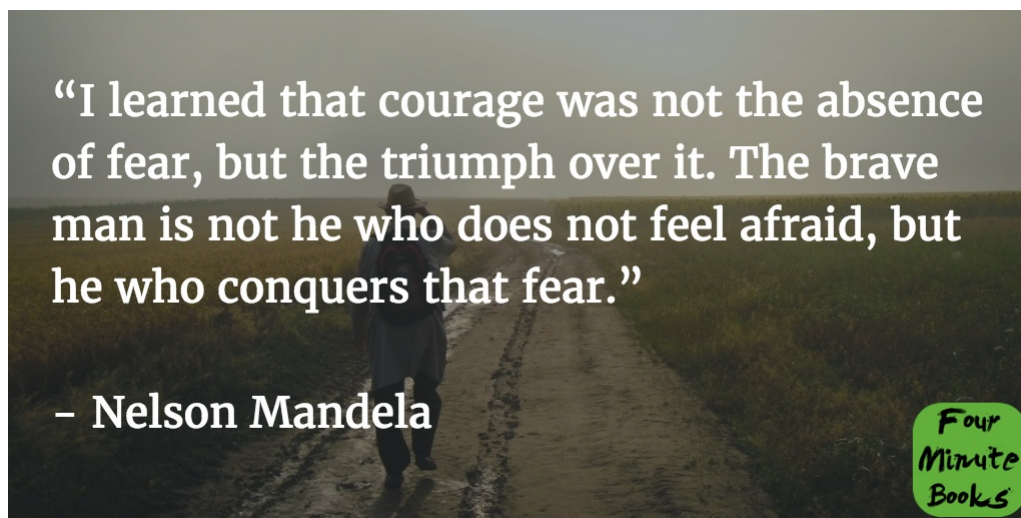
# Long Walk To Freedom Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Long Walk To Freedom* is the autobiography of Nelson Mandela, South African anti-apartheid activist, national icon and the first South African black president, elected in the first, fully democratic election in the country.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



I have a lot of heroes. Writers, creatives, entrepreneurs, actors, academics, you name a field, I can tell you a person I admire in it. People who chose themselves. There's no shortage of them and plenty of opportunity to get inspired.

However, sometimes, maybe once or twice a year, I learn about a person who did something I can't even comprehend. An achievement so big, an act of defiance so massive, I can't even remotely understand how a human being can do such a thing.

Earlier this year, Viktor Frankl was one such example. Surviving for over three years in places where every day, dying was more likely than living, I can't even imagine the scenario.

With Nelson Mandela, it's the same. In his struggle against apartheid (the racial segregation of blacks and whites in South Africa), he spent 26 years in prison, from 1964 to 1990. That's almost 10,000 days. Can you imagine going to sleep in a place that has nothing but a mat on the floor and a bucket in the corner, and waking up every morning to grueling work (mostly crushing stones) for 10,000 days and nights in a row?

Me neither. That's why there's so much to learn from the life of Nelson Mandela and that's exactly what we'll do. I tried to draw 3 high-level lessons from his biography, here they are:

1. Your best bet at finding true freedom is education.
2. If you want to be remembered, you must learn to challenge authority.
3. It's most important that you don't give up right after your biggest setback.

Would you like to be mentored by Nelson Mandela? Well, this is as close as it gets, let's do this!

## Lesson 1: Education holds the key to freedom.

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As I was reading through these blinks, the theme of violence vs. non-violence kept coming up. It probably feels natural to focus on the violent protests and Nelson Mandela's attitude towards violence as a justified means in desperate times, but if you look beyond those, you'll see that Nelson Mandela was as committed to education as very few people are.

He was the first person in his family to go to school, which is also where his teacher Miss Mdingane gave him his British name Nelson – the reason for which he never found out (but guessed it had something to do with Lord Nelson).

**From the very start of his education, Nelson Mandela realized that this was the true path to freedom.**

He studied so hard that he finished his junior certificate at Healdtown College within two years, instead of the usual three. At 19 years old, he then attended Fort Hare College, where he studied English, politics, anthropology, native administration and law.

That is, until he got expelled for supporting a major student boycott two years later. Speaking of which...

## Lesson 2: The only way to be remembered is to learn to challenge authority.

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Having learned and developed strong opinions about social injustice as a little child already, while attending tribe meetings with his father, it wasn't long before Nelson started challenging authority.

For example, at Fort Hare, he and fellow students decided freshmen weren't represented well in the House Committee, so they elected their own. After garnering support from other freshmen, they told the warden they would resign if he overruled them, causing a riot among students, so their committee was granted to stand.

Nelson was lucky in that he learned this lesson very early in his life, so challenging authority came natural to him. For most of us, it doesn't. I swam with the current for most of my life, so the habit of breaking the status quo was one I acquired (and still am learning).

However, if you think about the people you admire, how many of them would you describe as obedient, normal, authority-abiding people? *Zero*.

**We don't remember the yes-men and the quiet followers, we remember the rebels, the ruckus-causers, the troublemakers.** If you want to be remembered after your gone, you'll have to learn to challenge what's the norm.

By the way, Nelson Mandela's real, African tribe name was Rolihlahla – which means troublemaker.

## Lesson 3: The most important time to practice is right after your biggest loss.

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In 1964, after being convicted of high treason for conspiring to violently overthrow the government, Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life in prison. A “lucky” outcome, considering high treason was usually punished with the death sentence at the time.

And this is the unfathomable part of Mandela’s story: Right after his most devastating setback, the ultimate failure, the moment most people would give up and say it’s all over, he got right back to practice. He kept up the fight.

**Over the 26 years he spent in prison, he’d never stop educating himself and he’d never stop challenging authority.**

Initially, he was allowed just one visitor and one letter every six months, but Nelson held on to his beliefs. For example, when all prisoners were given shorts to wear, Mandela spoke to the warden in protest, as he thought shorts were indecent clothing for African men. After two weeks of heavy protesting, the guards gave in.

Over time, the prisoners managed to get their hands on books and magazines too, eventually even getting the guards on their side in protests about the horrible conditions in the prison, which lead to improvements for everyone.

## My personal take-aways

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Biographies can be hard to learn from, because it’s very easy to get sucked into the personal story, but difficult to zoom out and see the high-level lessons from a person’s life, as they’re usually not spelled out plainly in the book. However, I’m still happy how this one came out, and I hope *Long Walk To Freedom* will make you want to learn more about Nelson Mandela too. There’s even a movie, which looks interesting.

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- What Nelson Mandela’s first job was and how he got into law without ever finishing college
- Which unexpected event led to Nelson becoming a key member of the African National Congress
- How Mandela won cases creatively for his clients as a lawyer
- Why he managed to evade the state’s persuasion several times
- How Nelson created the MK and went underground with his efforts
- Why he received a life sentence, not a death sentence
- What Mandela did to pressure the South African government from inside prison
- How a bold request led to the first negotiations to end apartheid

- What happened on the day Nelson Mandela was released from prison

## **Who would I recommend the Long Walk To Freedom summary to?**

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The 19 year old, who stopped reading books after school, because she thinks education sucks, the 22 year old Master degree graduate, who swam with the current so much he now doesn't know what to do, and anyone who just had a big setback while working to achieve their dreams.