

# Political sciences: nelson mandela as a critical thinker essay

[People](#), [Nelson Mandela](#)



“ If we cultivate the habit of considering both-or even several- sides of a question, as Mandela did ... we may see solutions that would not otherwise have occurred to us” (Stengel 214). Nelson Mandela is one of the most notable statesmen and politicians. Mandela was the first African to be democratically elected as president in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Mandela also provided sober-minded leadership to South Africans during the country’s struggle for independence. Other than being an astute leader, Mandela is also one of the most prolific critical thinkers of all time. Critical thinking has several definitions but to most people, it is the art of being able to think rationally and clearly.

Critical thinkers exhibit a number of skills including the ability to grasp the connection between several logical ideas (Facione 23). In addition, logical thinkers have the ability to systematically solve problems, identify the ideas that are most relevant, and reflect on their own conclusions and beliefs.

As a critical thinker, Mandela was able to lead the fight for independence, dismantle the apartheid institutions, and lead his country into a path of economic prosperity. This paper discusses Mandela, the critical thinker using examples from his life.

One of the aspects that make Mandela a critical thinker is his ability to reflect on ideas, beliefs, arguments, and conclusions. Mandela once told his biographer about the parable of the man who went around the world looking for the perfect wife to no avail. After going around the world in vain, the man went back home.

However, on his way home he met his 'perfect bride'. Later on, the man learned that his perfect wife had lived next door to him the whole time. His biographer wondered what Mandela wanted to teach with this parable. Was the lesson that you do not need to travel far and wide to look for anything, or you that needed to travel and experience several alternatives before appreciating what you have?

When the biographer posed this question to Mandela, he told him that both of these lessons could be learned from the story. Furthermore, there were no "simple answers to the most difficult questions and various problems have many causes, not just one" (Stengel 103). This was Mandela the critical thinker.

Another trait of avid critical thinkers is their ability to consider opposing claims. In his biography, it is noted that Mandela advocated for non-violence during the fight for independence. However, another faction within his ANC Party was opposed to this tactic and advocated for armed struggle.

When Mandela was asked whether he supported the push for armed struggle, he answered by saying 'yes and no' (Stengel 210). Mandela's biographer notes that Mandela often considered both sides of an argument.

Critical thinkers are known for their ability to understand the meaning of situations, data, rules, beliefs, and conventions. As a lawyer, Nelson Mandela exhibited the ability to make interpretations. For instance, during his trial in Rivonia, Mandela recognized that nothing could make him abandon his fight for democracy, not even death (Mandela 80).

Mandela died in December of 2013 aged 95 and left behind a rich legacy of critical thinking. His biography tells the story of a man who saw the world differently. To Mandela, yes and no were not the only possible answers to a question, sometimes it was both. Mandela's ability to recognize what the priorities were was of great benefit both to himself and his fellow countrymen.

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Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, New York, NY: Hachette Digital, 2008. Print.

Stengel, Richard. *Nelson Mandela: Portrait of an Extraordinary Man*, New York, NY: Random House, 2012. Print.