Chapter 2: Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom

CONTENTS 6 exercises · 25 questions

2.1	Oral Comprehension Check 1 (Page 18)	5 Q
2.2	Oral Comprehension Check 2 (Page 21)	5 Q
2.3	Oral Comprehension Check 3 (Page 23)	3 Q
2.4	Thinking about the Text (Page 24)	5 Q
2.5	Thinking about Language (Page 25)	5 Q
2.6	Thinking about the Poem — A Tiger in the Zoo	2 Q

Exercise 2.1 — Oral Comprehension Check 1 (Page 18)

Q1 Where did the ceremonies take place? Can you name any public buildings in India that are made of sandstone?

SOLUTION

The inauguration ceremonies took place in the lovely sandstone amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa. For decades this had been "the seat of white supremacy", but now it became the site of a rainbow gathering for the installation of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government.

Public buildings in India made of (red) sandstone include the Red Fort, the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Parliament House in Delhi, the Jama Masjid, and the buildings of Fatehpur Sikri.

Answer: In the sandstone amphitheatre of the Union Buildings in Pretoria; Indian sandstone buildings include the Red Fort and Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Q2 Can you say how 10 May is an 'autumn day' in South Africa?

SOLUTION

South Africa lies in the Southern Hemisphere, where the seasons are the reverse of those in the Northern Hemisphere.

So while May is a spring/summer month in India and Europe, in South Africa it falls in autumn. Mandela himself calls it "that lovely autumn day".

Answer: South Africa is in the Southern Hemisphere, where seasons are reversed, so May is autumn there.

Q3 At the beginning of his speech, Mandela mentions "an extraordinary human disaster". What does he mean by this? What is the "glorious … human achievement" he speaks of at the end?

SOLUTION

The "extraordinary human disaster" refers to the long, cruel system of apartheid, under which the black-skinned people of South Africa were oppressed and discriminated against by the white minority for decades.

The "glorious human achievement" is the ending of apartheid and the establishment of the country's first democratic, non-racial government, in which the freedom of all people, regardless of skin colour, is recognised.

Answer: The disaster is the system of apartheid; the achievement is its end and the founding of a democratic, non-racial government.

Q4 What does Mandela thank the international leaders for?

SOLUTION

Mandela thanks the distinguished international guests for having come to take possession, along with the people of South Africa, of what he calls "a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity".

By their presence, the world leaders honoured and shared in South Africa's triumph over apartheid.

Answer: For coming to share in South Africa's common victory for justice, peace and human dignity.

Q5 What ideals does he set out for the future of South Africa?

SOLUTION

Mandela sets out the ideals of liberating all the people of South Africa from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other forms of discrimination.

He pledges that never again shall this beautiful land experience the oppression of

one by another, and declares, "Let freedom reign."

Answer: Freedom from poverty, deprivation and all discrimination, and an end to the oppression of one person by another.

Exercise 2.2 — Oral Comprehension Check 2 (Page 21)

Q1 What do the military generals do? How has their attitude changed, and why?

SOLUTION

The highest generals of the South African defence force and police, their chests bedecked with ribbons and medals, saluted Mandela and pledged their loyalty to him and to the new government.

Their attitude had changed completely: not so many years before, they would not have saluted but arrested him. The change came because apartheid had ended and a new government had been freely and fairly elected, so the military now demonstrated its loyalty to democracy.

Answer: They salute Mandela and pledge loyalty; earlier they would have arrested him, but democracy has replaced apartheid.

Q2 Why were two national anthems sung?

SOLUTION

Two national anthems were sung to symbolise the equality and unity of the new South Africa — the coming together of the black and white peoples.

The whites sang 'Nkosi Sikelel-iAfrika' (the black people's anthem) and the blacks sang 'Die Stem' (the old anthem of the Republic). Each group sang the anthem it had once despised, showing reconciliation.

Answer: To mark the equality and unity of the new South Africa, whites and blacks each sang the anthem they had once despised.

Q3 How does Mandela describe the systems of government in his country (i) in the first decade, and (ii) in the final decade, of the twentieth century?

SOLUTION

(i) In the first decade of the twentieth century, the white-skinned peoples of South Africa patched up their differences and erected a system of racial domination against the dark-skinned peoples of their own land. This formed the basis of one of the harshest, most inhumane societies the world has ever known.

(ii) In the final decade of the twentieth century, that system had been overturned forever and replaced by one that recognised the rights and freedoms of all

peoples, regardless of the colour of their skin.

Answer: First decade: a harsh, inhumane system of racial domination; final decade: a system recognising the rights and freedoms of all people.

Q4 What does courage mean to Mandela?

SOLUTION

For Mandela, courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it.

He learned this from his comrades in the struggle, who risked and gave their lives for an idea and stood up to attacks and torture without breaking. As he puts it, "The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

Answer: Courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it — the brave man conquers his fear.

Q5 Which does he think is natural, to love or to hate?

SOLUTION

Mandela believes that loving comes more naturally to the human heart than hating.

He says that no one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, background or religion; people must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, "for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

Answer: He thinks love is natural, because hatred has to be learned while love comes more naturally to the human heart.

Exercise 2.3 — Oral Comprehension Check 3 (Page 23)

Q1 What "twin obligations" does Mandela mention?

SOLUTION

Mandela says that in life every man has twin obligations.

The first is an obligation to his family — to his parents, his wife and his children. The second is an obligation to his people, his community and his country.

Answer: Obligations to his family (parents, wife, children) and obligations to his people, community and country.

Q2 What did being free mean to Mandela as a boy, and as a student? How does he contrast these "transitory freedoms" with "the basic and honourable freedoms"?

SOLUTION

As a boy, being free meant being free to run in the fields near his mother's hut, to swim in the clear stream, to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls.

As a student, freedom meant the "transitory freedoms" of being able to stay out at night, read what he pleased and go where he chose — freedoms wanted only for himself.

He contrasts these with the "basic and honourable freedoms" — the freedom to achieve his potential, to earn his keep, to marry and have a family, and not to be obstructed in a lawful life. The transitory freedoms are selfish and temporary, while the basic and honourable freedoms are essential and shared by all.

Answer: As a boy, freedom was play in nature; as a student, staying out and reading freely — selfish, temporary freedoms unlike the basic, honourable freedoms of a lawful, full life.

Q3 Does Mandela think the oppressor is free? Why/Why not?

SOLUTION

No, Mandela does not think the oppressor is free.

He says a man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. Both the oppressed and the oppressor are robbed of their humanity, so the oppressor must be

liberated just as surely as the oppressed.

Answer: No — the oppressor is a prisoner of hatred, prejudice and narrow-mindedness, robbed of his humanity like the oppressed.

Exercise 2.4 — Thinking about the Text (Page 24)

Q1 Why did such a large number of international leaders attend the inauguration? What did it signify the triumph of?

SOLUTION

A large number of international leaders attended the inauguration because it was a historic occasion — the birth of a new, democratic and non-racial South Africa after the fall of apartheid, which had been condemned all over the world.

Their presence signified the triumph of justice, peace and human dignity over the cruel and inhuman system of apartheid, and the victory of good over evil.

Answer: It marked the end of apartheid and the birth of a democratic South Africa; it signified the triumph of justice, peace and human dignity.

Q2 What does Mandela mean when he says he is "simply the sum of all those African patriots" who had gone before him?

SOLUTION

Mandela means that his achievement was not his alone but the result of the sacrifices of countless African patriots who had struggled and suffered before him.

Thousands of his people had given their courage and their lives in the fight against apartheid. He felt he was carrying forward their "long and noble line", so his success was really the sum of all their efforts.

Answer: He owes his success to the countless African patriots who fought and sacrificed before him — he carries forward their long, noble line.

Q3 Would you agree that the "depths of oppression" create "heights of character"? How does Mandela illustrate this? Can you add your own examples to this argument?

SOLUTION

Yes, one can agree that great oppression often brings out great strength of character, because extreme hardship tests and develops courage, wisdom and generosity.

Mandela illustrates this by saying that the decades of oppression and brutality

had an unintended effect: they produced men "of such extraordinary courage, wisdom and generosity" as Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Chief Luthuli, Yusuf Dadoo, Bram Fischer and Robert Sobukwe. He says, "Perhaps it requires such depths of oppression to create such heights of character."

Other examples include Mahatma Gandhi and other freedom fighters produced by British rule in India, Martin Luther King during the struggle of black Americans, and leaders like Aung San Suu Kyi.

Answer: Yes — hardship builds character; Mandela cites leaders like Tambo, Sisulu and Luthuli produced by apartheid; e.g. Gandhi and Martin Luther King too.

Q4 How did Mandela's understanding of freedom change with age and experience?

SOLUTION

As a boy, Mandela thought he was free — free to run, swim, roast mealies and ride bulls — as long as he obeyed his father and the customs of his tribe.

As a young student, he wanted freedom only for himself: the transitory freedoms of staying out at night, reading what he pleased and going where he chose.

Later, as a young man, he yearned for the basic and honourable freedoms of achieving his potential, earning a living, marrying and having a family. Finally he realised that not only was he not free, but none of his people were free, and his hunger for his own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of all his people.

Answer: From boyhood play, to selfish student freedoms, to basic personal freedoms, and finally to the shared freedom of all his people.

Q5 How did Mandela's 'hunger for freedom' change his life?

SOLUTION

Mandela's hunger for the freedom of his people transformed his whole life.

It turned a frightened young man into a bold one, drove a law-abiding attorney to become a "criminal", turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, and forced a life-loving man to live like a monk.

He gave up his personal comforts and family life and joined the African National

Congress to fight for the dignity and self-respect of all his people.

Answer: It made him bold, turned him into an 'outlaw' and a homeless man living like a monk, sacrificing family life to fight for his people.

Exercise 2.5 — Thinking about Language (Page 25)

Q1 There are nouns in the text (formation, government) which are formed from the corresponding verbs (form, govern) by suffixing -(at)ion or -ment. Make a list of such pairs of nouns and verbs in the text.

SOLUTION

Noun — Verb pairs from the text:

rebellion — rebel; constitution — constitute; formation — form; government — govern; installation — install; oppression — oppress; domination — dominate; discrimination — discriminate; emancipation — emancipate; deprivation — deprive; achievement — achieve.

Each noun is formed from the verb by adding the suffix -(at)ion or -ment, sometimes with a spelling change (as in rebel to rebellion).

Answer: e.g. rebellion/rebel, constitution/constitute, formation/form, government/govern, oppression/oppress, discrimination/discriminate.

Q2 Read the paragraph below. Fill in the blanks with the noun forms of the verbs in brackets. Martin Luther King's ___ (contribute) to our history … began when he came to the ___ (assist) of Rosa Parks … To break these laws would mean ___ (subjugate) and ___ (humiliate) … Beatings, ___ (imprison) and sometimes death awaited those who defied the System. Martin Luther King's tactics … involved non-violent ___ (resist) to racial injustice.

SOLUTION

Fill the blanks with the noun forms of the bracketed verbs:

contribute -> contribution; assist -> assistance; subjugate -> subjugation; humiliate -> humiliation; imprison -> imprisonment; resist -> resistance.

Full paragraph: Martin Luther King's contribution to our history as an outstanding leader began when he came to the assistance of Rosa Parks... To break these laws would mean subjugation and humiliation by the police and the legal system. Beatings, imprisonment and sometimes death awaited those who defied the System. Martin Luther King's tactics of protest involved non-violent resistance to racial injustice.

Answer: contribution, assistance, subjugation, humiliation, imprisonment, resistance.

Q3 Using the Definite Article with Names. Used with 'the' and/or in the plural, a proper noun carries a special meaning. What do 'the Oliver Tambos, the Walter Sisulus, … of our time' mean? (a) for example Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu; (b) many other men like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu / many men of their type or kind, whose names may not be as well known.

SOLUTION

The correct answer is (b).

When a proper noun is used with 'the' and in the plural, it no longer refers only to that one famous person. It stands for many other people of the same type or kind — here, many brave men like Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, whose names may not be as well known.

Answer: (b) — it means many other men of the same type or kind as Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu.

Q4 Idiomatic Expressions. Match the italicised phrases in Column A with the phrase nearest in meaning in Column B. (1) I was not unmindful of the fact; (2) when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits; (3) to reassure me and keep me going; (4) the basic and honourable freedoms of…earning my keep.

SOLUTION

Matching each phrase with its closest meaning from Column B:

1. I was not unmindful of the fact -> (i) had not forgotten; was aware of the fact.

2. when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits -> (iii) felt that we could not endure the suffering any longer.

3. to reassure me and keep me going -> (ii) help me continue to live in hope in this very difficult situation.

4. the basic and honourable freedoms of…earning my keep -> (i) earning enough money to live on.

Answer: 1-(i), 2-(iii), 3-(ii), 4-(i).

Q5 Looking at Contrasts. Use the following phrases to complete the sentences: (i) they can be taught to love; (ii) I was born free; (iii) but the triumph over it; (iv) but he who conquers that fear; (v) to create such heights of character. Complete: 1. It requires such depths of oppression ___ 2. Courage was not the absence of fear ___ 3. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid ___ 4. If people can learn to hate ___ 5. I was not born with a hunger to be free. ___

SOLUTION

Completing each balanced sentence with the correct phrase:

1. It requires such depths of oppression to create such heights of character. (v)

2. Courage was not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. (iii)

3. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid but he who conquers that fear. (iv)

4. If people can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. (i)

5. I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free. (ii)

Answer: 1-(v), 2-(iii), 3-(iv), 4-(i), 5-(ii).

Exercise 2.6 — Thinking about the Poem — A Tiger in the Zoo

Q1 Read the poem again, and work in pairs or groups to do the following tasks. (i) Find the words that describe the movements and actions of the tiger in the cage and in the wild. Arrange them in two columns. (ii) Find the words that describe the two places, and arrange them in two columns. Now try to share ideas about how the poet uses words and images to contrast the two situations.

SOLUTION

(i) Movements and actions of the tiger:

In the cage: stalks (in his vivid stripes), on pads of velvet quiet, in his quiet rage, locked in a concrete cell, stalking the length of his cage, ignoring visitors, hears the last voice at night, stares with his brilliant eyes.

In the wild: lurking in shadow, sliding through long grass, snarling around houses, baring his white fangs and claws, terrorising the village.

(ii) Words describing the two places:

The zoo: few steps, cage, concrete cell, behind bars, visitors, patrolling cars.

The wild/jungle: shadow, long grass, water hole (where plump deer pass), houses at the jungle's edge, the village.

The poet contrasts the tiger's restricted, silent, helpless life in the cage with its free, powerful, majestic life in the jungle. Words like "velvet quiet", "quiet rage" and "concrete cell" show suppressed anger and confinement, while "lurking", "snarling", "baring his white fangs" and "terrorising" show its natural strength and wild freedom.

Answer: The poet uses words of confinement (cage, concrete cell, bars, quiet rage) versus wild power (lurking, snarling, baring fangs, terrorising) to contrast the tiger's caged life with its free jungle life.

Q2 Notice the use of a word repeated in lines such as these: (i) On pads of velvet quiet, / In his quiet rage. (ii) And stares with his brilliant eyes / At the brilliant stars. What do you think is the effect of this repetition?

SOLUTION

In (i) the word "quiet" is repeated, and in (ii) the word "brilliant" is repeated.

The repetition emphasises and intensifies meaning. Repeating "quiet" stresses how silent yet full of suppressed fury the caged tiger is — its rage is deep but helpless. Repeating "brilliant" links the tiger's shining eyes with the brilliant stars, highlighting its longing for the free, open world outside the cage.

The repetition also creates rhythm and musical effect, and draws the reader's attention to these key images.

Answer: The repetition of 'quiet' and 'brilliant' emphasises the tiger's suppressed rage and longing for freedom, while adding rhythm and drawing attention to the images.