

OBITUARIES

GENERAL VOCABULARY

apartheid the former political and social system in South Africa, in which only white people had full political rights and people of other races, especially black people, were forced to go to separate schools, live in separate areas, and so on.

An obituary is a very abbreviated biographical sketch of a remarkable person in the form of a newspaper article. These are usually published in newspapers shortly after the person's death has been announced. The length of obituaries varies, but an important world leader is likely to get a full page. Here are extracts from two examples: one for Nelson Mandela, who after years of imprisonment eventually became president of post-**apartheid** South Africa, and the other for David Bowie, the famous musician. Both are taken from *The Guardian* newspaper.

▼ FROM 'NELSON MANDELA OBITUARY' FROM *THE GUARDIAN*

Mandela greatly enjoyed university, particularly boxing and athletics, and, on the strength of his first-year studies in English, anthropology, politics, native administration and Roman-Dutch law, nursed an ambition to become a civil servant and interpreter – about as high a position as a black man might aspire to in those days. But his ambition seemed to be crushed when, in 1940, in his second year, as a member of the student representative council he was expelled for his part in a rebellion over poor quality food. He returned to Mqhekezweni to find another potential disaster – an arranged marriage was being planned for him.

◀ Nelson Mandela

▼ FROM 'DAVID BOWIE OBITUARY' FROM *THE GUARDIAN*

In July 1969 Bowie released *Space Oddity*, the song that would give him his initial commercial breakthrough. Timed to coincide with the Apollo 11 moon landing, it was a top five UK hit. The accompanying album was originally called *Man of Words / Man of Music*, but was later reissued as *Space Oddity*.

The following year was a momentous one for Bowie. His brother Terry was committed to a psychiatric institution (and would kill himself in 1985), and his father died. In March, Bowie married Angela Barnett, an art student. He dumped Pitt [his manager] and recruited the driven and aggressive Tony DeFries, prompting Pitt to sue successfully for compensation. Artistically, Bowie was powering ahead. *The Man Who Sold the World* was released in the US in late 1970 and in the UK the following year under Bowie's new deal with RCA Victor, and with its daring songwriting and broody, hard-rock sound, it was the first album to do full justice to his writing and performing gifts.

◀ David Bowie