



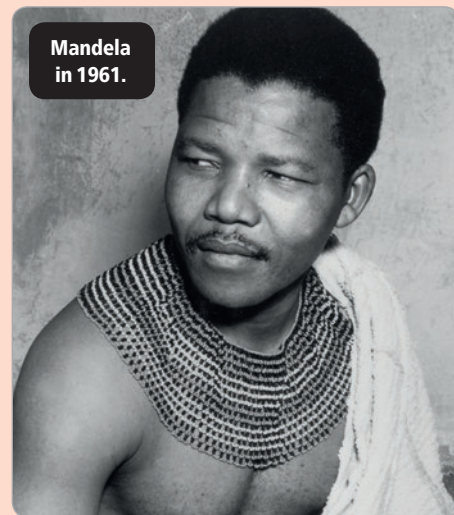
From prisoner to president

Nelson Mandela, who would have been 100 this year, was one of history's greatest leaders.

Nelson Mandela, a former president of South Africa, was one of the most important people of the 20th century. He is an inspirational figure for millions of people – not only in South Africa, but around the world. Mandela believed in democracy, equality and freedom. He faced many struggles during his lifetime, including racism and being put in prison, yet he never lost sight of the causes he was fighting for. Despite being treated badly, he always acted with dignity. During his life he brought about real change to millions of people and he is still a symbol for those fighting cruel treatment and inequality.

Birth of a leader

Mandela was born 100 years ago this week, on 18 July 1918, in Mvezo, South Africa. His parents named him Rolihlahla which means troublemaker in isiXhosa (one of the official languages of South Africa). He was the first member of his family to go to school, and it was on his first day at school that his teacher gave him the name Nelson. Giving African children English names was common in South Africa at that time. Even though most of the population was black, white people ruled the country and some of them couldn't or wouldn't pronounce African names. As Mandela grew up, he became aware of the unfair way that black people in South Africa were treated. White people owned the land, and controlled the money and military. They also forced black people to live separate lives from white people. It was illegal for black people to use the same schools or hospitals as white people. In 1948, this separation was made law and given the name apartheid, which means separateness.



Mandela in 1961.



Mandela presents the Rugby World Cup trophy in 1995.

DID YOU KNOW? Mandela was also known as Madiba. This is the name of the clan of which he was a member. Some people referred to him as Tata – meaning father – or Khulu, meaning great one.

Powerful protests

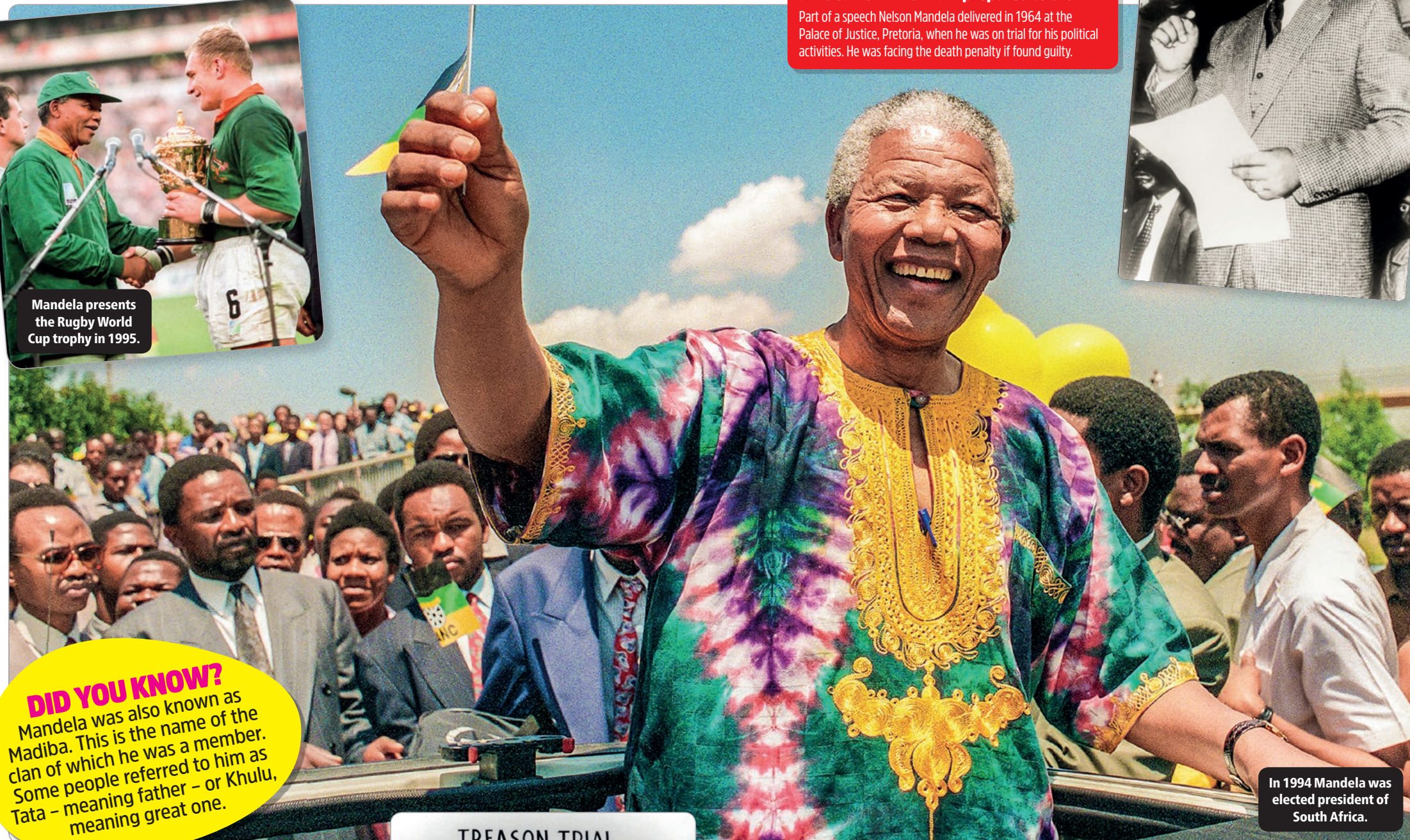
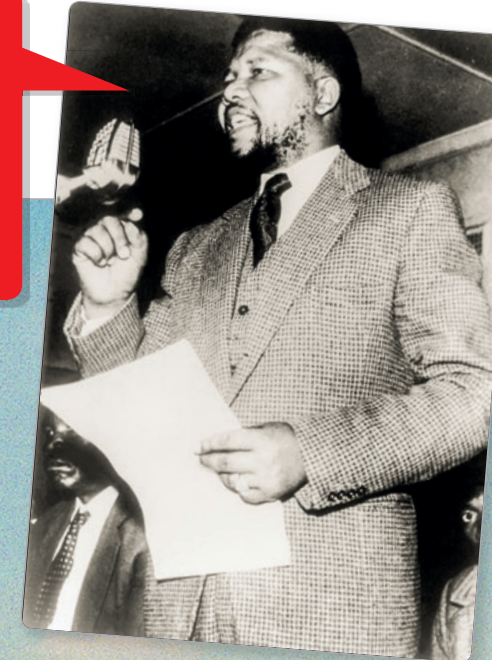
In 1944, Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC), a political party that was against apartheid. In 1955, Mandela, who was then a lawyer, was arrested, along with around 150 other people. They were accused of treason (betraying one's country) but none were found guilty. Mandela was arrested again in 1962, this time for leaving the country without a permit and for encouraging workers to go on strike (which means to stop working, as part of a protest). He spent the next 27 years in prison, during which time his mother and eldest son died. He was not allowed to go to their funerals.



More than 150 people were put on trial for treason.

"I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Part of a speech Nelson Mandela delivered in 1964 at the Palace of Justice, Pretoria, when he was on trial for his political activities. He was facing the death penalty if found guilty.



In 1994 Mandela was elected president of South Africa.

March to freedom

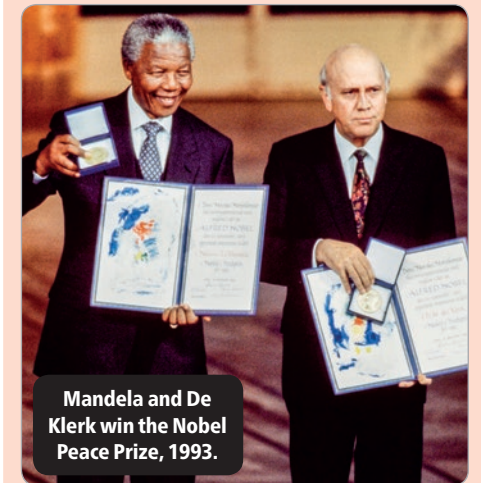
Even in prison, Mandela remained a powerful figure in the anti-apartheid movement. As time went on there was growing international support for his release. The president of South Africa at the time, P.W. Botha, offered Mandela freedom several times in exchange for stopping the fight against apartheid. Mandela refused each time. In 1989, F.W. de Klerk became president of South Africa. De Klerk was also against apartheid. On 11 February, 1990, Mandela was released. He said, "Our struggle has reached a decisive moment... Our march to freedom is irreversible. We must not allow fear to stand in our way."



Mandela celebrates his release in 1990.

Historic moments

In 1993, Mandela and De Klerk were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for "their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa". The following year, Mandela was elected the first black president of South Africa. These were the first elections in which black people in South Africa were allowed to vote, and so it was also the first time Mandela voted. In 1995, South Africa won the Rugby World Cup and Mandela was chosen to present the trophy to the team's white captain, Francois Pienaar. The mostly white crowd in the stadium shouted, "Nelson, Nelson, Nelson!" in support of their president. Mandela retired from politics in 1999 but campaigned for democracy, education and equal rights, until he died in 2013, aged 95.



Mandela and De Klerk win the Nobel Peace Prize, 1993.

Nelson Mandela Day

Nelson Mandela International Day is held every 18 July, the date of Mandela's birth. It is a day to celebrate democracy, freedom and justice. According to the United Nations, "Everyone has the ability and the responsibility to change the world for the better, and Mandela Day is an occasion for everyone to take action and inspire change." This year the day is dedicated to Action Against Poverty.

