

Learn about South Africa

By Hannah Lantos

CCSSR1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSSR2: Determine **central ideas or themes** of a text and analyze their development; **summarize** the key supporting details and ideas.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

EXPLAIN WHAT YOU LEARNED

1. Underline the most important information in each paragraph.
2. Write a short summary that tells what the passage explains. Include only the most important information.

Start your summary this way:

The main idea of the passage is _____.
Here is information that helps you understand that idea.

Then finish the summary. Include the information that helps explain the main idea.