

INVICTUS

WHAT IS APARTHEID?

Apartheid (Afrikaans pronunciation: [ə'pɛrthɛit], *separateness*) was a system of legal [racial segregation](#) enforced by the [National Party](#) government in [South Africa](#) between 1948 and 1994, under which the rights of the majority 'non-white' inhabitants of South Africa were curtailed and [minority rule](#) by [white people](#) was maintained.



Racial segregation in South Africa began in colonial times, but apartheid as an official policy was introduced following the [general election of 1948](#). New legislation classified inhabitants into [racial groups](#) ("black", "white", "[coloured](#)", and "Indian"),^[1] and residential areas were segregated, sometimes by means of forced removals. From 1958, [black people](#) were deprived of their [citizenship](#), legally becoming citizens of one of ten tribally based [self-governing](#) homelands called [bantustans](#), four of which became nominally independent states. The government segregated [education](#), medical care, and other public services, and provided black people with services inferior to those of white people.^[2]

Apartheid sparked significant [internal resistance](#) and violence as well as a long [trade embargo](#) against South Africa.^[3] Since the 1980s, a series of popular uprisings and protests were met with the banning of opposition and imprisoning of anti-apartheid leaders. As unrest spread and became more violent, state organizations responded with increasing repression and state-sponsored violence.

Reforms to apartheid in the 1980s failed to quell the mounting opposition, and in 1990 President [Frederik Willem de Klerk](#) began [negotiations to end apartheid](#), culminating in multi-racial democratic elections in 1994, which were won by the [African National Congress](#) under [Nelson Mandela](#). The vestiges of apartheid still shape South African politics and society.^[4]

The Poem:

"**Invictus**" is a short [Victorian poem](#) by the [English](#) poet [William Ernest Henley](#) (1849–1903). At the age of 12, Henley fell victim to [tuberculosis of the bone](#). A few years later, the disease progressed to his foot, and physicians announced that the only way to save his life was to [amputate](#) directly below the knee. It was amputated when he was 25. In 1875, he wrote the "Invictus" poem from a hospital bed. Despite his disability, he survived with one foot intact and led an active life until his death at the age of 53.

Invictus

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*



INVICTUS MOVIE QUESTIONS:

Answer on a separate sheet of paper. MANY OF THESE ANSWERS WILL NEED MORE THAN ONE SENTENCE IN ORDER TO BE COMPLETE. DON'T BE SLOPPY AND TAKE TIME AND CARE TO ANSWER THESE CORRECTLY!

1. What did Nelson Mandela risk by promoting reconciliation between black and white South Africans after he was elected president?
2. How would you describe the relationships among Mandela's security guards as the story progresses?
3. Why did Mandela take risks to bring all the citizens of South Africa together?
4. How is the relationship between Mandela and Pienaar portrayed?
Do both characters gain from this relationship? How or why not?
5. Matt Damon's character, Francois Pienaar, took many of his own risks after first meeting Mandela. What were they and what was his motivation?
6. What scenes stand out as pivotal to the development of Pienaar as he struggles with the many challenges he faces? What is revealed about Pienaar through these scenes?
7. How do different factions in South Africa begin to come together throughout the movie?
8. See the poem "Invictus" above. How does this poem relate to the movie, and why was it used as the title for the movie?

9. The poem talks about an individual facing challenges, and yet the movie is about individuals working together, eventually in solidarity. Is there a contradiction between individualism and the common good?
10. Give one specific example of how "solidarity" is portrayed in this movie?
11. Do you believe that art, such as poetry and film, and sport, such as rugby and soccer, can have a role in the ongoing work of justice and peace? Why?
12. How do sports shape community, impact relationships, create connections?
13. Mandela says: If we remove the rugby team, "we prove that we are who they feared we would be." What does he mean, what is he describing?
14. What was the point of the team's trip to Robben Island to see the prison where Mandela was held?
15. How do people determine who is an "enemy" and who is a "friend"?
16. In 1969, three years after arriving on Robben Island to serve a life sentence for sabotage, Nelson Mandela's eldest son, died in a car crash. Prison authorities refused to allow Mandela to attend the funeral. After 27 years in prison, how is it possible to not only forgive your captors, but to seek reconciliation with the white population and the apartheid leaders?
17. What did François Pienaar, the captain of the Springboks rugby team, learn from Nelson Mandela?
18. What was the significance of Mandela wearing the green and gold jersey and matching cap of the Springbok rugby at the end of the film? Why was it so important to his strategy?
19. Twenty years after the events in this film, South Africa faces many problems, including great poverty; centuries of injustices have left their mark on this nation. Is there a value of celebrating the potential of South Africa through a film such as *Invictus* at this later date, with so many challenges remaining for this African nation?
20. Read more about it. Do some further research on the social conditions in South Africa today and find out whether or not the living conditions have improved for all the people in that country.
21. Read the quote from Nelson Mandela about forgiveness and then read the article about the genocide that took place in Rwanda from the following link. [Link to NY Times Article](#) Write down a few thoughts that come to mind after seeing the pictures and reading the quotes. Would you be able to approach life the way those people did?

"Forgiveness liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon." -Nelson Mandela

