

First Flight

(Class X – NCERT English)

Chapter 2: Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom – Nelson Mandela

Detailed Summary (Expanded, Exam-Oriented)

The extract from "Long Walk to Freedom" is Nelson Mandela's autobiographical account of his inauguration as South Africa's first black president on May 10, 1994. It marks the end of apartheid and the beginning of a new era of freedom, equality, and democracy in South Africa.

The chapter describes the historic inauguration ceremony held in Pretoria, attended by political leaders and dignitaries from over 140 countries. Mandela describes the beautiful amphitheater formed by the Union Buildings, where the ceremony takes place.

On this momentous day, South Africa's first democratically elected, non-racial government is being installed. Mandela takes the oath as President, pledging to uphold the constitution and dedicate himself to the welfare of the Republic and its people.

Two deputy presidents are also sworn in - Thabo Mbeki and F.W. de Klerk. The presence of de Klerk, who was once Mandela's jailer and the representative of the apartheid regime, now standing as his deputy, symbolizes the miraculous transformation of South Africa.

During the ceremony, South African jets fly in formation, displaying the new South African flag. The highest military generals salute Mandela, who had once been considered a terrorist and criminal by the same military. This moment fills Mandela with awe and gratitude.

As Mandela reflects on the occasion, he thinks about the long and difficult journey to this moment. He remembers the decades of oppression, the struggle, the sacrifices of countless men and women who fought for freedom but did not live to see this day.

Mandela acknowledges that apartheid created two kinds of victims - those who were oppressed (black South Africans) and those who became oppressors (white South Africans). Both were dehumanized by the system. The oppressed lost their freedom and dignity, while the oppressors lost their humanity and became prisoners of hatred.

Mandela explains that when he was young, he enjoyed certain freedoms - the freedom to run in the fields, swim in streams, and roast mealies (corn) under the stars. As a young man, he wanted basic freedoms like being able to stay out at night, read what he wanted, and go where he chose.

But as he grew older and learned about the oppression of his people, his understanding of freedom deepened. He realized that his individual freedom was meaningless as long as his people were not

free. This realization transformed him from a frightened young man into a bold one, driving him to join the African National Congress and fight for liberation.

Mandela recognizes that both the oppressor and the oppressed need to be liberated. A person who takes away another's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, prejudice, and narrow-mindedness. True freedom means freeing both the oppressed and the oppressor.

He reflects on the courage it took to continue the struggle. He learned that courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. He experienced fear many times but learned to overcome it.

Mandela pays tribute to the countless African patriots who sacrificed everything for freedom - men like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Bram Fischer, and many others who gave their lives so that future generations could be free. Their sacrifices made this day possible.

The chapter ends with Mandela acknowledging that while South Africa has achieved political emancipation, the journey is not over. They must now work toward ending poverty, suffering, and discrimination. True freedom requires liberation from want, from poverty, from deprivation, and from oppression.

Mandela concludes with a profound observation: freedom is indivisible. The chains on any one of his people are chains on all of them. Similarly, when they remove the chains from the oppressed, they also free the oppressor. This interconnectedness defines true freedom and liberation.

Central Themes

1. Freedom and Equality

The central theme is the achievement of freedom and equality for all South Africans, regardless of race. Mandela emphasizes that true freedom is not just political but also social and economic.

2. Courage and Perseverance

The struggle against apartheid required immense courage and perseverance. Mandela learned that courage is not the absence of fear but triumphing over it.

3. Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Mandela's willingness to work with former oppressors like de Klerk shows the power of forgiveness and the necessity of reconciliation for nation-building.

4. Sacrifice for the Greater Good

Countless freedom fighters sacrificed their lives, comfort, and personal freedoms for the liberation of their people. Their sacrifice made South Africa's freedom possible.

5. Interconnected Humanity

Mandela believes that freedom is indivisible - the oppressor and the oppressed are both prisoners of the system. Freeing one means freeing both.

Character Analysis

1. Nelson Mandela

The narrator and protagonist. He is wise, reflective, courageous, and magnanimous. He shows no bitterness despite 27 years in prison. His vision extends beyond revenge to reconciliation and nation-building. He represents the triumph of the human spirit over oppression.

2. F.W. de Klerk

The last white president of South Africa who became Mandela's deputy. His presence symbolizes the transformation of South Africa and the possibility of reconciliation between former enemies.

3. African Patriots (Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, etc.)

Freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for liberation. Mandela pays tribute to their courage and dedication. They represent the countless unnamed heroes of the struggle.

Important Vocabulary (With Meanings)

- **Apartheid** – policy of racial segregation in South Africa
- **Emancipation** – freedom from slavery or oppression
- **Inauguration** – formal ceremony to mark the beginning of a term
- **Oppression** – prolonged cruel or unjust treatment
- **Dignity** – the state of being worthy of honor or respect
- **Resilience** – ability to recover from difficulties
- **Prejudice** – preconceived opinion not based on reason
- **Patriots** – people who love and support their country
- **Tyranny** – cruel and oppressive government or rule
- **Transformation** – thorough or dramatic change

Exam-Ready Key Points

- The chapter is from Mandela's autobiography about his presidential inauguration in 1994
- It marks the end of apartheid and the beginning of democracy in South Africa
- F.W. de Klerk, former oppressor, becomes Mandela's deputy - showing reconciliation
- Military generals who once hunted Mandela now salute him as president
- Mandela reflects on the long struggle and the sacrifices of freedom fighters
- He explains that apartheid created two types of victims - oppressed and oppressors
- Both the oppressed and oppressor need liberation for true freedom
- Courage is not absence of fear but triumph over it
- Freedom is indivisible - chains on one are chains on all
- The struggle continues - from political freedom to economic and social freedom