



## The Republic of South Africa

*The following text is an extract from a textbook for children in America on the history of the Republic of South Africa.*



The Republic of South Africa is a country located at the southern tip of the continent of Africa. It has a very long coast along both the Atlantic and Indian oceans. The Cape of Good Hope, at the southernmost point of South Africa, has been an important place in sailing history. It has a long history that includes many challenges.

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About 50 million people live in South Africa today. It is 79.5% Black, 9.2% White, 8.9% coloured, and 2.5% Asian. Coloured is a term used formally in South Africa for mixed

race. It is spelled with a “u” because that is how the people in England spell it, and it was England that labeled these groups. Race has been a very important part of its history. For many years, Black and coloured South Africans had few rights. Today, the situation is much better.

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The problems for South Africa probably got started about 150 years ago. That was when gold and diamonds were discovered in inland South Africa. Many people moved to the country, to work in the mines and to own them. There were two groups of Europeans in the country, people from Holland and people from England. They fought for control of this land.

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The trouble continued. The native peoples had a very difficult time. The Natives' Land Act of 1913 severely restricted the ownership of land by 'Blacks' to the small percentage of 7%. In 1948, the National Party was elected and intensified the implementation of the program of racial segregation that had begun with European settlers, and subsequently continued by the South African governments. The Nationalist Government set up a system of segregationist laws, which meant that only whites could own most property and that Blacks and coloured people had very few rights. That terrible system became known as apartheid.

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People struggled to end apartheid. It was so very unfair. Their fight went on for years. One great leader, Nelson Mandela, was put into prison in 1964 and kept there for 27 years. Even though he was in prison he still was a great leader. His writings helped inspire others.

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Other nations recognized the injustice of apartheid and argued against it. Those good countries were protesting this ongoing situation. But the government of South Africa did not change for many years. It took a long time and an international boycott, but finally there was progress. A boycott is when a group refuses to do business with another group.

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In 1990, the old government allowed Nelson Mandela's political party, the African National Congress, to have a voice. Finally, it released this persistent hero from prison. The first multi-racial elections were held in 1994, and Nelson Mandela's party won. He became the President and served as president until 1999. In 1993 he won the Nobel Peace Prize. That is an international prize given each year to someone who helps the world have more peace.

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Many people believe there would have been more progress if South Africa's government had freed Nelson Mandela much sooner. But Nelson Mandela does not believe in looking back at problems. He wants people to look forward, to work together to plan and make progress. He is a very great leader for Africa. He is a leader for the whole world.

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# ***From Nelson Mandela's autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom***

My mother presided over three rondavels at Qunu which, as I remember, were always filled with the babies and children of my relations. In fact, I hardly recall any occasion as a child when I was alone. In African culture, the sons and daughters of one's aunts or uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins. We do not make the same distinctions among relations practised by Europeans. We have no half-brothers or half-sisters. My mother's sister is my mother; my uncle's son is my brother.

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Of my mother's three huts, one was used for cooking, one for sleeping and one for storage. In the hut in which we slept, there was no furniture. We slept on mats and sat on the ground. I did not discover pillows until I went away to school. The stove on which my mother cooked was a three-legged iron pot that rested on a grate over a hole in the ground. Everything we ate we grew and made

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ourselves. My mother planted and harvested her own mealies. After harvesting the mealies, the woman ground the kernels between two stones. A portion of this was made into bread, while the rest was dried and stored in pots. Unlike mealies, which were sometimes in short supply, milk from our cows and goats was always plentiful.

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From an early age, I spent most of my free time in the veld playing and fighting with the other boys of the village. A boy who remained at home tied to his mother's apron strings was regarded as a sissy. At night, I shared my food and blanket with these same boys. I was no more than five when I became a herd-boy, looking after sheep and calves in the fields. I discovered the almost mystical attachment that the Xhosa have for cattle, not only as a source of food and wealth, but as a blessing from God and a source of happiness. It was in the fields that I learned how to knock birds out of the sky with a slingshot, to gather wild honey and fruits and edible roots, to drink warm, sweet milk straight from the udder of a cow, to swim in the clear, cold streams, and to catch fish with twine and sharpened bits of wire. I learned to stick-fight - essential knowledge to any rural African boy - and became adept at its various techniques, parrying blows, feinting in one direction, striking in another, breaking away from an opponent with quick footwork. From these days I date my love of the veld, of open spaces, the simple beauties of nature, the clean line of the horizon.

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Rondavel – a round, brick made hut, found in Africa.

Mealies – a maize or corn cob plant.

Veld – open rural landscape in South Africa.

# Questions



Re-read extract 1. Answer the questions below.

1. Explain the origin of the word 'coloured'.  
Lines 9 - 12. (1)
2. Identify 4 facts about Nelson Mandela from  
lines 28 - 42. (2)
3. Identify an example of persuasive language used  
in lines 1 - 19. Give a reason why you think the  
example is persuasive. (2)
4. Analyse how the writer use language and  
structure to appeal to its readers? (8)  
Support your views with detailed reference to the  
text.

Re-read extract 2. Answer the questions below.

5. Find 2 facts about the huts Mandela lived in.  
Lines 7 - 20 (1)
6. Identify an example of descriptive language used  
in the lines 24 - 36. Give a reason why you think  
the example is descriptive. (2)
7. How does the writer uses language and structure  
to create ideas about family life and childhood?  
(8)



8. Compare how the writers of Text 1 and Text 2 present ideas  
about South Africa.  
Support your answer with detailed references to the texts.  
(12)

9. Write an entry for a guide book, exploring facts and ideas about South Africa.  
You could write about:
  - the history of South Africa
  - what it is like in rural parts of South Africa
  - why tourists should travel there.as well as any other ideas you might have. (25)
10. Write the words of a speech, exploring the importance of understanding  
apartheid and learning from history. You could write about:
  - apartheid in South Africa
  - Nelson Mandela's contribution to restoring equal rights
  - how we can learn from historyas well as any other ideas you might have. (25)