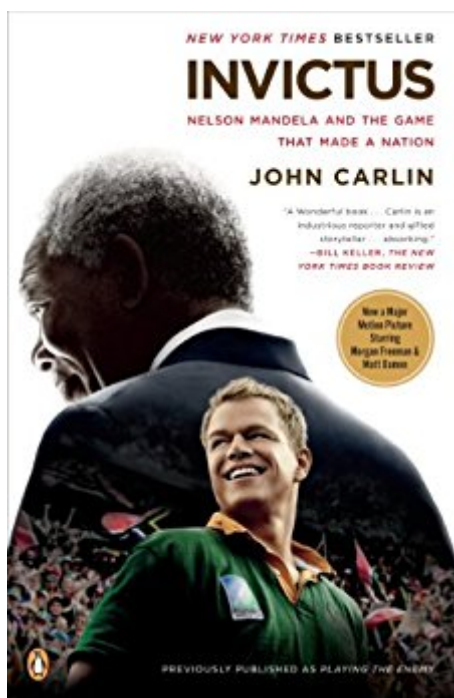


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# Invictus: Nelson Mandela And The Game That Made A Nation



## Synopsis

Beginning in a jail cell and ending in a rugby tournament—this is the true story of how the most inspiring charm offensive in history brought South Africa together. After being released from prison and winning South Africa's first free election, Nelson Mandela presided over a country still deeply divided by fifty years of apartheid. His plan was ambitious if not far-fetched: use the national rugby team, the Springboks—long an embodiment of white-supremacist rule—to embody and engage a new South Africa as they prepared to host the 1995 World Cup. The string of wins that followed not only defied the odds, but capped Mandela's miraculous effort to bring South Africans together again in a hard-won, enduring bond. [Watch a Video](#)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*Playing the Enemy\* is a wonderful book - moving, touching, filled to brimming with inspiration. This is the story of Nelson Mandela's rise to the presidency of South Africa, and the power of love (and rugby) to unite a nation. I laughed. I cried. By the time I finished this book, my heart was filled with hope for our world. This book was proof, to me, that nothing - absolutely nothing - is impossible to

Love."Mandela's weakness was his greatest strength. He succeeded because he chose to see good in people who ninety-nine people out of a hundred would have judged to have been beyond redemption...By appealing to and eliciting what was best in them, and in every single white South African watching the rugby game that day, he offered them the priceless gift of making them feel like better people, in some cases transforming them into heroes."His secret weapon was that he assumed not only that he would like the people he met; he assumed also that they would like him. That vast self-confidence of his coupled with that frank confidence he had in others made for a combination that was as irresistible as it was disarming." - from *\*Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation\**- Karen Molenaar Terrell, author of *\*Blessings: Adventures of a Madcap Christian Scientist\**

I agree with the other reviewers here about this book; it is indeed a "must-read". This book is not really a story of rugby, as later portrayed in the Hollywood movie; it is a story of a country struggling with a massive and long-overdue change in the fabric of its society. John Carlin tells the story of South Africa during the transition period after Nelson Mandela was freed from prison and apartheid ended. Whether you are an expert in this era or a neophyte, Carlin's writing and summary of this time is nothing short of superb. He is able to tell the tale of how South Africa managed an almost incomprehensibly huge change in its society without warfare, which is an incredible feat. Carlin had worked in South Africa and as such had background knowledge of the country as well as access to the many prominent figures that he interviewed for the book, including Mandela himself. The role of rugby in this book is as the thread that ties together the characters from all walks of life who appear throughout the story. It doesn't much resemble the movie in that sense, which relied more heavily on showing the rugby team, games, etc., as the primary driver of the story. The book is far more powerful. Everyone, and I do mean everyone, should read this book. It is well-written, fast-paced, emotional, and tells a story that would have been unbelievable if it weren't true. As a side note, the poem "Invictus", for which the movie was titled, brilliantly captures the bravery of Mandela and all of South Africa shown in this book. "It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." Excerpt from *Invictus*, by William Ernest Henley

This was an immensely interesting book. I was coming of age when stories out of South Africa were in the news almost daily. I remember this being one of the first major news stories that I followed as a young adult (the power shift, that is) and I remember being quite mesmerized by it. I'm glad I was

able to read an insider's take on the happenings, and wish I hadn't waited 20 years later to do so. Interestingly, this is not a play-by-play of the rugby games. Outside of the final game, little details of the action on the pitch is described, and honestly, even the final game is not entirely descriptive. This book explores more of the juxtaposition of sports and political turmoil. Similar to the 1980 US Olympic Hockey Team. If you are wanting a story about rugby, it's not going to be your first choice. However, it's an extremely interesting perspective when discussing Apartheid and interesting to see how it was used as a political tool to unify a country that was completely divided. I'd highly recommend this book. It was a great way to explore the political shift in South Africa in the mid-90's without having to read a book that is written like a news article. The only thing I felt the book was lacking was a bit more background in some of the players on the team.

The author raises this question toward the end of this very good book. It's a legitimate one to ask. Mandela takes on an almost supernatural aura as the action unfolds. *Playing the Enemy* chronicles the birth of post apartheid South Africa and the unexpected role in this of an epic sports contest. It follows Mandela from the beginnings of his contacts with government officials while still in prison, through his triumphant release and election as President. But all this simply provides context for the narrative of a rugby match. And what a match it was. Mandela understood that before a new country of South Africa could come into being, what was required was the creation of a population of South Africans, something that had not existed in the era of the Afrikaners and numerous fragmented tribal groups. He seized on the sport of rugby as the unlikely vehicle to make this happen. Rugby had been the exclusive province of the Boer oppressors, and the name and colors of the national team were vilified among the black population. Mandela's amazing leadership turned this around, and the sight of black masses cheering for the Springboks conveyed a potent message of forgiveness and reconciliation. Read this book to replenish your hope in human potential and possibilities.

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