

Name _____ Date _____

Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born in South Africa in 1918. Until about 1992, South Africa had a political system called apartheid. This meant that black people had to live apart from white people. For example they could not go to the same schools as white people or eat in the same restaurants. Most blacks had no jobs, were poor and could not vote in elections.

Mandela grew up in a village. When he was a young man, he left his village to study law. He wanted to help free black people from apartheid. He became a lawyer in 1952 and worked in Johannesburg, a large city in South Africa.

Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944. The ANC led many protests against the government's apartheid policy. From 1952 to 1960, Mandela was arrested and jailed twice for being a leader of the ANC. In 1960, the government killed many black people for protesting against apartheid. Mandela was a peaceful man, but after these killings, his protests became more violent.

In 1963, the government sent Mandela to prison for life because of his work against apartheid. Even though he was in prison, he became a famous example of how black people suffered under apartheid. People from all over the world asked the South African government to release him from jail.

Mandela was released in 1990. He had spent 27 years in prison. In 1991, he became president of the ANC. He and the South African president then agreed that South African would end apartheid and become a democracy. They won the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize for this.

In 1994, an election was held. Black people were allowed to vote and Mandela became the first black president of South Africa. When he was president, he worked to improve the economy, especially for black people. He also worked to bring peace to his country, after so many years of violence between blacks and whites.

In 1999, Mandela retired as president. He now helps other countries solve their problems.