First-time voters, South Africa, 1994. Residents of the Western Transvaal queue to vote for the first time in South Africa's multiracial elections in 1994. After years of apartheid and oppression, black South Africans showed a respect and devotion to their new democracy that inspired citizens of democracies around the world who often took for granted their own right to vote and to participate in governance.

and grew steadily over several decades. In the 1950s, as other African nations began to win independence, European observers urged South Africa to liberalize its racial policies, but the government of South Africa stubbornly resisted. In 1960, in the town of Sharpeville, the government confronted unarmed political protesters, massacring 69 black Africans and wounding many others. The ANC shifted to strikes and armed protests, renouncing attacks on people and limiting itself to sabotage of property. The South African government continued to crack down. ANC leader Nelson Mandela (b. 1918), a brilliant and charismatic lawyer, was arrested, charged with plotting to overthrow the government, and eventually sentenced to life in prison. At his trial in 1964, Mandela declared his commitment to his country and his vision for its future:

> I have fought against white domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Edelstein, p. 73)

The ANC and the general movement for racial justice were crippled but not killed off by the government's repression. As Zambia and Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique won independence and majority rule in the 1960s and 1970s, world attention focused on South Africa as the last remaining bastion of white, minority rule. In addition, the newly independent nations bordering South Africa sheltered members of the ANC and other movements for majority rule, including some dedicated to guerrilla warfare. Following the massacre at Sharpeville, many nations gradually adopted sanctions against South Africa, restricting or stopping trade; "disinvesting" or withdrawing economic investments; and ending diplomatic, cultural, and sports exchanges. South Africa became a pariah nation, cut off from intercourse with much of the rest of the world until it moved toward racial equality.

Enforcing the sanctions proved difficult. South Africa was a regional economic powerhouse, with rich resources: 85 percent of the world's platinum; two-thirds of its chromium; half its gold; half its manganese; and substantial proportions of its

gem-quality diamonds. Geopolitically, 90 percent of Europe's oil passed by its waters. Many large and powerful nations, including the United States and Great Britain, did not want to abandon their own economic interests in South Africa, and did not fully comply. They argued that "constructive engagement" through trade would be more effective in ending apartheid. Neighboring states also ignored the sanctions. They had tens of thousands of workers who subsisted only through jobs in the South African mines and industries; they continued surreptitious trade and diplomatic relationships.

Nevertheless, the sanctions did gradually exact their toll; isolation was painful, culturally and diplomatically as well as economically. The continuing expansion of independence among the African states brought black rule ever closer to South Africa's borders, and unrest within the country continued. In 1976 protests against government educational policies began in Soweto, a black township outside Pretoria, and led to nationwide riots in which 600 people were killed. Some liberalization was granted: black labor unions were legalized, the prohibition on interracial sex was abolished, segregation in public transportation ended. Finally, in 1990, the new government of President F.W. de Klerk (b. 1936) lifted its ban against the ANC and freed Nelson Mandela. He had spent 27 years in prison. De Klerk's National Party repealed apartheid laws and began wary and difficult negotiations with the ANC for transition to majority rule. In 1993, Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in the 1994 South African elections, open equally to all races on the principle of one person-one vote, the ANC won 62 percent of the vote. Mandela was elected president.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. South Africans confronted the problem of establishing a new political and cultural identity for themselves after the collapse of apartheid government. For the first time in their history, the blacks of South Africa counted as political equals to the whites. But unlike many other colonial situations in which most white colonizers left the newly independent colony, in South Africa, the whites had been residents of the country for centuries. This was their home. They viewed themselves as Africans, and most of them had no intention of leaving. Even if they did, they had no other home to which to go. Thus 32 million mostly impoverished and until recently suppressed and persecuted blacks and eight million mostly wealthy and highly privileged whites had to find new ways of getting along together. One of their highly imaginative solutions was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which functioned from 1996 to 1998 in an effort to clear the air for further interracial cooperation in the future.

The commission was initiated by President Mandela and headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (b. 1931), the head of the Anglican Church in South Africa. Its goal was to bring the peoples of South Africa together by exposing the bitter and violent realities of the past and, through that exposure, enabling all of its peoples to see themselves as part of a single nation. The commission heard cases of some 20,000 people who had suffered gross human rights violations since the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 until the first democratic election in 1994.

Thousands of people from all corners of the country stepped forward to testify. Thousands were granted some measure of reparations from the state treasury. Most whites, unable to state publicly that they had benefited from apartheid, did not initiate the act of admitting their crimes. Some, however, did step forward, helping in the process of reconciliation. Many others came because of accusations of criminal activity brought against them. The proceedings of the commission were not equivalent to criminal trials, and amnesty could be granted to those who could demonstrate that they were carrying out the political policies of the state, rather than their own agendas, and were acting without sadism. In his concluding remarks,

HOW DO WE KNOW?

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Many observers of the commission's proceedings raised serious criticisms. Some felt that the granting of amnesty came too easily to defendants in these noncriminal proceedings. Defendants could plead that they were simply following orders of the government and that they had not acted sadistically, and receive amnesty. Dirk Coetzee, first commander of a counterinsurgency unit, and his team were convicted in criminal court for the murder of Griffiths Mxenge, a civil rights lawyer, but subsequently the commission granted them amnesty because they were simply carrying out their duties as policemen engaged in the government's struggle against the liberation movement. Griffiths' brother was disgusted with this decision for amnesty:

> My main objection is that amnesty promotes the interests of the perpetrators, as once they are granted amnesty they are not criminally liable and no civil action can be instituted against [them], and that is totally against the interests of the victims. It is totally unjust. (Edelstein, p. 113)

On the other hand, Josephine Msweli was more forgiving of the men who killed her sons:

> I want the people who killed my sons to come forward because this is a time for reconciliation. I want to forgive them and I also have a bit of my mind to tell them. I would be happy if they could come before me because I don't have [my] sons today ... I want to speak to them before I forgive them. I want them to tell me who sent them to come and kill my sons. Maybe they are my enemies, maybe they are not. So I want to establish as to who they are and why they did what they did. (Edelstein, p. 154)

One member of the commission, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a clinical psychologist, reaffirmed the healing power of public disclosure by victim and perpetrator alike: "If a memory is kept alive in order to transcend hateful emotions, to free oneself or one's society from the burden of hatred, then remembering has the power to heal" (Edelstein, p. 30).

She lamented, however, the inability of most whites, despite the commission, to recognize that they had benefited from the general violence of the system of inequality imposed by apartheid.

Despite its shortcomings, the commission brought truth to light, and most commentators believed that this truth allowed purification of the body politic. It allowed the true identity of the old state to be exposed so that a new identity could be formed.

Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, wrote:

> Any society that allows its torturers to retire with medals and pensions inevitably pays the price. The price of lies is immobilized nostalgia for tyranny ... you cannot create a culture of freedom unless you eliminate a specific range of impermissible lies ... The Truth Commission had rendered some lies about the past simply impossible to repeat. (Edelstein, pp. 20–21)

Ignatieff concluded that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made it impossible for white South Africans to deny the violence of their society. They could no longer deflect blame by saying that any problems were caused by only a few rotten apples, but those were the exceptions rather than the rule. What the TRC uncovered was something very different indeed:

> not a few bad apples, not a few bad cops ... but a system, a culture, a way of life that was organized around contempt and violence for other human beings. The truth, the cold core, of apartheid was the Sanlam building in Port Elizabeth where they threw you against radiators and beat you with wet towels. Every South African citizen was contaminated by the degradation, that deadness, that offence against the spirit. (Edelstein, p. 21)

Knowing the painful truth, however, would ultimately set the society free.

- President Nelson Mandela inspired the creation of the commission and Archbishop Desmond Tutu was its chairman. Based on the concept and workings of the commission, how would you characterize the politics and ethics of these two men?
- How would you interpret the key goals of the commission? Were they realistic? Do you think they correspond to human nature as you understand it?
- Ignatieff argues that torture and violence against citizens were not an aberration caused by "a few rotten apples," but by "a system, a culture, a way of life that was organized around contempt and violence for other human beings." To what extent do you think his rhetoric and his description of consequences mirror the debate about torture carried out by Americans in the Abu Ghraib prison, and at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, during the Iraq war?

Thematic Essay Outline

Leader			
	Information	Information	Information
	Analysis	Analysis	Analysis
	Information	Information	Information
	Analysis	Analysis	Analysis

I. Introduction

Briefly explain the theme: _____

_____

Thesis statement: _____

_____

II. Body of Essay

1) Topic Sentence:

_____

_____

a) _____
b) _____
c) _____

III. Body of Essay

2) Topic Sentence:

_____

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a) _____
b) _____
c) _____

IV. Body of Essay

3) Topic Sentence:

_____

_____

a) _____
b) _____
c) _____

V. Conclusion

1) Summary:

_____

_____

a) _____
b) _____
c) _____