



## Paideia Seminar Lesson Plan



**“I am Prepared to Die”** by Nelson Mandela<sup>1</sup>

Grade/Subject

HS / Social Studies



Ideas, Values:

Democracy, Equality, Freedom, Government, Poverty



Pre-Seminar Content



*Launch Activity:*

Listen to excerpts from the audio recording of “I Am Prepared to Die” by Nelson Mandela, in particular the closing moments of the speech. Discuss how this speech embodies the ideas of Equality, Freedom, and Government.



*Inspectional Read:*

Distribute the text and ask students to examine it briefly without “reading” it. Based on what they heard during the *Launch Activity* and what they see at first glance in the transcript, ask what they expect the text to be like. Have students number the paragraphs 1-20 (note that the long quote by the Prime Minister is a separate paragraph, number 10). Have volunteers read the text aloud for the first time, paragraph by paragraph.

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<sup>1</sup> The text for this seminar is the last 20 paragraphs from the transcript of Mandela’s three-hour speech at his trial.

## Background Information:

Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013) was a prominent member of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC. These two groups led the civil rights movement in South Africa, which prior to this time has been ruled entirely by a repressive white regime.

"**I Am Prepared to Die**" is the name given to the three-hour speech given by Nelson Mandela on 20 April 1964 from the dock of the defendant at his trial for treason. Mandela is being accused of treason because he is one of the leaders of the ANC, which led the movement among black South Africans to break through political barriers created by the white South African government. The speech is so titled because it ends with the words "it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die". The speech is considered one of the great speeches of the 20th century, and a key moment in the history of South African democracy.

## Vocabulary:

Have students identify any unfamiliar words or phrases and list them on the (interactive) white board. Add any other words from your curriculum that you would like them to study as part of this literacy cycle (*Apartheid* for example). Have students work in teams to define those words and share the definitions with the entire class.

## Analytical Read:

Assign each of the 20 paragraphs to a student (or pair of students) and ask that they identify the topic sentence for that paragraph. If there does not appear to be a topic sentence, have the student(s) compose a sentence that serves as an efficient summary of that paragraph. Share the topic sentence for each paragraph while the entire group marks (or writes) the appropriate sentences on their copies of the text.



## Pre-Seminar Process

 Define and state purpose for Paideia Seminar.

 Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.

 Have participants set a Personal Goal.

 Agree on a Group Goal.

## Seminar Questions

*Opening (Identify main ideas from the text.):*

- ❖ What is the single most important sentence in this speech? (round-robin response)
- ❖ What makes that sentence so important? (spontaneous discussion)

*Core (Analyze textual details.):*

- ❖ What does Mandela argue (in paragraph 6) are the two ways to break out of poverty? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- ❖ What do you think Mandela is really saying (in paragraph 8) about the equality of schooling in South Africa? Refer to the text.
- ❖ What are the implications of Mandela's argument (in paragraph 13) that: "They do not look upon them as people with families of their own; they do not realize they have emotions—that they fall in love like white people do; that they want to be with their wives and children like white people want to be with theirs..."?
- ❖ Which of the "secondary effects" Mandela describes (in paragraph 15) are most devastating for a culture? Why?
- ❖ Do you agree with Mandela's assertion (in paragraph 18) that "political division, based on colour, is entirely artificial and, when it disappears, so will the domination of one colour group by another"? Why or why not?

*Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas.):*

- ❖ (Re-read the last paragraph in the speech.) What ideal do you feel as strongly about as those that Mandela identifies in his conclusion? What would you be willing to do in order to achieve that ideal?

## Post-Seminar Process

- ★ Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal participation goal.
- ★ Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of seminar.
- ★ Note reminders for next seminar.



## Post-Seminar Content

### ★ Transition to Writing:

Have students take notes on the most memorable things they said, heard, and thought during the seminar discussion—about the important ideas of Democracy, Equality, Freedom, Government, and Poverty.

### ★ Writing Task:

After reading and discussing an excerpt from Nelson Mandela’s “I am Prepared to Die” on Apartheid in South Africa, write a speech in which you identify an important social problem and propose a solution. Support your position with quotes from Mandela’s famous speech. (Argumentation/Problem-Solution)

(LDC Task#: 8)

### ★ Brainstorm:

Display the writing task and then have students talk in pairs for two minutes to share thoughts about what the writing task is asking and how they might respond. Discuss for clarity with the entire class.

### Structure the Writing:

Ask students to design an outline for this multi-paragraph speech based on the task. Encourage them to consider carefully the arguments that Mandela used as they are composing their own speeches.

### First Draft:

Challenge all to draft their speeches by writing the paragraphs defined by their outlines. Refer to the Mandela speech in detail for supporting examples.

### Collaborative Revision:

Have participants work in pairs to read their first drafts aloud to each other with emphasis on reader as creator and editor. (Stress that each speech must state a clear argument and support that position with examples from the text.) Listener says back one point heard clearly and asks one question for clarification. Switch roles. Give time for full revisions resulting in a second draft.

### Edit:

Once the second draft is complete, have participants work in groups of three-four and this time take turns reading each other's second drafts slowly and silently, marking any spelling or grammar errors they find. (Have dictionaries and grammar handbooks available for reference.) Take this opportunity to clarify/reteach any specific grammar strategies you have identified your students needing. Give time for full revisions resulting in a third and final draft.

### Publish:

Hold a "Freedom and Democracy Day" at your school and ask your students to each present a three-minute excerpt from their speeches while visitors from local civil rights organizations listen and discuss. Then send a complete collection of the speeches to the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory for the archives. The Centre can be reached at 107 Central St, Johannesburg, 2198, South Africa or via its web site at <http://archive.nelsonmandela.org/home> .

*This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:*

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## **“I Am Prepared to Die”**

### **Nelson Mandela**

Our fight is against real and not imaginary hardships or, to use the language of the State Prosecutor, 'so-called hardships'. Basically, My Lord, we fight against two features which are the hallmarks of African life in South Africa and which are entrenched by legislation which we seek to have repealed. These features are poverty and lack of human dignity, and we do not need communists or so-called 'agitators' to teach us about these things.

South Africa is the richest country in Africa, and could be one of the richest countries in the world. But it is a land of extremes and remarkable contrasts. [audio interference] The whites enjoy what may well be the highest standard of living in the world, whilst Africans live in poverty and misery. Forty per cent of the Africans live in hopelessly overcrowded and, in some cases, drought-stricken reserves, where soil erosion and the overworking of the soil makes it impossible for them to live properly off the land. Thirty per cent are labourers, labour tenants, and squatters on white farms and work and live under conditions similar to those of the serfs of the Middle Ages. The other thirty per cent live in towns where they have developed economic and social habits which bring them closer in many respects to white standards. Yet most Africans, even in this group, are impoverished by low incomes and the high cost of living.

The highest-paid and the most prosperous section of urban African life is in Johannesburg. Yet their actual position is desperate. The latest figures were given on the 25th of March 1964 by Mr. Carr, Manager of the Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department. The poverty datum line for the average African family in Johannesburg, according to Mr. Carr's department, is R42.84 per month. He showed that the average monthly wage is R32.24 and that forty-six per cent of all African families in Johannesburg do not earn enough to keep them going.

Poverty goes hand in hand with malnutrition and disease. The incidence of malnutrition and deficiency diseases is very high amongst Africans. Tuberculosis, pellagra, kwashiorkor, gastro-enteritis, and scurvy bring death and destruction of health. The incidence of infant mortality is one of the highest in the world. According to the Medical Officer of Health for Pretoria, it is estimated that tuberculosis kills forty people a day, almost all Africans, and in 1961 there were 58,491 new cases reported. These diseases, My Lord, not only destroy the vital organs of the body, but they result in retarded mental conditions and lack of initiative, and reduce powers of concentration. The secondary results of such conditions affect the whole community and the standard of work performed by Africans.

The complaint of Africans, however, is not only that they are poor and whites are rich, but that the laws which are made by the whites are designed to preserve this situation.

There are two ways to break out of poverty. The first is by formal education, and the second is by the worker acquiring a greater skill at his work and thus higher wages. As far as Africans are concerned, both these avenues of advancement are deliberately curtailed by legislation.

I ask the Court to remember that the present Government has always sought to hamper Africans in their search for education. One of their early acts, after coming into power, was to stop subsidies for African school feeding. Many African children who attended schools depended on this supplement to their diet. This was a cruel act.

There is compulsory education for all white children at virtually no cost to their parents, be they rich or poor. Similar facilities are not provided for the African children, though there are some who receive such assistance. African children, however, generally have to pay more for their schooling than whites. According to figures quoted by the South African Institute of Race Relations in its 1963 journal, approximately forty per cent of African children in the age group between seven and fourteen do not attend school. For those who do attend school, the standards are vastly different from those afforded to white children. In 1960-61 the per capita Government spending [someone coughs] on African students at State-aided schools was estimated at R12.46. In the same years, the per capita spending on white children in the Cape Province (which are the only figures available to me) was R144.57. Although there are no figures available to me, it can be stated, without doubt, that the white children on whom R144.57 per head was being spent all came from wealthier homes than African children on whom R12.46 per head was being spent.

The quality of education is also different. According to the Bantu Educational Journal, only 5,660 African children in the whole of South Africa passed their Junior Certificate in 1962, and in that year only 362 passed matric. This is presumably consistent with the policy of Bantu Education about which the present Prime Minister said, during the debate on the Bantu Education Bill in 1953 when he was Minister of Native Affairs, I quote:

"When I have control of Native Education I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them. People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for Natives. When my Department [audio interference] controls Native education it will know for what class of higher education a Native is fitted, and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge," unquote.

The other main obstacle to the economic advancement of the African is the Industrial Colour Bar under which all the better paid, better jobs of industry are reserved for whites only. Moreover, [audio interference] Africans in the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations which are open to them are not allowed to form trade unions which have recognition under the Industrial Conciliation Act. This means that strikes of African workers are illegal, and that they are denied the right of collective bargaining which is permitted to the better-paid white workers. The discrimination in the policy of successive

South African Governments towards African workers is demonstrated by the so-called 'civilized labour policy' under which sheltered, unskilled Government jobs are found for those white workers who cannot make the grade in industry, at wages far, which far exceed the earnings of the average African employee in industry.

The Government often answers its critics by saying that Africans in South Africa are economically better off than the inhabitants of the other countries in Africa. I do not know whether this statement is true and doubt whether any comparison can be made without having regard to the cost-of-living index in such countries. But even if it is true, as far as African people are concerned, it is irrelevant. Our complaint is not that we are poor by comparison with people in other countries, but that we are poor by comparison with white people in our own country, and that we are prevented by legislation from altering this imbalance.

The lack of human dignity experienced by Africans is the direct result of the policy of white supremacy. White supremacy implies black inferiority. Legislation designed to preserve white supremacy entrenches this notion. Menial tasks in South Africa are invariably performed by Africans. When anything has to be carried or cleaned the white man will look around for an African to do it for him, whether the African is employed by him or not. Because of this sort of attitude, whites tend to regard Africans as a separate breed. They do not look upon them as people with families of their own; they do not realise that we have emotions - that we fall in love like white people do; that we want to be with their wives and children like white people want to be with theirs; that we want to earn money, enough money to support our families properly, to feed and clothe them and send them to school. And what 'house-boy' or 'garden-boy' or labourer can ever hope to do this?

Pass laws, which to the Africans are among the most hated bits of legislation in South Africa, render any African liable to police surveillance at any time. I doubt whether there is a single African male in South Africa who has not at some stage had a brush with the police over his pass. Hundreds and thousands of Africans are thrown into jail each year under pass laws. Even worse than this is the fact that pass laws keep husband and wife apart and lead to the breakdown of family life.

Poverty and the breakdown of family life have secondary effects. Children wander about the streets of the townships because they have no schools to go to, or no money to enable them to go to school, or no parents at home to see that they go to school, because both parents, if there be two, have to work to keep the family alive. This leads to a breakdown in moral standards, to an alarming rise in illegitimacy, and to growing violence which erupts not only politically, but everywhere. Life in the townships is dangerous. There is not a day that goes by without somebody being stabbed or assaulted. And violence is carried out of the townships into the white living areas. People are afraid to walk alone in the streets after dark. Housebreakings and robberies are increasing, despite the fact that the death sentence can now be imposed for such offences. Death sentences cannot cure the festering sore.

The only cure is to alter the conditions under which Africans are forced to live and to meet their legitimate grievances. Africans want to be paid a living wage. Africans want to perform work which they are capable of doing, and not work which the Government declares them to be capable of. We want to be allowed to live where we obtain work, and not be endorsed out of an area because we were not born there. We want to be allowed and not to be obliged to live in rented houses which we can never call our own. We want to be part of the general population, and not confined to living in our ghettos. African men want to have their wives and children to live with them where they work, and not to be forced into an unnatural existence in men's hostels. Our women want to be with their men folk and not to be left permanently widowed in the reserves. We want to be allowed out after eleven o'clock at night and not to be confined to our rooms like little children. We want to be allowed to travel in our own country and to seek work where we want to, where we want to and not where the Labour Bureau tells us to. We want a just share in the whole of South Africa; we want security and a stake in society.

Above all, My Lord, we want equal political rights, because without them our disabilities will be permanent. I know this sounds revolutionary to the whites in this country, because the majority of voters will be Africans. This makes the white man fear democracy.

But this fear cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the only solution which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all. It is not true that the enfranchisement of all will result in racial domination. Political division, based on colour, is entirely artificial and, when it disappears, so will the domination of one colour group by another. The ANC has spent half a century fighting against racialism. When it triumphs as it certainly must, it will not change that policy.

This then is what the ANC is fighting. Our struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by our own suffering and our own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live. [someone coughs]

During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to see realised. But, My Lord, if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Full Transcript available at <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/07/12/transcript-nelson-mandela-speech-i-am-prepared-die%E2%80%99> .