

INVICTUS

The title of the movie comes from the fact that Mandela had the poem “Invictus” (below) written on a scrap of paper in his prison cell while he was incarcerated. The word “invictus” is a Latin term which means unconquered / unconquerable / undefeated.

Invictus (William Earnest Henley)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be,
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond the place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

1. What did Nelson Mandela risk by promoting reconciliation (forgiveness) between black and white South Africans after he was elected president?
2. How would you describe the relationships among Mandela's security guards as the story progresses?
3. Why did Mandela take risks to bring all the citizens of South Africa together?
4. Describe the relationship between Mandela and Pienaar?
5. Do both characters gain from this relationship?
6. Matt Damon's character, Francois Pienaar, took many of his own risks after first meeting Mandela. What were they and what was his motivation?
7. What scenes stand out as pivotal to the development of Pienaar as he struggles with the many challenges he faces? What is revealed about Pienaar through these scenes?
8. How do different groups in South Africa begin to come together as the movie proceeds?
9. What is the significance of Nelson Mandela knowing each player's name? Do you feel this is a significant or important lesson to learn for your own life?
10. The poem *Invictus* (above) is about an individual facing challenges, and yet the movie is about individuals working together, eventually in solidarity. Is there a contradiction between individualism and the common good?

11. Fifteen years after the events in this film, South Africa faces many problems, including great poverty; centuries of injustices have left their mark on this nation. Is there a value of celebrating the potential of South Africa through a film such as *Invictus* at this later date, with so many challenges remaining for this African nation?

12. Do you believe that art, such as poetry and film, and sport, such as rugby and soccer, can have a role in the ongoing work towards justice and peace? Why or why not?

13. Mandela says: If we remove the rugby team, “we prove that we are who they feared we would be.” What does he mean in this statement?

14. What was the point of the team’s trip to Robben Island to see the prison where Mandela was held?

15. How do sports shape a community, impact relationships and create connections?

16. In 1969, three years after arriving on Robben Island to serve a life sentence for sabotage, Nelson Mandela’s eldest son, died in a car crash. Prison authorities refused to allow Mandela to attend the funeral. After 27 years in prison, how is it possible to not only forgive your captors, but to seek reconciliation with the white population and the apartheid leaders?

17. What did François Pienaar, the captain of the Springboks rugby team, learn from Nelson Mandela?

18. What was the significance of Mandela wearing the green and gold jersey and matching cap of the Springbok rugby at the end of the film? Why was it so important to his strategy?

19. In what ways did watching the movie *Invictus* impact you as a person?

20. Refer to the poem above. How do you think Mandela and later François were inspired by this poem? Identify an individual or group of individuals (contemporary or historic) to whom the poem could apply, even though they may never have heard it.