

# Nelson Mandela's Nobel Prize Speech and Vocabulary

## Section Objectives:

- Summarize a story
- Analyze primary and secondary sources and make inferences
- Analyze a literary work using philosophical, political, religious, ethical, and social influences of a historical period
- Complete word analogies
- Create semantic maps
- Understand jargon or technical language and synonyms

In 1486 the King of Portugal appointed Bartolomeu Dias to find a trade route to India. Two years later Dias became the first European to sail around the southernmost tip of Africa, which he named the Cape of Storms. The king later renamed it the Cape of Good Hope, as it represented a route to the East.

## *Reading Nelson Mandela's Nobel Peace Prize Address (continued)*

The first focus of your reading of this address should be to identify how Mandela's life experience and core ethical and political beliefs are conveyed. He not only talks about problems of racial oppression in South Africa but the entire world.



He makes numerous specific references to the oppressive conditions that black South Africans endured. Mandela uses phrases like “path of tyranny and injustice,” “five-hundred years of African colonization that began...with the Portuguese empire,” and “the grave insult to human dignity which described some as masters and others as servants, and transformed each into a predator whose survival depended on the destruction of the other” in order to express what black South Africans endured under the policies of apartheid. See if you can find more of these references in his speech.

After describing these dehumanizing conditions, his tone turns to positive and hopeful as he claims the measures of greatest reward in abolishing apartheid will include: “the happiness and welfare of the children...no longer tortured by hunger, disease, ignorance, molestation, abuse or slavery,” “the happiness of the mothers and fathers of these children who...no longer fear being robbed or killed for material or political profit,” “the happiness and welfare of all the people of our country who have torn down the inhuman walls that divide them,” and “the joyful peace which will triumph.”



Mandela’s hopeful vision for South Africa can be summarized when he says, “...common humanity that bonds both black and white into one human race, will have said to each one of us that we shall all live like the children of paradise. Thus shall we live, because we will have created a society which recognizes that all people are born equal, with each entitled in equal measure to life, liberty, prosperity, human rights, and good governance.”

He conveys not only his vision for South Africa, but the whole world when he proclaims:

“This must be a world of democracy and respect for human rights, a world freed from the horrors of poverty, hunger, deprivation and ignorance, relieved of the threat and the scourge of civil wars and external aggression and unburdened of the great tragedy of millions forced to become refugees.”

Though he remains hopeful throughout this speech, Mandela does address the fact that South Africa is still facing internal problems when he says: “But there are still some within our country who wrongly believe they can make a contribution to the cause of justice and peace by clinging to the shibboleths that have been proved to spell nothing but disaster.”

He ends the address with a message of righteousness, inspiration, and hope when he concludes: “Let a new age dawn!”

*To focus your reading of this address, look for the answers to the following questions.*

1. What does Mandela claim will be the measure of greatest reward in abolishing apartheid?
2. Find a passage that summarizes Mandela's vision for South Africa and the world.
3. Where does Mandela address the fact that South Africa is still facing internal problems?
4. How would you describe the **tone** of this address? Cite specific words and phrases as evidence.

### *Vocabulary*

5. usurpers
6. ignoble
7. foresight
8. shibboleths
9. repugnant
10. microcosm
11. beckon
12. eminence
13. wretched
14. cynicism
15. encapsulates

### *Identifying Vocabulary in Context*

Carefully examine the context each word is used in and from that try to discern the meaning of the word. Then compare your best guess to the actual definition.

Neither should it ever happen that once more the avenues to peaceful change are blocked by **usurpers** who seek to take power away from the people, in pursuit of their own, **ignoble** purposes.

He had the **foresight** to understand and accept that all the people of South Africa must through negotiations and as equal participants in the process, together determine what they want to make of their future.

But there are still some within our country who wrongly believe they can make a contribution to the cause of justice and peace by clinging to the **shibboleths** that have been proved to spell nothing but disaster.

It remains our hope that these, too, will be blessed with sufficient reason to realize that history will not be denied and that the new society cannot be created by reproducing the **repugnant** past, however refined or enticingly repackaged.

We live with the hope that as she battles to remake herself, South Africa, will be like a **microcosm** of the new world that is striving to be born.

The processes in which South Africa and Southern Africa as a whole are engaged, **beckon** and urge us all that we take this tide at the flood and make of this region as a living example of what all people of conscience would like the world to be.

Moved by that appeal and inspired by the **eminence** you have thrust upon us, we undertake that we too will do what we can to contribute to the renewal of our world so that none should, in future, be described as the “wretched of the earth.”

Let it never be said by future generations that indifference, **cynicism**, or selfishness made us fail to live up to the ideals of humanism, which the Nobel Peace Prize **encapsulates**.