

Can Nelson Mandela be wrong?

Key terms:

Apartheid: Institutionalised racial segregation in South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia) between 1948 and early 1990s.

African National Congress (ANC): Political party founded in 1912 aiming at giving voting rights to black South Africans and ending the Apartheid after 1948. Banned after the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, its leaders were either in prison or in hiding during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The ANC won the 1994 elections and has been in power ever since.

Pan Africanist Congress (PAC): Former members of the ANC founded the PAC in 1959 after disagreements on the strategy to adopt against the Apartheid regime and the multiracial nature of the ANC.

Treason Trial: 156 people, including Nelson Mandela, were accused of treason in South Africa in 1956. Accused were not found guilty.

Sharpeville massacre (21 March 1960): After a day of demonstrations organised by PAC against pass laws, a crowd of about 7,000 protesters went to the police station of Sharpeville (Gauteng). The South African Police opened fire on the crowd, killing 69 people and injuring 180 others.

Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK): Armed wing of the ANC founded by the ANC after the Sharpeville massacre. Sabotage of symbols of oppression were the first targets of its leaders before they were sent to prison in the early 1960s. MK became increasingly violent and was responsible for the killing of South African civilians in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Rivonia Trial (1963-64): led to the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and the others among the accused who were convicted of sabotage.

Questions for thinking and writing:

Why did Mandela go into hiding after the Treason Trial?

To what extent was the Sharpeville massacre a turning point in the History of South Africa?

How does Mandela justify his choice of using violence?

Why would historians use autobiographies to write books?

To what extent has Mandela become a secular saint?

To what extent has Mandela been in control of his own image?

Further reading and research:

- Tom Lodge, *Mandela. A Critical Life* (Oxford, 2006)
- Elleke Boehmer, *Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Sterling, NY, 2010)
- Colin Bundy, *Nelson Mandela* (Auckland Park, 2015)
- A. Sampson, *Mandela. The Official Biography of Nelson Mandela* (London, 1999)
- M. Meredith, *Nelson Mandela: A Biography* (Hamish Hamilton, 1997)
- Rita Barnard, *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (2014)
- M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela* (Panaf, 1980)
- Fatima Meer, *Higher than Hope: the Authorized Biography of Nelson Mandela* (Harper and Row, 1990)
- David James Smith, *Young Mandela* (Weidenfeld, 2010)
- K. Asmal, D. Chidester, W. James (eds), *Nelson Mandela in his Own Words* (London, 2004)

A few links:

- Nelson Mandela Foundation: <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/>
- Google Arts and Culture (Nelson Mandela): <https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/m05g7q>
- University of Witwatersrand: <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&c=A2519/R/>
- British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/nelson-mandelas-speech-i-am-prepared-to-die-at-the-rivonia-trial>