



Liliesleaf

A PLACE *of* LIBERATION

Grade 9

Building A Timeline Of South African Resistance History

The Freedom Charter

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together—equals, countrymen and brothers—adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

History has been defined as ‘the study of change and development in society over time’. (CAPS 2011) It involves asking questions about the past: What happened? When did it happen? Why did it happen then?

History is studied and written in sequence. It is important to be able to place events in the order in which they happened in time, and to consider their context. Consider the following:

- The police shoot at a crowd of peaceful protestors at Sharpeville on 21 June 1960 and kill 69 people...
- There is widespread condemnation of the police action, both inside the country and internationally...
- The apartheid government realises that the situation is explosive. A State of Emergency is declared and shortly afterwards the ANC and PAC are banned...
- The liberation movement starts operating underground...
- The ANC protests against the whites only referendum that will decide whether South Africa should become a Republic, distancing the country from British influence and criticisms of apartheid...
- The apartheid government suppresses the anti-referendum protests with extreme violence...
- After much discussion and debate, the ANC concludes that the time has come to resort to armed struggle...
- They find a ‘safe house’ where they can meet and hide out – Liliesleaf...

This series of events can be taken further, to the raid on Liliesleaf, the Rivonia Trial, the imprisonment of the core liberation leadership – all the way to present-day South Africa.

Time and chronology are central to our understanding of history. You have seen that most history books will have a timeline of important events so that it is possible, at a glance, to see in what order events took place and to start making the connections between those events.

Activity

You are going to build your own timeline of South African resistance history. Use the Liliesleaf exhibitions and the information on the Liliesleaf website to help you. Some of the major events have already been filled in. You need to decide which events are important in the context of resistance to oppression, and place those on the timeline with their dates.

Build this timeline as a class. Write each event with its date on a card and build the timeline around the walls of your classroom. Putting the events on cards means that you will be able to move the cards and adapt your timeline as you discover new information.

The events below will get you started – but bear in mind that there are many more significant events that should form part of a timeline of resistance.

31 May 1910 - Union of South Africa proclaimed

8 January 1912 - ANC launched

1913 - Natives Land Act

1948 - National Party comes to power

26 June 1955 - Freedom Charter launch

21 March 1960 - Sharpeville Massacre

8 April 1960 - Unlawful Organisations Act bans the ANC and PAC

5 October 1960 - Whites-only referendum on South Africa becoming a republic

16 December 1961 - Formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)

11 July 1963 - Police raid on Liliesleaf

12 June 1964 - Rivonia accused sentenced to life imprisonment

16 June 1976 - Student uprisings

20 August 1983 - United Democratic Front launched

11 February 1990 - Nelson Mandela released

10 May 1994 - Nelson Mandela inaugurated as president of South Africa