

“Saturdays at the Sculley’s” – “Invictus” starring Morgan Freeman, Matt Damon, 2009, PG-13, 134 minutes

Major themes:

- Transformation
- Reconciliation
- Forgiveness
- Tackling huge social problems (racism, crime, unemployment, economic stagnation)
- Inspiration
- Perseverance
- Unity

Background info:

"Invictus" (Latin for *undefeated* or *unconquered*) is a short Victorian poem by the English poet William Ernest Henley (1849–1903). At the age of 12, Henley fell victim to tuberculosis of the bone. A few years later, the disease progressed to his foot, and physicians announced that the only way to save his life was to amputate directly below the knee. It was amputated when he was 17. Stoicism inspired him to write this poem. Despite his disability, he survived with one foot intact and led an active life until his death at the age of 53. We hear this poem in its entirety in the movie.

As of October, 2011, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (*Madiba*, his Xhosa clan name; *Tata*, Xhosa for *father*) is still living, aged 93. He was imprisoned for 27 years, from 1962 to 1990. He served as president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999.

Nelson Mandela adopted two songs as national anthems in 1995 – *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (God bless Africa) and *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* (The Call of South Africa); they were merged in 1997 to form the current anthem.

The Springboks (nickname: Bokke) is the name of South Africa's national rugby union team.

The Rugby World Cup, played every 4 years, is currently (Oct 2011) underway in New Zealand (first game was played Sep 9th). Quarterfinals are being held this weekend, semi-finals on October 15th & 16th, and finals will be played on October 23rd. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Rugby_World_Cup

Scriptures:

Isaiah 61:1 – 4 (NLT) – *“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory. They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities destroyed long ago. They will revive them, though they have been deserted for many generations.”*

Galatians 3:28 (NLT) – *“There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

2 Corinthians 5:17 – 18 (NLT) – *“. . . anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”*

Matthew 18:21 – 22 (The Message) – *“. . . Peter got up the nerve to ask, ‘Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?’ Jesus replied, ‘Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven.’”*

Mark 10:27 (NLT) – *“Jesus looked at them intently and said, ‘Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.’”*

Proverbs 29:18 (The Message) – *“If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.”*

James 1:12 (The Message) – *“Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life.”*

Psalm 133 (NLT) – *“How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron’s head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe. Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting.”*

Major characters:

- Nelson Mandela
- Francois Pienaar, captain of the Springboks
- Brenda (Mazikubo), Mandela’s chief of staff
- Jason Tshabalala, head of presidential security detail
- Chester Williams, only black Springbok team member

Discussion points:

1. The film opens on the day Mandela was released from prison. Discuss the contrasting responses:
 - a. *"It's the terrorist Mandela, they let him out. Remember this day boys, this is the day our country went to the dogs."*
 - b. *"This is the moment the world has been waiting for!"*
2. Why is forgiveness liberating to the soul? In what ways is forgiveness a powerful weapon?
3. Is trust a necessary component of working relationships? What did you observe about the changes that occurred among the bodyguards?
4. How can we surprise those who see us as enemies with compassion, restraint, and generosity?
5. What did you notice about the way Mandela related to his family, his employees, "important people", "ordinary people"?
6. Respond to Mandela's question, *"How do we inspire ourselves to greatness when nothing less will do? How do we inspire everyone around us?"*
7. How can words help us to stand when all we want to do is to lie down?
8. Nelson Mandela requested that the Springboks hold coaching clinics around the nation as preparation for the World Cup. Even though they were reluctant at first, how do you think this experience impacted them?

Invictus (William Ernest Henley)

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.*

*In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of fate
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.*

*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.*