Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Background:**

**A Brief History of the Apartheid Era in South Africa (1940-1994)**

**![C:\Users\shakira.guillory\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\2ETQ8UDA\Flag_of_South_Africa_svg[1].png]()**

**Directions: Answer the reading comprehension questions which follow this historical background section.**

South Africa was colonized by the English and Dutch in the seventeenth century. English domination of the Dutch descendants (known as Boers or Afrikaners) resulted in the Dutch establishing the new colonies of Orange Free State and Transvaal. The discovery of diamonds in these lands around 1900 resulted in an English invasion which sparked the Boer War. Following independence from England, an uneasy power-sharing between the two groups held sway until the 1940s, when the Afrikaner National Party (ANP) was able to gain a strong majority. ***Apartheid***is defined asan official policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in the Republic of South Africa, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against nonwhites. *Strategists in the National Party invented apartheid to separate black and white South Africans, to oppress, to dominate and control blacks, and in the same breath, to enrich white South Africans at the expense of the oppressed people.*

Population Registration Act of 1950

With the enactment of apartheid laws in 1948, racial discrimination was institutionalized. Race laws touched every aspect of social life, including a prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites, and the sanctioning of “white-only” jobs. In 1950, the Population Registration Act required that all South Africans be racially classified into one of three categories: white, black (African), or colored (of mixed descent). The colored category included major subgroups of Indians and Asians. Classification into these categories was based on appearance, social acceptance, and descent. For example, a white person was defined as “in appearance obviously a white person or generally accepted as a white person.”

A person could not be considered white if one of his or her parents were non-white. The determination that a person was “obviously white” would take into account “his habits, education, and speech and deportment and demeanor.” A black person would be of or accepted as a member of an African tribe or race, and a colored person is one that is not black or white. The Department of Home Affairs (a government bureau) was responsible for the classification of the citizenry. Non-compliance with the race laws were dealt with harshly. All blacks were required to carry “pass books” containing fingerprints, photo, and information in order for them to access non-black areas.

Bantu Education

The introduction of Bantu Education led to a huge reduction of government aid to the already ailing learning institutions of black Africans. The above law forced institutions under the direct control of the state. The National Party now had the power to employ and train teachers as they saw fit. Black teacher’s salaries in 1953 were extremely low and resulted in a dramatic drop of trainee teachers.

The policy of Bantu (meaning “low level or gutter”) education was aimed to direct black and

non-white youth to the unskilled labor market, to ensure white control and prosperity. All of

the above was carefully orchestrated and implemented in the name of “God” by the powers

to be. By controlling the media they convinced the white electorate that the cause was “just” and it would greatly benefit blacks in South Africa. Black political organizations reacted with anger at the new law. Thousands of parents vowed, they would rather have children roaming the streets, than to be subjected to Bantu education.

Black Homeland System

One of the priorities of the Apartheid government was to restrict black Africans even further, by creating Black homelands, later known as *separate development*. As a result of mass evictions from white farms and land hunger in black reserves, black Africans caused huge problems for apartheid government by occupying private or vacant land without permission. The Apartheid government quickly stepped in with a law preventing “illegal squatting”. This law was to prevent black Africans from occupying private or public land without the permission of the authorities. Its effects were to force tens of thousands of black Africans out of urban areas.

Farm workers coming from rural areas had to be granted permission by the local authorities to work on white farms. The above laws led to the elimination of blacks owning land in white farming areas. This system meant that all black Africans would in future legislation be categorized according to their various tribal antecedents and forced to accept citizenship of the appropriate designated “homeland”, where they can exercise political rights.

In 1958, H.F. Verwoerd, a brilliant intellectual, refined and theoretically substantiated the apartheid ideology. Limited self-administration was instituted in the black reservations and they were declared semi-autonomous homelands. By this measure, the South African government rid itself of responsibility for the economic and social problems on the reservations, or “homelands”. The Afrikaner government could call its elections free and general because the majority of the blacks were no longer citizens of South Africa.

The apartheid government was highly effective of achieving its goal of preferential treatment for whites, as is demonstrated by the statistics in Figure 1.



Defiance Campaigns

Backed by anti-apartheid groups in the colored, Indian and white communities, the African National Congress (ANC) demonstrated its growing popularity. A wave of black resistance under the banner of the ANC launched defiance campaigns which were open outcries of protest against apartheid government treatment. As a result, hundreds of blacks and non-whites were arrested and jailed under the law of “detention without trial”. Specifically, any person that challenged apartheid government policy was considered a “terrorist”. Some individuals that fought against the system were subjected to torture methods used during World War II. Several black leaders held under the “detention without trial” law, mysteriously died in prison. The media often reported these leaders had committed suicide while being detained. Those who were tried were sentenced to death, banished, or imprisoned for life, like Nelson Mandela. The significance of defiance campaigns was to place South Africa in the spotlight of the United Nations and to garner more support from non-whites and coloreds within the country.

The Freedom Charter

The Freedom Charter is comparable to the American Declaration of Independence in that it was a direct result of the harsh injustices inflicted by apartheid government and its laws. It contained the following ten clauses:

1. The people shall govern; affirm the rights of all regardless of race, color or sex, and the right to vote.
2. All national groups shall have equal rights before the law, in government, and in schools.
3. The people shall share in the country’s wealth, the nationalization of the mines, banks, trade, and industry. Also, it called for equal opportunity in employment.
4. The land shall be shared among those who work it, a redistribution of the land, assistance for those in poverty, and the abolition of the restrictions on movements of people and their access to land.
5. All shall be equal before the law, promising the abolition of the “detention without trial” law.
6. All shall enjoy human rights, freedom of speech, worship, and association.
7. There shall be work and security, equal work for equal pay, minimum working conditions, and the abolition of child labor.
8. The doors of learning and culture shall be opened, equal education, and the removal of color barring an individual from education.
9. There shall be houses, security, and comfort, demolition of ghettoes or shanty towns, proper medical care, and abolition of color/ancestry being factored in when purchasing a home/land.
10. There shall be peace and friendship within South Africa. Also, South Africa will strive for peace with other states.

Changing Tides

After the Soweto Uprising of 1976, when thousands of pupils, demonstrating against Afrikaans as a required school subject, were brutally shot, the unrest spread over the whole country. The ANC struggle became militant and South Africa developed fully into a police state. This situation lasted a few years, until in 1989 the last president of the old South African government, F.W. de Klerk, openly admitted the failure of apartheid policies. An important reason for the collapse of the old regime was, after many years of economic and trade restrictions, the desolate state of economy. Eventually negotiations opened the door to the first general elections in South Africa.

\*Courtesy of: [*http://www.southafrica-travel.net/history/eh\_apart2.htm*](http://www.southafrica-travel.net/history/eh_apart2.htm) and *www-cs students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html*

**Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. Name the political party which began in 1940.
2. Why was apartheid created?
3. List two provisions of the Population Registration Act of 1950.
4. If someone were to ask you to explain the difference between what the Afrikaan government considered a “white” person versus a “non-white person”, how would you do that?
5. What was the aim of Bantu education? Did it succeed in that respect?
6. What three facts can you gather about the Black Homeland System?
7. Who created the idea of semi-autonomous nations? What was its end result?
8. Using Figure 1, what areas showed the greatest amount of disparity?
9. What, if any, significance did the defiance campaigns have?
10. What law allowed the government to detain suspected “terrorists”?
11. How were these prisoners often treated?
12. Based on the ten clauses of the Freedom Charter, what main idea can you formulate about the injustices of the apartheid government?
13. What major event occurred in 1989? How did it effect changes within South Africa?