



My Friend, MANDELA

**Denis
Herbstein**

OXFORD



My Friend, MANDELA

A Grandfather's Tale

Denis Herbstein

Illustrated by Petra Rohr-Rouendaal



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
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First published 2003

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN-13: 978 0 19 919625 8

ISBN-10: 0 19 919625 7

5 7 9 10 8 6

Mixed Pack (1 of 6 different titles): ISBN-13: 978 0 19 919632 6; ISBN-10: 0 19 919632 X

Class Pack (6 copies of 6 titles): ISBN-13: 978 0 19 919631 9; ISBN-10: 0 19 919631 1

Illustrated by Petra Rohr-Rouendaal
Cover photo by Peter Turnley/Corbis UK Ltd.

Acknowledgements

p 4(left) Mhlambi Siphiwe/Sygma/Corbis UK Ltd.; pp 4/5 Corel; pp 10/11
Bettmann/Corbis UK Ltd.; p 12 Peter McKenzie/Picturenet Africa; p 14 Fort
Hare University; p 15 Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis UK Ltd.; p 17 David
Turnley/Corbis UK Ltd.; p 18 Sipa/Rex Features; p 22 Charles O'Rear/Corbis UK
Ltd.; p 26 Nils Jorgensen (NJ)/Rex Features; p 27 Peter Turnley/Corbis UK Ltd.;
p 28 David Turnley/Corbis UK Ltd.; p 29 Murray Andrew/Sygma/Corbis UK Ltd.;
p 30 (left) Caroline Penn/Corbis UK Ltd.; pp 30/31 David Turnley/Corbis UK
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Printed in Hong Kong

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Introduction

Nelson Mandela was the most famous prisoner in the world. He is probably now one of the most famous grandfathers in the world! Here he is celebrating a birthday with his family.



This book is about another grandfather, who is not world-famous. He is talking to his young grandson about Nelson Mandela. The young grandson is called Andile (And-eel-ay) and he is growing up in a very different South Africa to that of his grandfather and Nelson Mandela.



Andile has friends who are both black and white, and knows little of the struggle that Nelson Mandela fought for a better life for South Africa's black people. So, Andile's grandfather tells him that story.



CHAPTER

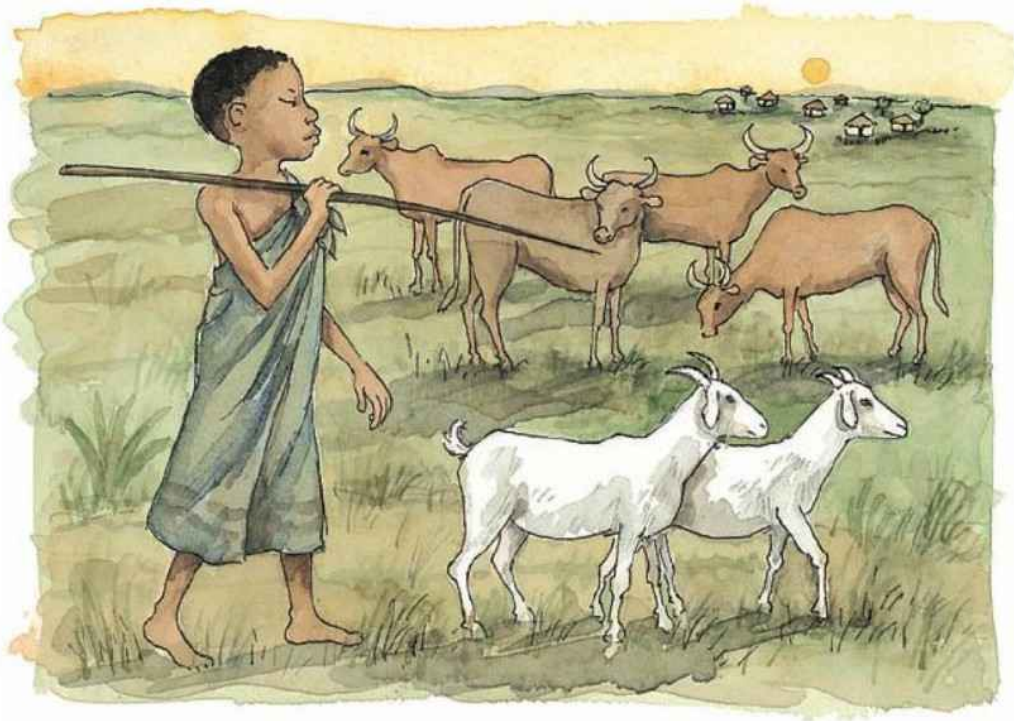
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Childhood (1918–1941)

Nelson Mandela was a country boy. When I first knew him he lived in a small village near the Indian Ocean, in a hut shaped like a beehive.

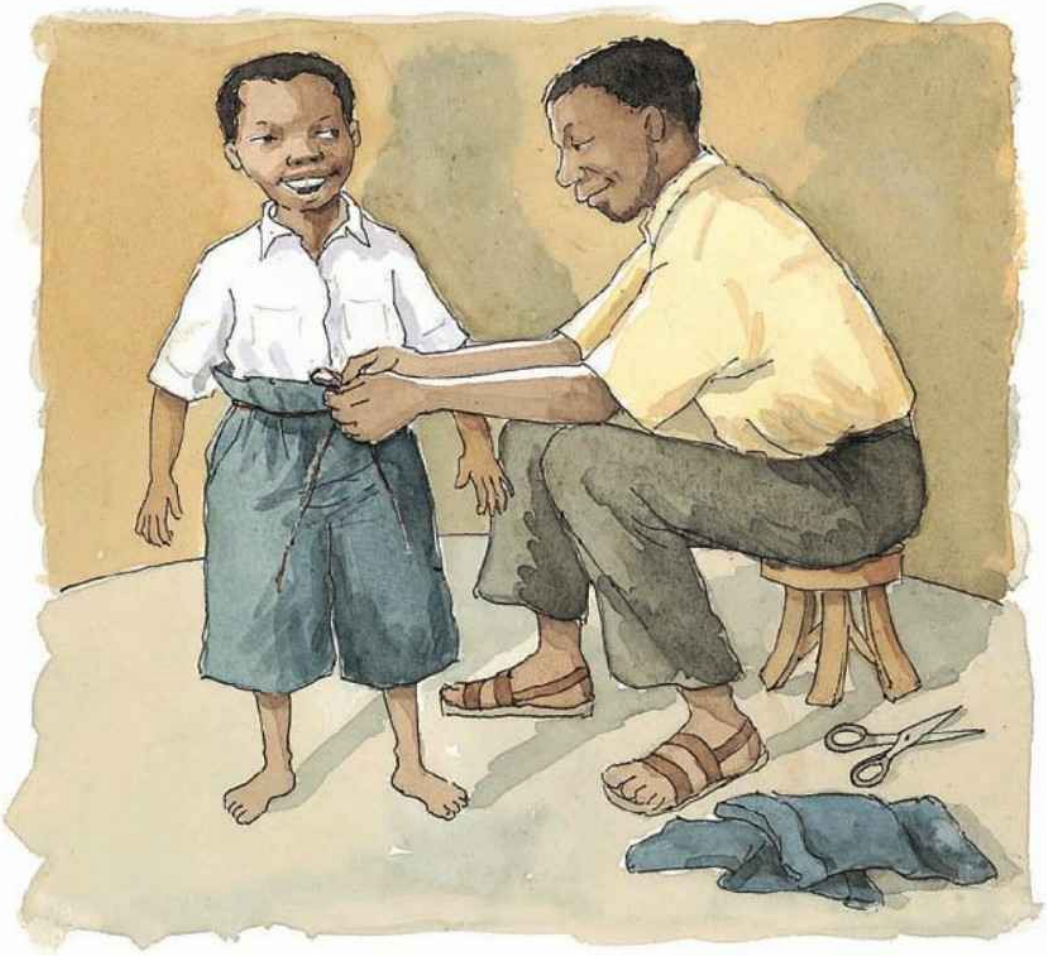
With his mother and his three sisters, he ate meals out of a communal pot. The food was usually **samp**, a porridge made from corn on the cob. Mmm, it was delicious!





He was five, even younger than you, when he became a herd boy. He looked after the sheep and cows. It wasn't all hard work. He played tag and hide-and-seek with his friends, just like you do. The winters were cold, I remember, so sometimes he would wear a blanket. And he loved to drink the warm milk straight from the cow.

When he turned seven his father sent him to school. He was the chief of the village and he wanted his son to look good. He cut down a pair of his trousers and tied them with string round his tummy to hold them up.





A class of children at a mission school

It was a Methodist Church school and he began to learn English. The teacher, Miss Mdingane, gave each pupil an English name. Who knows why she did this? But suddenly, he was called Nelson. Did you know, he was a famous English admiral?



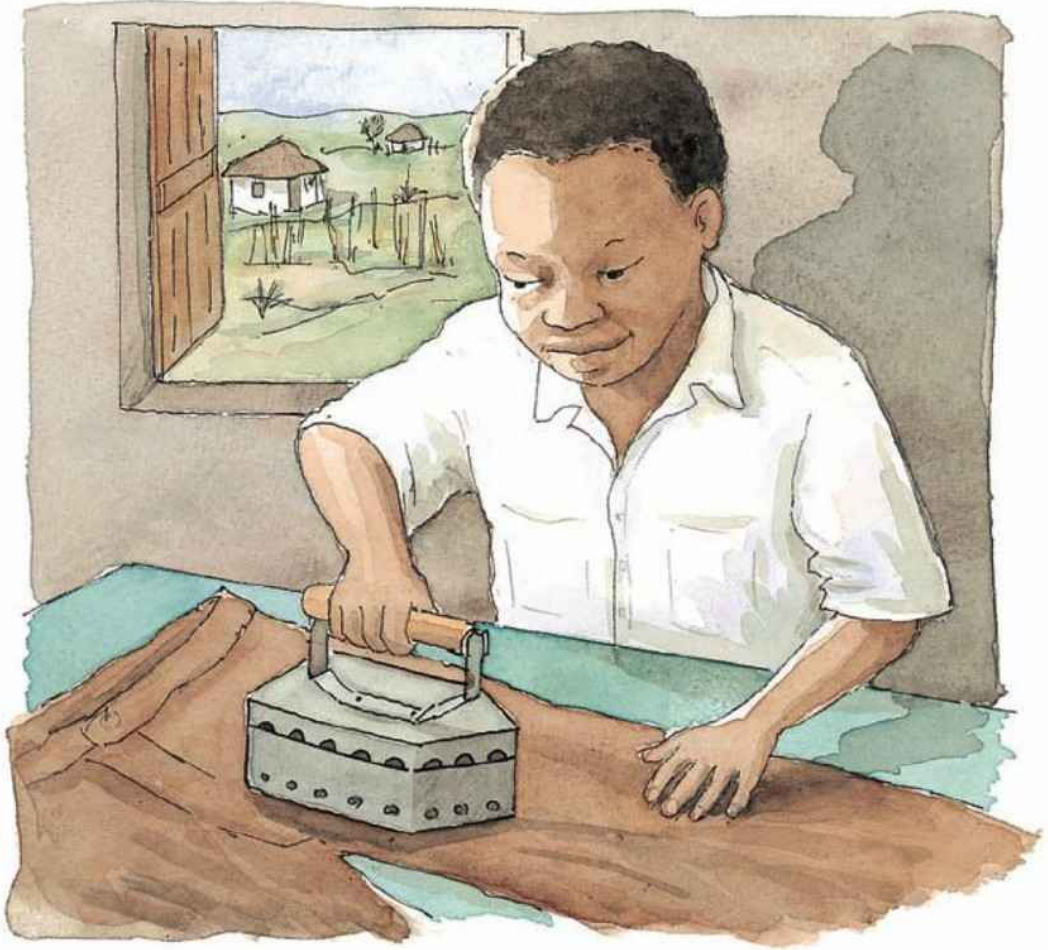
Then Nelson's father fell ill and died. It was a blow, but now he had a stroke of luck. His father was a cousin of the king.

ANDILE: Aah, so he was a prince?

Not really... So the regent, the king's son, invited him to live in the royal palace. He had a good education. And he learnt about his own people, the **Xhosas**, how they had fought bravely against the British, though they lost much of their land.



*Mandela's birthplace and
the site of his current home*



The regent liked him – maybe because he worked hard and was ready to pull his weight. One job he liked doing was to iron the regent's trousers. People have always said Mandela is fashionably dressed.

The regent sent him to boarding school, and afterwards to a university for black students. But then he found a wife for Nelson. He was only 22, too young to get married. So he ran away. Of course, the regent was cross, but what could Nelson do?

Andile, his Xhosa name is *Rolihlahla*. Do you know what it means?...“The troublemaker”. That’s what people said he would be.



The entrance to Fort Hare University, the university that was for black students



Aerial view of Johannesburg at the time, showing gold mines

CHAPTER

2

A Leader (1941–1961)

So he went to Johannesburg, the City of Gold. It was a good place for rich white people but hard work for the black men who dug out the gold in the mines a mile below the ground.

He decided to study law. He had barely enough money to buy candles for light to read in his room. But he passed the exams, and with his friend, Oliver Tambo, they opened a lawyers' office.



Apartheid is gone now, Andile, but it was bad. It meant separating white and black people, but whites got the better things. Black children went to



*Surfer at
a Whites
Only
beach*

school without breakfast, often walking barefoot for miles. There could be a hundred pupils in one classroom. Think of that!

So Nelson joined the **African National Congress**, which helped black people. He became one of its leaders. He was away from home and married by then. One day his son asked his mum: “Where does daddy live?” He was only five. It made Nelson sad.



*Nelson Mandela in boxing
clothes and gloves*

You have heard how he liked to keep fit by doing exercises every day? He was a keen boxer.

ANDILE: Why did he like it tamkhulu?

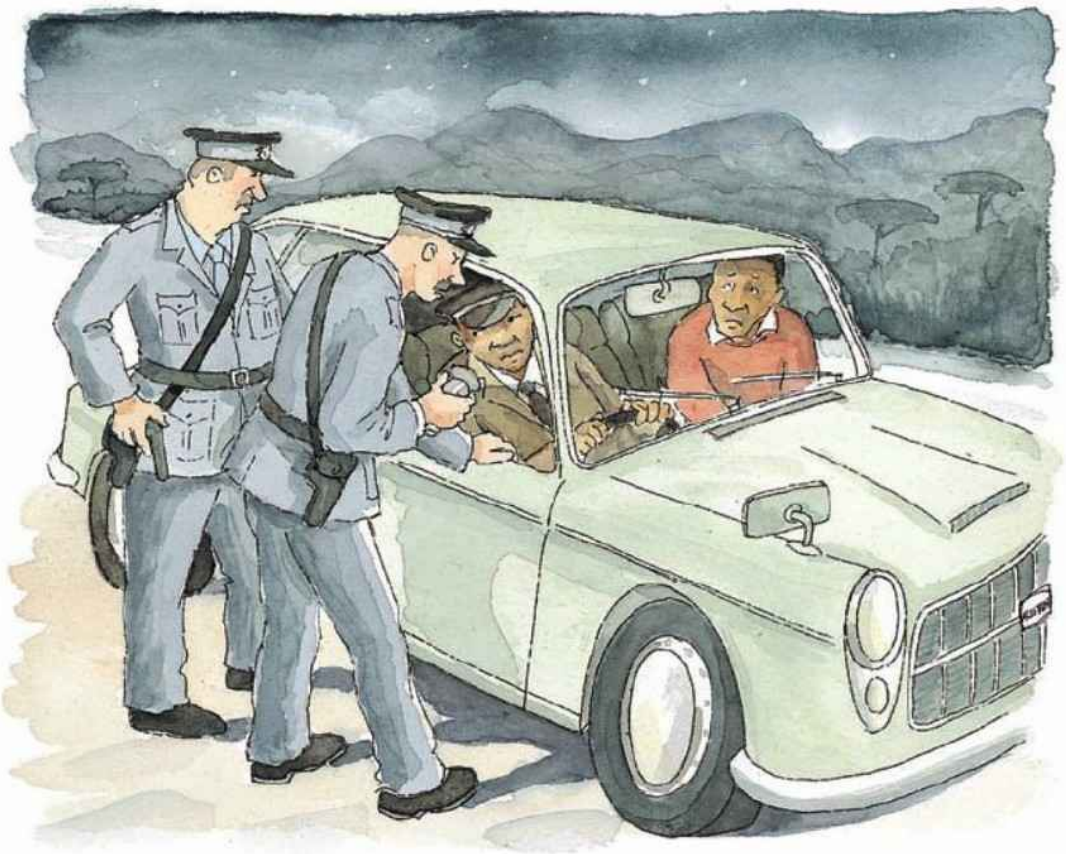
He's over six feet tall and was quite strong. He said boxing taught him to stand up to bullies.

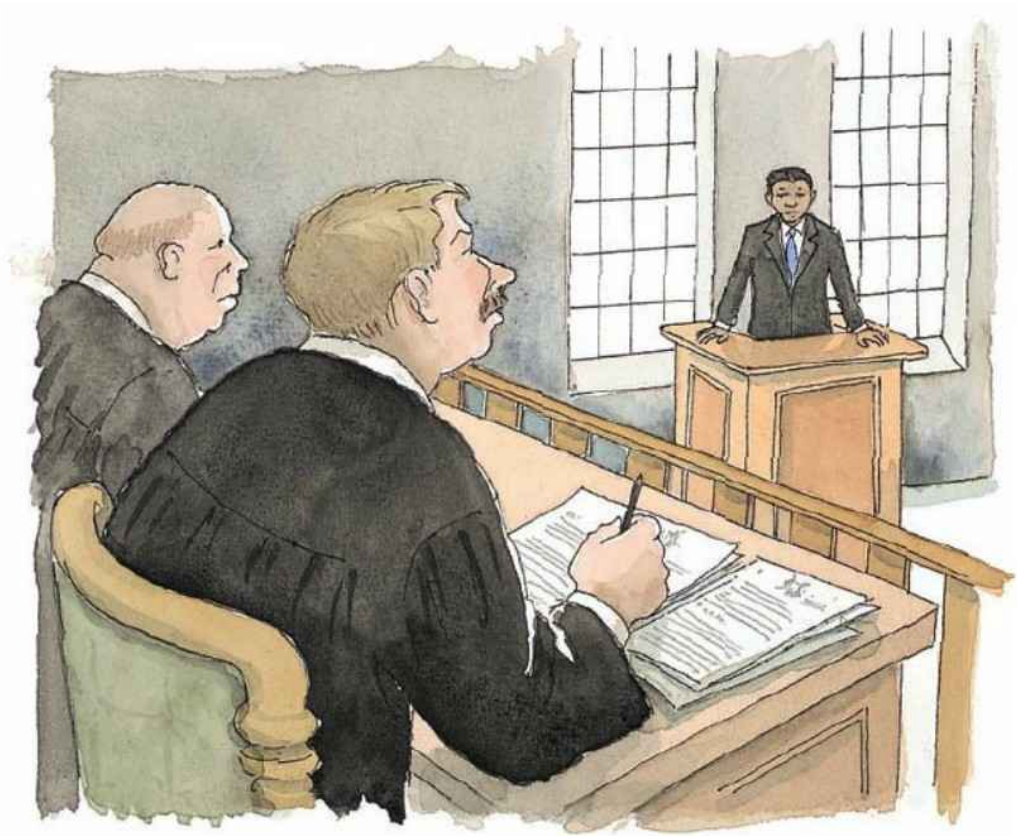
Eventually, he and his friends realised that peaceful protests would not change the laws. They decided to fight the government. Nelson became the commander-in-chief of the army, the **Spear of the Nation**.

ANDILE: A soldier!

It was long ago, my boy.

The police wanted to arrest him. He disguised himself in old clothes and grew a beard. He was captured and put on trial. He escaped and was working as a chauffeur when the police caught him again. He was prepared to die for the freedom of his people!





The judge sentenced him to prison for the rest of his life. He was 45 years old. The government thought it had got the better of him.

ANDILE: And had they?

Wait and see.



*Aerial view of Table Mountain
from off Robben Island*

CHAPTER

3

Prison (1961–1990)

The prisoners were considered dangerous. The police flew them to **Robben Island** prison. It was a green place with penguins, antelopes and a lovely view of Table Mountain. But it was no holiday in the sun. It was a fortress, guarded day and night.

His cell was tiny. He could cross it in three paces. At first he slept on a mat on the floor. In winter he shivered under thin blankets. He had to wear a shirt, shorts and sandals. They worked in the blinding light of a lime quarry. The food was not at all nourishing. But on Christmas Day they were given an extra cup of coffee.

ANDILE: No turkey and Christmas pudding?

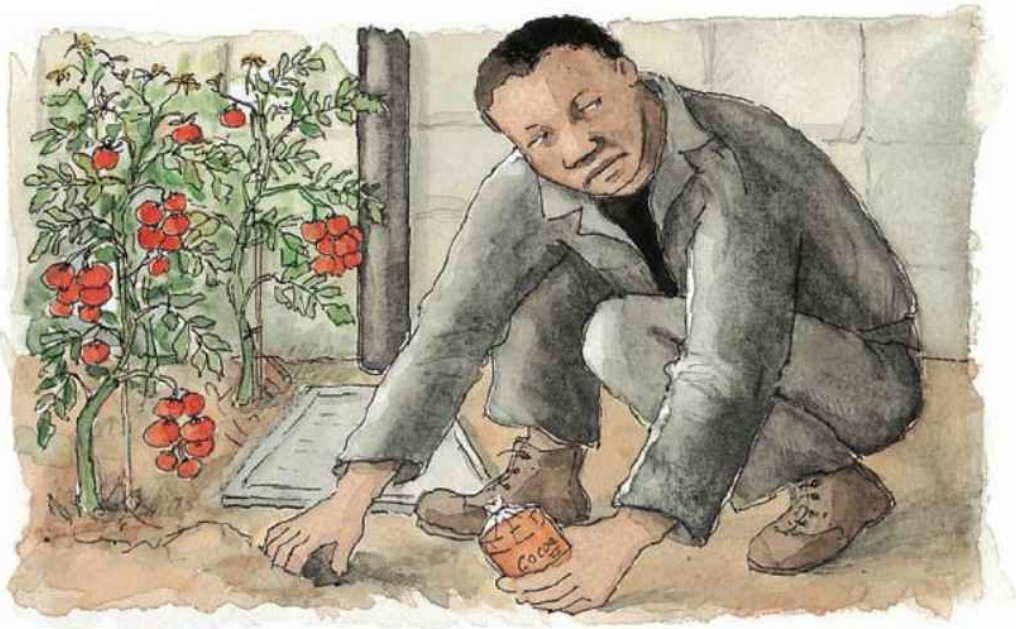
Don't joke, please.





It was awful being separated from their families. They were allowed to receive only one letter every six months. How they looked forward to news of their loved ones. Nelson said a letter was like the summer rain which makes the desert bloom.

But at night they worked hard at their studies and educated themselves. And he did his exercises before dawn. Secretly, in the long nights, he wrote the story of his life and buried the book in the yard because it was forbidden under the prison laws. It was smuggled out. That is the book you see in the shop windows, *Long Walk to Freedom*.



After many years things became better. The outside world began to hear about them. People wore T-shirts saying, “*Release Nelson Mandela*”. In London, the BBC organised a huge pop concert at Wembley Stadium to celebrate his seventieth birthday.

He was becoming as big a nuisance inside prison as he had once been outside.

ANDILE: Your friend had a pop concert, tamkhulu!



*Nelson Mandela
pop concert,
Wembley
Stadium, 1988.*

CHAPTER

4

Mr President (1994–1999)



Nelson Mandela leaving prison

Nelson wrote that he knew some day he would feel the grass under his feet and walk in the sunshine as a free man. In 1990, he was freed from prison. For twenty-seven years no one was allowed to see his face. Now, millions could at last see him on television.



Nelson Mandela and his daughter as he is sworn in as South Africa's president

Four years later he became president of our country, South Africa. For the first time, all our people, white and black, in cities and small villages, voted in the election. He tried hard to make all the people live together in friendship.

When he met the Queen of England, they walked in the gardens of Buckingham Palace. He told her he was still a country boy at heart. He wanted to build a home near his boyhood village where he would spend his old age.

ANDILE: I would like to visit him there, tamkhulu.

Nelson Mandela and the Queen during his visit



Story background

Apartheid was the law of racial **segregation** which allowed the white minority to keep political power in South Africa. Between 1948 and 1994 the white National Party used this law to **discriminate** against the rest of the population.

Today there are over 40 million people in South Africa from lots of different backgrounds. That is why it is sometimes called “The Rainbow Nation”.

The new generation of young South Africans



South Africa is beginning to grow away from the bad years of apartheid. Many people travel there now on holiday or for their work. South African sportspeople, both black and white, are now taking part in events at the highest levels. This was not always possible because of apartheid.

The Rainbow Nation



A South African athlete wearing the flag, waves to the crowd



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Freedom 25
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Glossary

African National Congress a national freedom movement formed in 1912 to unite the African people
apartheid policy of racial segregation
discriminate to exclude someone deliberately on the basis of something – like the colour of their skin
Robben Island South African penal colony
samp porridge of coarsely ground maize
segregation to keep apart
Spear of the Nation a movement dedicated to overcoming apartheid by damaging government buildings and police stations
sworn in to take an oath or pledge – a form of promise to the people
Xhosa Bantu people of the CAPE province



Stage 10/11

My Friend, MANDELA

**The troublemaker.
That's what people said he would be.**

Mandela fought for the people of
South Africa. In prison, he struggled even
harder for his country. He became the most
famous prisoner in the world...

My Friend, Mandela Denis Herbstein
Sea Empress Disaster Chris Ogden
Mystery of the Cocos Gold Saviour Pirotta
Over the Rainbow Ann Jungman
Fayim's Incredible Journey Tessa Kraling
Cup Winners Martin Waddell

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ISBN 0-19-919625-7



9 780199 196258