



# Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

*Elleke Boehmer*

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As well as being a remarkable statesman and one of the world's longest-detained political prisoners, Nelson Mandela has become an exemplary figure of non-racialism and democracy, a moral giant. Once a man with an unknown face, he became after his 1994 release one of the most internationally recognizable images of our time.

Set within a biographical frame, this Very Short Introduction explores the reasons why his story is so important to us in the world at large today, and what his achievements signify. It shows how our picture of Mandela is a great deal more complicated than the legend suggests: quality of character is combined with his talents as a performer, his maverick ability to absorb transnational influences, his proximity to outstanding colleagues, his steely survival skills, and his postmodern ease with media image. It shows how many different interconnected stories, histories, values, and symbols combine in the famous name Nelson Mandela.

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