

Speaking Card 61

South Africa

April 2020

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Geography: Located at the southern tip of Africa, the Republic of South Africa has a long coastline along two oceans: the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Indian Ocean in the east. In the north it is bordered by Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, and to the northeast by Mozambique and Eswatini (Swaziland). A separate country called Lesotho is completely contained within South Africa. South Africa has three capital cities: the parliament is in Cape Town (the legislative capital), the government and president are based in Pretoria (the executive capital) and the legal system is based in Bloemfontein (the judicial capital).

Population and People: South Africa is home to more than 57 million people and has 11 official languages, including Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans (a variant of Dutch) and English. The people of South Africa are ethnically and culturally diverse, earning the country the nickname of “the rainbow nation”. The largest city is Johannesburg (population 8 million), which is especially diverse: the most common first language is English, but 70% of people have a different first language.

History before Independence: The Portuguese and Dutch first came to the country while trying to find new shipping routes to India and China. In the 17th century, the Dutch started a trading post in what is today the city of Cape Town. As this grew into a town, they imported many Dutch farmers and 71,000 slaves. In the early 1800s, the British took control of this territory. In 1910 the colonies in the region united to form South Africa, and British control over the country ended in 1931.

History after Independence: South Africa had segregationist laws from the 1850s onward, but in 1948, the National Party put the system of “apartheid” into practice. Apartheid divided people into four categories: blacks, whites, coloureds (mixed race) and Asian. Many legal rights were taken away from black people, they couldn’t marry white people and only whites could vote. The situation led to decades of violence. Peace talks between anti-apartheid groups and the

government began in 1991. In a referendum held on March 17th 1992, the white people voted 68% in favour of democracy, and in 1994 the first all-race elections were held.

Political System: South Africa has democratic elections every five years. The people are represented by parliament, which selects the president. The president is both the head of the government and the head of state. South Africa’s current president, Cyril Ramaphosa, represents the African National Congress political party, which has been in power since 1994. However, most people would agree that the most popular politician in South African history is definitely Nelson Mandela (1918–2013). He spent 27 years in prison because he disagreed with the apartheid government. He was freed in 1990 by President F.W. de Klerk and was elected South Africa’s president in 1994.

Places: The country has many different landscapes, from deserts and savannahs to mountains, forests and coastal beaches. The most famous mountains are the Drakensberg Mountains. There are also metropolitan cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Cape Town, which stands next to Table Mountain and the Table Mountain National Park, is an attractive tourist destination all year round. Cape Agulhas, near Cape Town, is the southernmost point of Africa, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. There are also many national parks, e.g. Kruger National Park.

Wildlife: A highlight of South Africa is the wildlife. You can see many animals here, including a group called “the big five”: lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and Cape buffalo. The rhinoceros is highly endangered and is protected, but numbers continue to go down as they are illegally hunted for their horns.

SOLUTIONS

Photos: 2 Nelson Mandela, 3 Table Mountain near Cape Town, 4 elephant; **Task:** A king protea (the national flower), B springbok (the national animal), C the flag

Discussion

What can you see in the pictures?
Where were they taken?

What are the major cities in South Africa?
How many can you name?

Have you ever been to South Africa?
If so, what did you see there? If not,
what would you like to see there?

What is South Africa famous for?

Do you know any famous people
from South Africa? Do you recognise
the man in the picture?

Task

**What are these objects
connected with
South Africa?**

A



B



C



01



02



03



04

