



In South Africa, Freedom Day is a public holiday on 27 April.

This is the story of Freedom Day.

You will read about its history, and why it is an important day.



South Africa got its freedom on the 27th of April 1994.

It was the first time that Black people voted in South Africa's elections.

We celebrated the end of apartheid, and the start of democracy.



Democracy is a system where anyone can vote if they are old enough.

People vote in elections to choose their leaders and the government.

During apartheid, the South African government did not let Black people vote.



Many freedom fighters fought against the apartheid government.

Nelson Mandela is our most famous freedom fighter. He fought for equal rights for all South Africans.

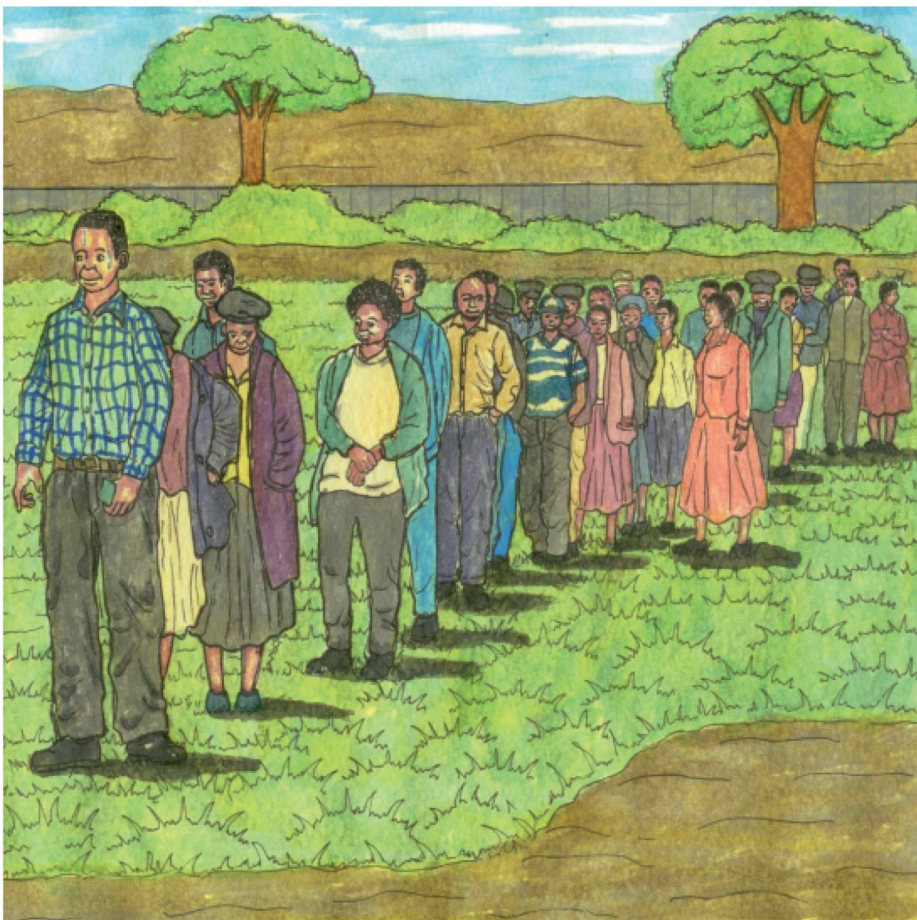
The apartheid government sent him to jail for 27 years because he fought for democracy.



On 27th of April in 1994, South Africans started to queue early at polling stations across the country.

A polling station is the place where we go to vote.

When we vote, we choose the people who we want to run our government.

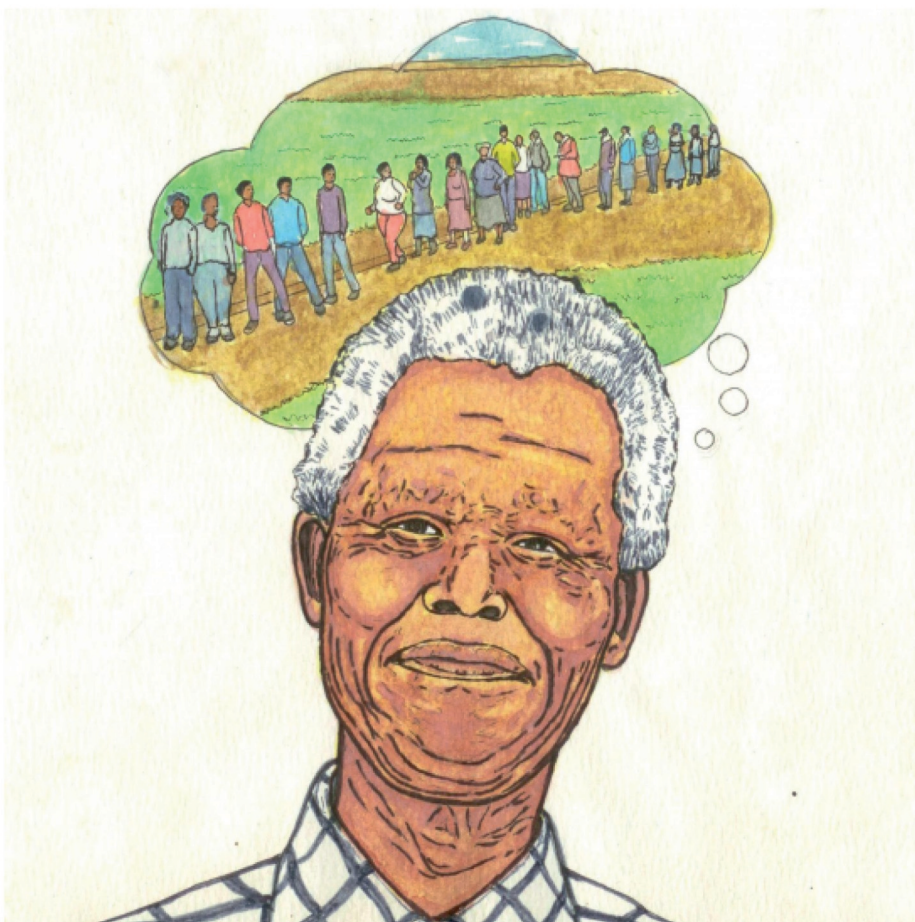


Everyone was excited to vote in South Africa's first democratic election.

The queues got longer and longer.

The day got hotter and hotter.

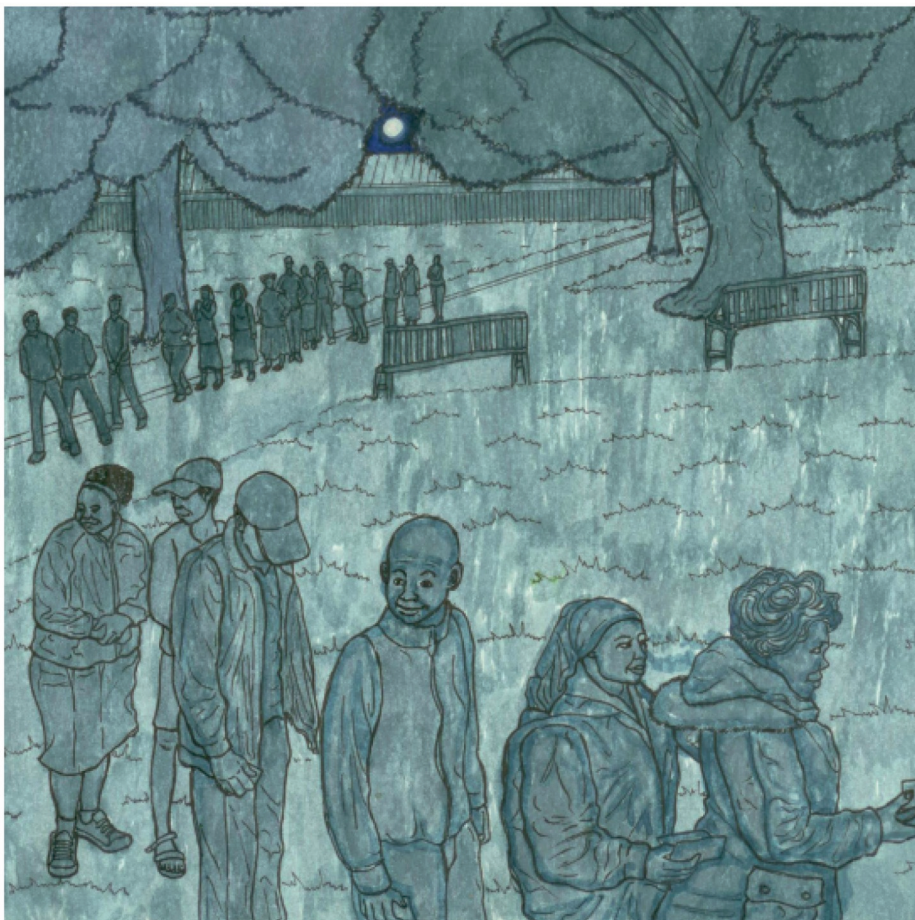
But everyone was happy because they felt free.



Nelson Mandela remembered this beautiful day with admiration.

He could not forget the long queues of people in the streets.

He remembered the many people waiting to vote in the first free election. These memories always stayed in his mind.



This is the day when all South Africans older than 18 could vote.

Across the country, we waited patiently to enter the polling stations.

We queued until late that night, until everyone in the queue had voted.



Then, the polling stations closed. It was time to count the votes.

It was time to find out who the people wanted to govern South Africa.

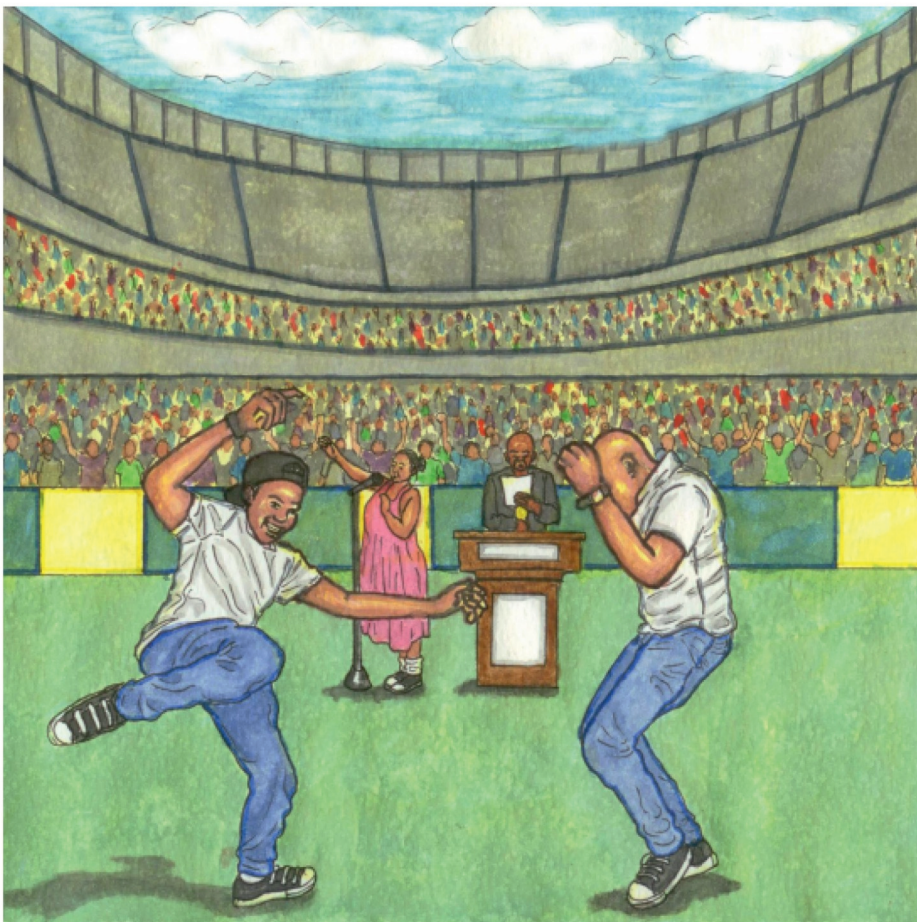
About 20 million people voted on the 27th April 1994. We voted for a new government.



The African National Congress was the party that got the most votes.

The ANC won the first democratic election by far!

Nelson Mandela was the ANC's leader. He was the first democratic president of South Africa.



The new government made 27 of April a public holiday so that South Africans can celebrate this day every year. We celebrate democracy and the new laws.

We celebrate by gathering at stadiums for special events. We celebrate with music, poetry, and speeches.

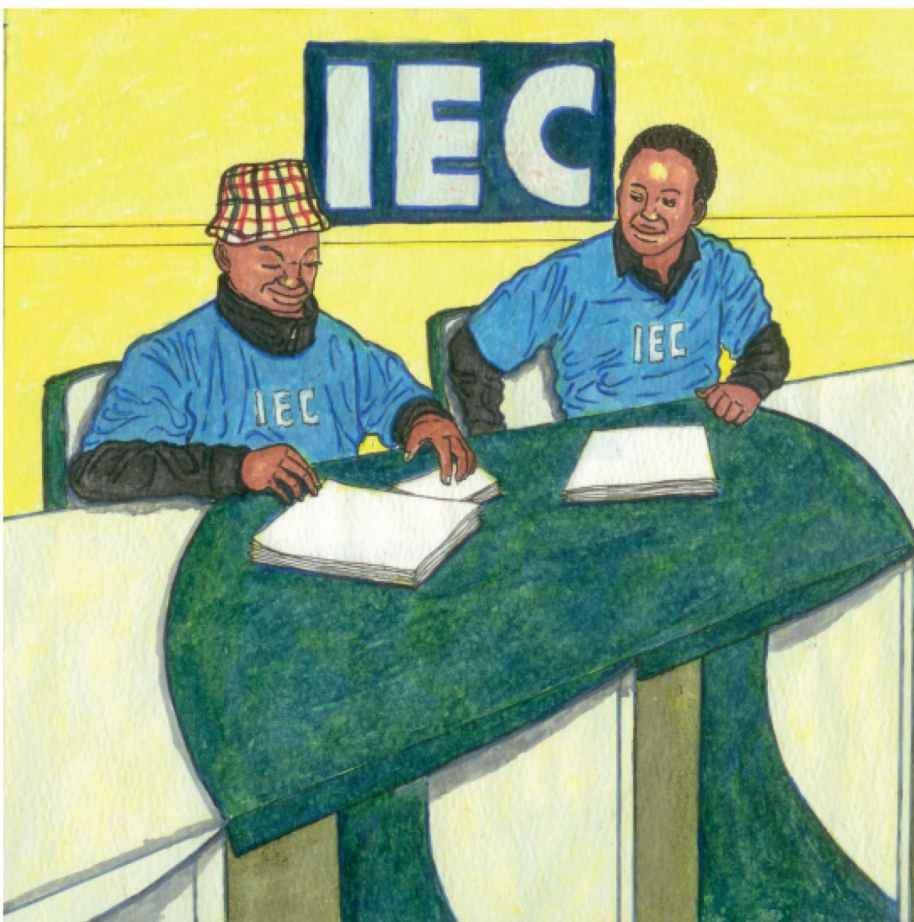


On Freedom Day, we honour our freedom fighters.

We celebrate the end of apartheid.

We celebrate that everyone has the right to vote.

We promise to make sure that everyone is equal and free.
That is democracy!



Elections in South Africa are organised by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

This organisation makes sure that elections are “free and fair”. What do you think that means?

Find out about the Independent Electoral Commission.



—Questions

1. What happened on the 27th of April in 1994 in South Africa?
2. Who can vote in a democracy?
3. Why is the 27 April a public holiday?
4. What is democracy?
5. Who was the first democratic president of South Africa?
6. What does 'equal rights' mean?
7. What things are you not free to do in your school? Why?
8. Apart from organising elections, what other work does the Independent Electoral Commission do?



—Books in this series

- Freedom Day
- Heritage Day
- Human Rights Day
- Reconciliation Day
- Women's Day
- Workers' Day
- Youth Day



The storybook was created and written in Sepedi, as part of the Zenex Ulwazi Lwethu reading materials project in 2020.