PRINT COPY OF BRAILLE

National
Qualifications
2018

X724/76/11

English
Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation — Text

FRIDAY, 11 MAY

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Candidates should enter their surname, forename(s), date of birth, Scottish candidate number and the name and Level of the subject at the top of their first answer sheet.

Total marks — 30

Read the passages carefully and then attempt ALL questions, which are printed on a separate sheet.

Passage 1

Read the passage below and then attempt questions 1 to 7.

Nelson Mandela, the great South African statesman, was imprisoned for 27 years by his country's apartheid government. Four years after his release, he was elected President of South Africa. He died in 2013.

Remembering an Icon of Freedom

Nelson Mandela was always uncomfortable talking about his own death; he understood that people wanted him to offer inspirational words about death and he had none to give. He was an utterly unsentimental man. 'Men come and men go,' he said. 'I have come and I will go when my time comes.' And he seemed satisfied by that. I never once heard him mention God or heaven or any kind of afterlife. Nelson Mandela believed in justice in this lifetime.

Mandela might have been a more sentimental man if so much had not been taken away from him. His freedom. His ability to choose the path of his life. His eldest son. Two great-grandchildren. Nothing in his life was permanent except the oppression he and his people were under. And he sacrificed everything he might have had to achieve the freedom of his people. But all the crude jailers, tiny cells and arrogant white apartheid leaders could not take away his pride, his dignity and his sense of justice. Even when he had to strip and be hosed down when he first entered Robben Island prison, he stood straight and did not complain. He refused to be intimidated in any circumstance.

It's worth remembering that Mandela — this great, historic revolutionary — was in many ways a natural conservative. He did not believe in change for change's sake. But one thing turned him into a revolutionary, and that was the pernicious political system of racial oppression he experienced as a young black man in Johannesburg. When people spat on him in buses, when shopkeepers turned him away, when whites treated him as if he could not read or write, that changed him irrevocably. For deep in his bones was a basic sense of fairness: he simply could not abide injustice.

If he, Nelson Mandela, the son of a chief, tall, handsome and educated, could be treated as subhuman, then what about the millions who had nothing like his advantages? 'That is not right,' he would sometimes say to me about something as mundane as a plane flight being cancelled or as significant as a world leader's policies, but that simple phrase — that is not right — underlay everything he did, everything he sacrificed for and everything he accomplished.

In many ways, the image of Nelson Mandela has become a kind of fairy tale: he is a figure of superhuman achievement. Indeed, his life has followed the narrative of the archetypal hero, of great suffering followed by redemption. But as he said to many people over the years, 'I am not a saint.' And he wasn't. As a young revolutionary, he was fiery and rowdy. But like Gandhi, like Lincoln, like Churchill, he was doggedly, obstinately right about one over-arching thing, and he never lost sight of that. His intolerance of injustice was what goaded him. It was the engine of his discontent, his simple verdict on the basic immorality of apartheid. He saw something wrong and tried to right it. He saw injustice and tried to fix it.

Nelson Mandela had many teachers in his life, but the greatest of them all was prison. Prison was the crucible that formed the Mandela we know. The man who went into prison in 1962 was hot-headed and easily stung. How did this passionate revolutionary become a measured statesman? In prison, he had to temper his responses to everything. There was little a prisoner could control. The one thing you could control — that you had to control — was yourself. There was no room for outbursts or self-indulgence or lack of discipline. When I first walked into Mandela's old cell on Robben Island, I gasped. It's not a human-sized space, much less Mandela-sized. He could not stretch out when he was lying down. It was obvious that prison had, both literally and figuratively, moulded him: there was no room for extraneous motion or emotion; everything had to be pruned away; everything had to be ordered. Every morning and every evening, he painstakingly arranged the few possessions that he was allowed in that tiny cell.

Prison steeled him but it broke many others. Understanding that made him more empathetic, not less. He never lorded it over those who could not take it. He never blamed anyone for giving in. Surrendering was only human. Over the years, he developed a radar and a deep sympathy for human frailty.

The man who walked out into the sunshine, on the day of his release from prison 27 years later, was measured, even serene. He had come to understand that if he was ever to achieve that free and non-racial South Africa of his dreams, he would have to come to terms with his oppressors. He would have to forgive them. Asked what was different about the man who came out of prison compared with the man who went in, he said simply, 'I came out mature.'

And then, after he forged this new South Africa, won the first democratic election in the country's history and began to redress the wrongs done to his people, he walked away from it. Like George Washington, he understood that every step he made would be a template for others to follow. He could have been President for life, but he knew that for democracy to rule, he could not. He was a large man in every way. His legacy is that he expanded human freedom. He was tolerant of everything but intolerance.

Adapted from an article by Richard Stengal

Passage 2

Read the passage below and attempt question 8. While reading, you may wish to make notes on the main ideas and/or highlight key points in the passage.

In the second passage, David Von Drehle discusses Barack Obama.

What President Obama Achieved in Eight Years

Barack Obama entered the White House as something new in American history. He wasn't chosen on the basis of experience, nor for his role as leader of a party or a movement. He had not been a governor or a general or a veteran legislator. He did not become president by the accident of his predecessor's death in office.

Obama was elected purely for himself — his message, his persona and what he symbolised. In 48 brief months, he rose from the obscurity of a state legislature to become the first Democrat in more than three decades to win more than half of the popular vote. Messenger and message were inseparable; he offered himself as Exhibit A in the case for hope and change. Obama was a mirror in which millions of people saw their cherished ideals reflected.

After two bruising and tumultuous terms in office — a period of economic crisis and geopolitical upheaval — it's difficult to recall how the young candidate riveted the world simply by being Obama. As a mere nominee, not yet elected, he drew an estimated crowd of 200,000 people — in Germany. He filled a football stadium for his acceptance speech, a city park for his victory speech and, of course, much of the National Mall for his first inauguration. In October 2009, the Nobel Prize committee awarded him its most prestigious honour, the Peace Prize, before he'd had time to accomplish much at all. 'Only very rarely has a person to the same extent as Obama captured the world's attention and given its people hope for a better future' the prize citation declared. A Nobel Peace Prize just for being Obama.

In a sense, there was nowhere to go but down. The most exalted position in American life has a way of humbling its occupants. Obama left office more human than he entered it, a mere mortal with a track record and the grey hair to show for it. And that track record contains much more than his enemies — or even many of his friends — have been ready to acknowledge.

Taking office in the midst of an economic meltdown, Obama seized on the massive federal response to make record investments in education initiatives, environmental research, industrial modernisation and, most famously, health-care reform. He poured money into basic medical and scientific research and super-charged the US alternative-energy sector. His high-stakes reorientation of American foreign policy worried many experts, and the results might not be fully understood for years. But the effort cannot be called small.

Indeed, Obama's record is bigger and more substantial than even he allowed himself to admit through much of his time in office. A candidate known for his stirring speeches struggled, as president, to sell the public on what he was doing and why he was doing it.

Through eight years in office, Barack Obama used all the tools in a president's kit to make significant changes: laws, rules, executive orders and the platform of his office. Yet he couldn't change the nature of politics itself. The irony of Obama's presidency is that he achieved more than most presidents — yet millions of Americans grew convinced during his administration that Washington can't get anything done.

There is, however, something that seems unassailable, and it goes a long way toward explaining the steady rise in the president's approval ratings as Americans contemplated his last day at the helm. Despite his inexperience, Barack Obama gave a full measure of scandal-free service, a rarity among modern presidents. And he never lost hope, even when others wavered. There is no tougher job — an endless stream of difficult decisions, all guaranteed to stir fierce criticism. Obama did it with dignity and conscience. As was true at the beginning, it remains true at the end: who Obama was mattered at least as much as what he did. And start to finish, he was an honourable man.

[END OF TEXT]