

## Class -X. Sub-English

### Chapter 2

# Long walk to freedom

## Introduction

This chapter is an extract from the autobiography of Nelson Mandela (born- 18 July, 1918), the first Black President of South Africa. Excerpts from “Long Walk to Freedom” include description of the inauguration ceremony, citations from his speech, his journey to being a freedom fighter, the struggle, along with a tribute to other freedom fighters and countless other people who fought for their freedom. In South Africa, a brutal practice named “apartheid” was followed. Apartheid refers to the discrimination between people on the basis of their race. It was one of the most brutal societies where dark-skinned people were deprived of their basic rights. This lesson gives us an overview as to how Nelson Mandela along with others, carved their way to a society where there will be no discrimination on the basis of their colour, caste, race, age or gender.

## Summary

Long Walk to Freedom is the autobiography of former South African President, Nelson Mandela. First published in 1994, it covers Mandela’s life from his youth in Apartheid South Africa, his coming of age and education, his embrace of political activism and his role in the anti-apartheid movement, and his twenty-seven years in prison on the notorious Robben Island, where he was imprisoned as a terrorist for his role as a leader of the then-outlawed African National Congress. The narrative also covers the period after his release, and chronicles the fall of apartheid and his ascension to the Presidency, which he held at the time of the book’s release. Exploring themes of racial equality, political protest, and the ability of the human spirit to overcome great hardship, Long Walk to Freedom is considered one of the most acclaimed and important autobiographies of the late 20th century. The winner of the Alan Paton Award from The Sunday Times in 1995, it has been translated into multiple languages including Afrikaans. Widely read and studied as an essential text on the fall of apartheid in South Africa, it was adapted into a 2013 film titled Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom, directed by Justin Chadwick and starring Idris Elba.

Part one of Long Walk to Freedom chronicles Mandela’s upbringing in South Africa. Related to the royal Thembu dynasty, he was given the childhood name Rolihlahla, which is translated as “pulling the branch of a tree”, or troublemaker. This name anticipated his lifelong passion for challenging unjust social orders. He was educated at a Thembu college called Clarkebury, and later at the strict Healdtown school. There, students followed strict routines and obeyed harsh rules, but Mandela always found it hard to obey without questioning. He later went to the University of Fort Hare, where he studied law. He went on to practice at a law firm, which was where he started to become politically aware. He writes, “Democracy meant all men to be heard, and decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be clashed by a majority.”

In the second part of the book, Mandela focuses on the political and social aspects of apartheid in South Africa, and looks at the politicians responsible for implementing it. These include Daniel Francois Malan, the first official leader of the apartheid regime and the man responsible for the harshest enforcement of its policies.

Mandela joined the African National Congress in 1950 and describes the methods they used, which included guerrilla tactics and underground organizations that were used to sabotage the regime. Mandela quickly became known as a significant political figure in South Africa, and the apartheid regime became determined to silence him. He was arrested in 1961 and convicted for inciting people to strike, as well as leaving the country without a passport.



He was sentenced to five years in prison. However, soon afterwards additional charges of sabotage were brought against him in the notorious "Rivonia Trial". Although he was facing the death penalty, Justice Dr. Quartus de Wet sentenced him to life imprisonment.

Nelson Mandela was a South African political leader, politician, revolutionary, and philanthropist who played a key role in ending the apartheid regime of the 20th century. He served as the country's first black President from 1994 to 1999, and is considered one of the most significant figures of the 20th century. He was the winner of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in bringing the apartheid regime to a peaceful end and laying the foundations for a truly democratic South Africa. He is honored around the world and at home as the founding father of modern South Africa.

## Key points

- *Nelson Mandela swears in as the first black president of South Africa on 10th May 1994.*
- The swearing in ceremony took place in the lovely sandstone amphitheater in Pretoria
- He addressed the rainbow gathering with a zest telling that never, never, and never again should it be that that beautiful land would experience the oppression of one by another.
- He wished that freedom in Africa should reign.
- The army officials who could have caught him and put him in jail before were saluting him to pay respect to the newly born democracy.
- The two national anthems were sung at the time of his swearing in ceremony.
- He recalls back the history and pays homage to the national martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their motherland.
- He tells that the martyrs were the men of extraordinary courage and wisdom and generosity.
- The country of South Africa is rich in minerals and gems but the greatest wealth of country is its people.
- He tells no one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion.
- If people learn to hate, they can be taught to love too.
- He talks that man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never exhausted.
- He talks about the twin obligations-obligation towards his family & obligation towards his nation. While discharging his duties he found he was not free.
- Hence, he joined African National Congress fought for the freedom of his country.
- He knew that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed.
- The oppressor and oppressed are alike are robbed of their humanity.

## Question and answers

**Question 1: Where did the ceremonies take place? Can you name any public buildings in India that are made of sandstone?**

**Answer:** The ceremonies took place in the sandstone amphitheater formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The Supreme Court of India, Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan are some of the public buildings in India made of sandstone.

**Question 2: Can you say how 10 May is an 'autumn day' in South Africa?**

**Answer:** 10 May is an 'autumn day' in South Africa since this day was the largest meeting of international leaders on South African soil to establish the first democratic, non-racial government in South Africa.

**Question 3: At the beginning of his speech, Mandela mentions "an extraordinary human disaster". What does he mean by this? What is the "glorious ... human achievement" he speaks of at the end?**

**Answer:** The 'extraordinary human tragedy' described by Mandela at the beginning of his speech refers to the cruel practice of apartheid, i.e. the racial injustice endured in South Africa by the blacks at the hands of the whites. In the end, the 'glorious human achievement' he spoke of refers to the development of the first democratic, non-racial government in South Africa.

**Question 4: What does Mandela thank the international leaders for?**

**Answer:** Mandela felt fortunate to be the host of the International nations since just a while ago South Africans were considered outlaws. Therefore, he thanked all the world leaders for witnessing his abdication as President as this occurrence could be considered a shared victory for justice, peace and human dignity.

**Question 5: What ideals does he set out for the future of South Africa?**

**Answer:** Mandela had high expectations for South Africa's future. He vowed to rid all South Africans of the enduring slavery of poverty, deprivation, misery, gender and other discrimination. He also underlined that South Africa's magnificent land should never again suffer racial discrimination.

**Question 6: What do the military generals do? How has their attitude changed, and why?**

**Answer:** South African defense force and police's top military generals saluted Mandela and swore their loyalty. When the military officers welcomed Mandela, he wasn't oblivious that a few years ago they wouldn't have saluted him but arrested him.

**Question 7: Why were two national anthems sung?**

**Answer:** Two national anthems were sung on the day of the inauguration, one by the whites and another by the blacks. This symbolized blacks and whites becoming equal.

**Question 8: How does Mandela describe the systems of government in his country (i) in the first decade, and (ii) in the final decade, of the twentieth century?**

**Answer:** i) In the first decade of the twentieth century, the white-skinned peoples of South Africa patched up their differences and developed a regime of ethnic dominance against the dark-skinned inhabitants of their own territory, thus providing the basis for one of the harshest and most inhumane societies ever known to the world.

ii) The previous regime had been permanently overthrown in the last decade of the twentieth century and replaced by one that acknowledged the rights and freedoms of all races, regardless of the color of their skin.

**Question 9: What does courage mean to Mandela?**

**Answer:** Mandela discovered that bravery was not the absence of terror, but the victory over it, when she saw people stand up to attacks and torture without cracking and thereby displaying strength and endurance that defied the imagination.

**Question 10: Which does he think is natural, to love or to hate?**

**Answer:** For Mandela, love comes more naturally to the human heart than hate.

**Question 11: Why did such a large number of international leaders attend the inauguration? What did it signify the triumph of?**

**Answer:** South Africa was in the grips of apartheid until Nelson Mandela became the President, and was then branded an outlaw by other nations. When Mandela became President, apartheid was abolished and diplomatic relations with several countries were restored.

**Question 12: What does Mandela mean when he says he is “simply the sum of all those African patriots” who had gone before him?**

**Answer:** As Mandela says he was 'simply the sum of all African patriots,' he means he can connect with the unparalleled sacrifices of all those noble and brave men who have fought for African people's collective liberty. He was pained not being able to thank them, and not being able to see what their efforts had done.

**Question 13: How did Mandela's understanding of freedom change with age and experience?**

**Answer:** As a child, Mandela didn't hunger for liberty because he thought he was born free. He believed he was free in any way, as long as he obeyed his father and abided by his tribe's customs. As an adolescent he had certain needs and as a young man, he had other needs. Gradually he discovered during his boyhood that he was selfish. He gradually understands that it is not just his freedom that is being curtailed, but the emancipation of all blacks.

**Question 14: How did Mandela's 'hunger for freedom' change his life?**

**Answer:** In his youth, Mandela realized that it was not only his independence that was being curtailed but the emancipation of all blacks. The desire for his own liberty was a desire for his people's rights.

**Question 15: What “twin obligations” does Mandela mention?**

**Answer:** Mandela mentions that every man has twin obligations. The first is to his family, parents, wife, and children; the second obligation is to his people, his community and his country.

**Question 16: What did being free mean to Mandela as a boy, and as a student? How does he contrast these “transitory freedoms” with “the basic and honorable freedoms”?**

**Answer:** As a boy, Mandela wasn't hungry to be free, because he felt he was born free. As long as he obeyed his father, and kept up with his tribe's traditions, he was safe in every way he knew. As a kid, he only wanted those "transitory freedoms" for himself, such as being able to stay out at night, reading what he liked, and going to where he wished. He then speaks about certain "simple honorable freedoms" such as recognizing his ability to earn his living, marry and have a child. He compares these two freedoms by saying that he was limited to the transitory freedoms he desired, while the noble freedoms had to do more with the role of his citizens in society.

**Question 17: Does Mandela think the oppressor is free? Why/Why not?**

**Answer:** Mandela does not feel the oppressor is free because he thinks an oppressor is a prisoner of hate, trapped behind bars of oppression and narrowness. He thinks they are deprived of their dignity by both the oppressor and the oppressed.