

What Was Apartheid?



In this introductory activity, students will examine and explore the lyrics of anti-apartheid songs and convey information to other young people about anti-racism.

To examine apartheid as an extreme form of racial discrimination, identify its negative effects, and learn how it was finally defeated

Brainstorm with students what they know about apartheid, the system of racial discrimination that existed in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Ask students if they have heard the name Nelson Mandela and what they know about him. Have them describe what they know of Canada's role in the international campaign against apartheid from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Lead a discussion about prejudice, racism, and discrimination. Ask students to use an organizational tool of their choice to record their responses and ideas about the meaning of the terms, and include examples of each. Suggest that they consider adding significant historical examples of countries where a form of race-based discrimination was enforced and its consequences for the people who lived there.

Direct students to the topic Canada and the Fight Against Apartheid on the CBC Radio and Television Archives Web site. Have them browse the site in any order they wish to gather information about apartheid. They may want to take notes defining apartheid, explaining its beginnings and enforcement in South Africa, noting the justifications of white South Africans and the resistance of black South Africans, explaining the history of South Africa's ejection from the Commonwealth, noting the impact of the freeing of Nelson Mandela, and explaining when and how apartheid was defeated.

Using the information they have gathered, students work in pairs or small groups to search the Internet for examples of anti-apartheid songs. Have them print and write an explanation of the lyrics, including the events and situations that prompted the artists to write them. If possible, students can play the songs for the class or read the lyrics.

Have students play the songs to the class and discuss the lyrics. Write the main points arising from them on the board.

Write the following statement on the board: The system of apartheid that existed in South Africa between 1948 and 1994 was one of the worst examples of racially-based discrimination in history, and it is good for that country and the world as a whole that it was finally ended. Lead a discussion with students on their views about it.

Have students name examples of prejudice, racism, and discrimination in their own lives, school, or community. Discuss whether they think young people should be involved in combating racism. Interested students can locate an anti-racism organization and get involved in a local event or campaign, or organize one in the school. Alternatively, students can prepare a visual display to illustrate the consequences of racism and post the display in the school corridors.

<http://archives.cbc.ca/300c.asp?id=1-71-703>