



**Nelson Mandela**, leader of the movement to end **South African apartheid**, is released from prison after 27 years on February 11, 1990. Mandela spent the first 18 of his 27 years in jail at the brutal Robben Island Prison. Confined to a small cell without a bed or plumbing, he was forced to do hard labor in a quarry. He could write and receive a letter once every six months, and once a year he was allowed to meet with a visitor for 30 minutes. However, Mandela's resolve remained unbroken, and while remaining the symbolic leader of the anti-apartheid movement, he led a movement of civil disobedience at the prison that coerced South African officials into drastically improving conditions on Robben Island.