

Enquiry and debate

Nelson Mandela: The Official Exhibition is full of unique historical sources including objects and clothes that belonged to Nelson Mandela during different times in his life; letters, documents and photographs associated with the Freedom Struggle; and first-hand accounts. Many of these artefacts have never been seen before outside of South Africa.

Students can use these primary sources, alongside secondary sources such as films and exhibition text, to gather evidence in response to historical enquiries about Nelson Mandela and the anti-apartheid struggle.

They could use the [Picturing the past](#) resource to prepare them before the visit and to help them interrogate different sources in the exhibition.

They could use the [Collecting evidence and ideas](#) resource to record the sources they think are most useful, interesting or relevant.

Back at school, students can use the [Timeline](#), [London landmarks](#) and other sources to further their research. They could present their findings as an exhibition (real or imagined), a piece of writing, a diagram or poster, or in a debate.

Some historical enquiry questions:

About the context

- What was segregation in South Africa? What did it mean for Black South Africans on a daily basis during the 20th century?
- What was apartheid in South Africa? What tactics did people in South Africa use to resist and fight against it?
- How was apartheid in South Africa enforced?
- Why is the South African National Anthem sung in five different languages? What are they and what is their significance?

About Nelson Mandela

- In what different places did Nelson Mandela live during his life? Why did he live in each place? How would you describe each place in three words?
- Why was Nelson Mandela imprisoned for 27 years? Why did the world care?
- What was daily life like for Nelson Mandela and his fellow prisoners on Robben Island?
- In what ways did Nelson Mandela's prison warders try to break his spirit? How did he resist this?
- In what ways did Nelson Mandela continue the struggle against apartheid while he was in prison?
- How did Nelson Mandela win the respect of his prison warders?
- Why did Nelson Mandela reject President Botha's offer to release him in 1985? What might the consequences have been of accepting this offer?
- In what ways did Nelson Mandela try to unify the people of South Africa when he was released from prison and during the years after?

About his impact

- Why do we remember Nelson Mandela?
- How did Nelson Mandela change people's lives? Whose lives did he change? Did he do this alone?
- What is Nelson Mandela's legacy?
- What does Nelson Mandela mean to you?

Debate provocations

- This house believes [insert students' own choice] was the most effective form of resistance/protest during the struggle against apartheid
- This house believes violence was a necessary part of the struggle against apartheid
- This house believes the role of women in the struggle against apartheid has generally been unrecorded
- This house believes Nelson Mandela was a born leader
- This house believes Nelson Mandela is peerless

True or false?

Students could use the exhibition to collect a series of facts about Nelson Mandela and the themes associated with his life. Back at school they write a series of statements – some true, some false – and give them to a partner or students from another group to guess which is which. Their true facts should be 'unbelievable but true'; their false statements must be believable and historically accurate.