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The South African History Museum

Pre-reading questions

1. What is a museum, and why do we have museums?
2. What does the word **history** mean?
3. What do you think could be in a museum about South Africa?

Luke and his Grade 2 class have been learning about South Africa. Today they are going on a school outing to the History Museum.

At the museum, they are divided into three groups. Luke is happy to be in a group with some of his friends. Each group goes in a different direction with their museum guide.



Luke and his friends are visiting the museum.

Luke's group walk to the section that displays the early history of South Africa. There they see old weapons, clothing, bowls and mugs.

“In the beginning, only a few people lived in southern Africa. There were mostly plants, open land and animals,” says the museum guide. “There were two main groups of people – the San and the Khoikhoi.”

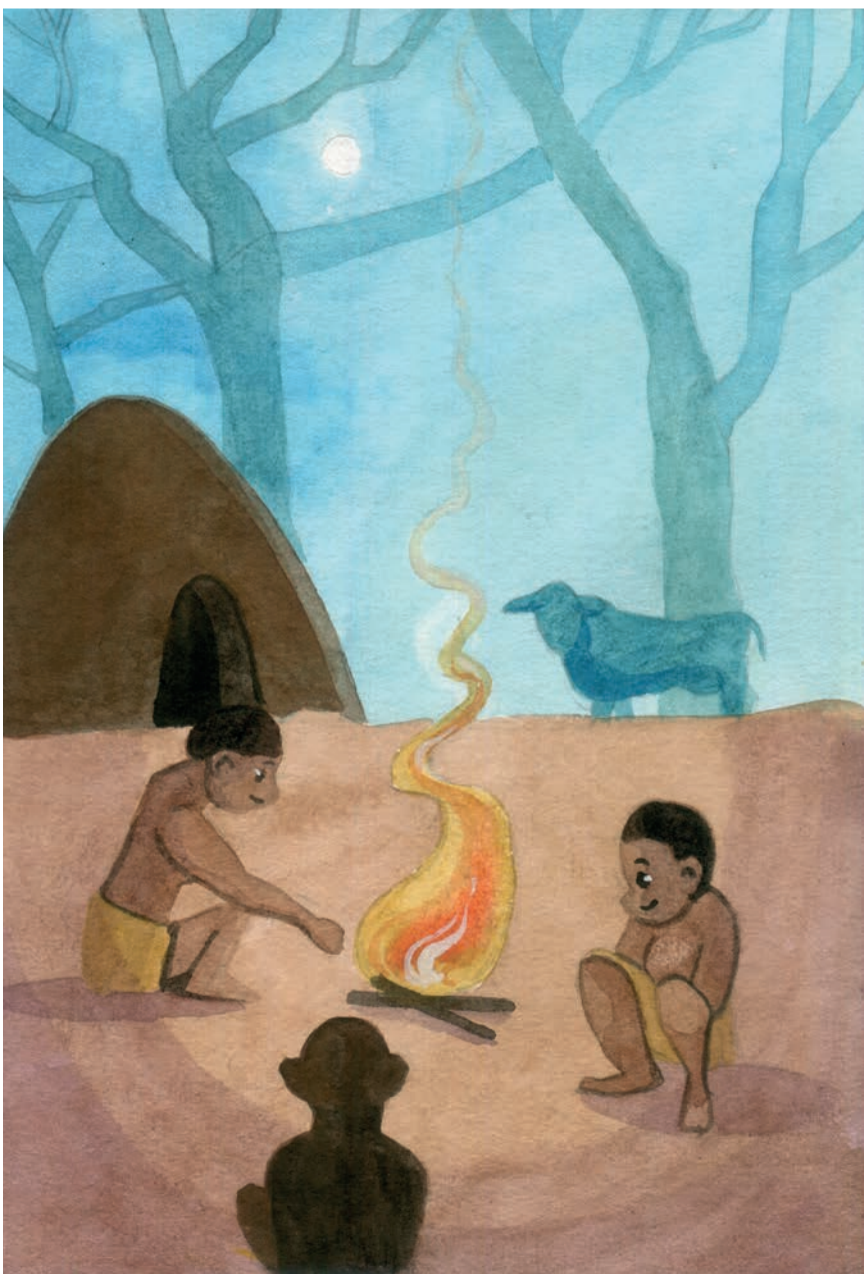
Long ago, there were only a few people living in southern Africa.





“The San were hunter-gatherers. The men would hunt animals while the women would gather berries and other plants to eat. Families would often walk far to find places with more food and water.”

The San were hunter-gatherers.



“Next came the group called the Khoikhoi,” the guide continues. “The Khoikhoi were nomadic farmers. This means they moved around with their sheep, cattle and goats.”

The Khoikhoi were nomadic farmers.

“Sometimes the two groups would fight because the San wanted to hunt the Khoikhoi’s cattle.

The San and the Khoikhoi both painted beautiful artwork on rocks. We know about them because of their rock paintings.

The Khoikhoi and the San used to tell stories about their lives and their beliefs. These stories were then told by their children and grandchildren. We still hear these stories today.

Both groups believed that the praying mantis was an important insect that would bring them good luck.”

The Khoikhoi and the San painted beautiful pictures on rocks.



Next, the guide takes Luke and his group to a room with pictures of big sailing ships. “When people from Europe sailed around Africa, they landed in a bay with a big mountain. They set up farms and houses. Today this place is called Cape Town. The people from Europe thought that they were better than the San and the Khoikhoi. They fought against the two tribes because they wanted the land,” said the guide.



“It’s so unfair to take the land from those who were here first!” says Luke to Femi.

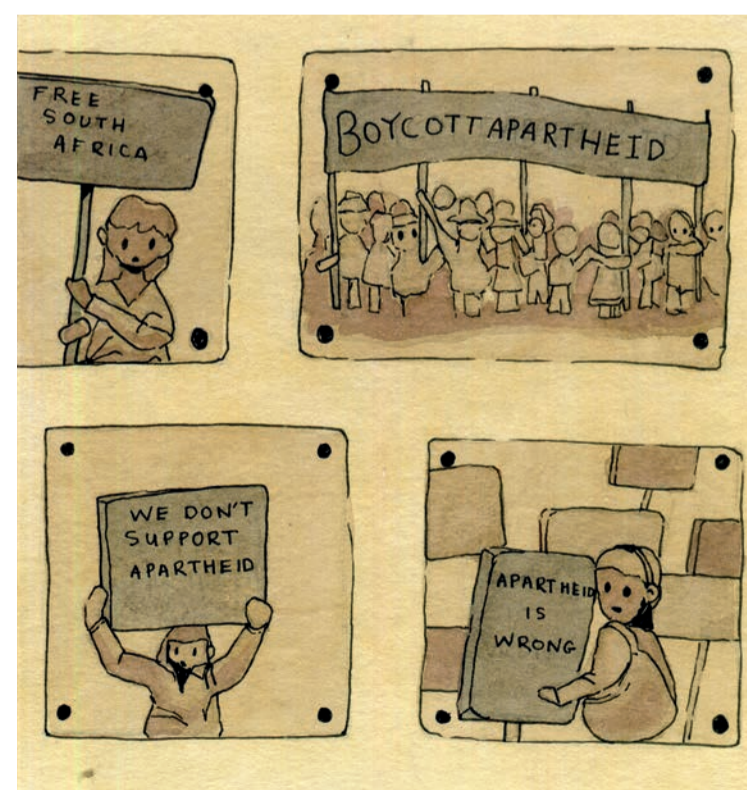
“It was very unfair,” says the guide, “but this continued for hundreds of years. The government made rules that said that people of colour had to live in different places. They also couldn’t play, be friends or go to school with light-skinned people.”

People of colour were treated unfairly by the government.



“There were many people, such as Nelson Mandela, who thought that this was wrong. Mr Mandela joined other people who wanted to change the unfair rules in South Africa. Even though it was dangerous, they wanted to make South Africa better for everyone.”

Many people wanted to change the unfair rules in South Africa.



“Nelson Mandela and many South Africans who fought against the government were locked up in prison. One prison was on Robben Island, near Cape Town. But even when Mr Mandela was in prison, he continued to fight for what he believed in. After 27 years, Mandela was released from prison. Many South Africans celebrated Mr Mandela’s freedom.”
Their guide continued: “Mr Mandela and President de Klerk didn’t always agree, but they wanted to create a better country.”



South Africa got a new flag.

South Africa is my home

South Africa is my home.
I hope you like it too.
Our history is so wide and vast.
Everyone has a different view.

South Africa is my home.
I dream, I learn, I play.
We are all so different and unique.
We learn more about each other everyday.

The guide led the group to one of the last boards. “Four years later, Mr Mandela became the new president of South Africa,” said the guide. “After being president for five years, he said it was time for someone younger to take over.”
“I’m so proud of our country!” said Luke.



We are proud to be South African.

Post-reading questions

1. The San people were hunter-gatherers. What does this mean? What did they do?
2. How are our lives different to the San and Khoikhoi people?
3. ‘Tata’ is an isiXhosa word that means ‘father’ and can be used as a way of showing respect and affection. Why do you think we call Nelson Mandela ‘Tata?’