

# Nadine gordimer

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



A lion, apartheid, South Africa and racism. What do these things have in common? They all play a part in Nadine Gordimer's collection of short stories called *A Soldier's Embrace* published in 1980. This book is based around the lifestyle of South Africa, and the law separating the different cultures at that time (South Africa no longer has these laws of apartheid as of 1991). In the recent news, there was a story about South Africa and its quarrels. What happened was there was a black man who tried to enter South Africa illegally, and he was caught. As a punishment, the white South African police let their dogs attack the black man and rip him apart. Just because the racist laws of South Africa have been rewritten less than a decade ago, does not mean that the people of different races have forgotten about that ordeal. It is these problems that Nadine Gordimer writes about. She is a South African novelist and short story writer, who wrote about many of the issues there, such as the clash of races. In her short stories, she explores human behavior and unjust authority which was forced not only upon the native Africans, but also upon the people from the Middle East and the Chinese. She is a founding member of the Congress of South African Writers and won the Nobel prize for literature in 1991 (notice that is the same year the racist laws of South Africa were changed). She writes devotedly about South Africa and even at the height of the apartheid period, she never considered leaving her country. Gordimer's main themes are based on the passionate human problems of South Africa and its more than unfair politics. The people of different races in the book *A Soldier's Embrace* are quite separate throughout the entire book. If the people of different cultures were not separated into cities, then they were by the types of careers each were

either forced upon them or chosen by them depending on their culture and race. There have always been racist people around as long as the human race has existed, but the situations in this book best describe of what could be some of the worst cases of racism. What was probably the most moving story of *A Soldier's Embrace*, was the last story and what would be considered the climax of the book. It was called " Oral History". Gordimer writes about the Africans finding out about Native rebels hiding out in their village. The chief wanted to get rid of them, so he asked the white army to do it. The white army bombed the village and killed everyone who was in it, too. When the chief came back and found out what had happened, he hanged himself from a tree. This is how Nadine Gordimer writes the ending: " No one can say what it was the white soldier said over the telephone to his commanding officer, and if the commanding officer had told him what was going to be done, or whether the white soldier knew, as a matter of procedure laid down in his military training for this kind of war, what would be done. The police found the bicycle beneath his dangling shoes. So the family hanger-on still rides it; it would have been lost if it had been safe in the kitchen when the raid came. No one knows where the chief found a rope, in the ruins of the village." " Oral History" by Nadine Gordimer Although that last selection (story) was quite long and dramatic, the most symbolic short story in this book is quite brief. This story is called " A Lion on the Freeway". In this story, Gordimer describes the scenery of a town with a zoo in it and how the main character can always hear the animals making noise, especially the lion that is a cage. Throughout the story, the lion is always trying to escape the cage it is kept in at the zoo. The story, itself, is a

metaphor which represents raw human emotions and feelings from deep inside a person that one tries to keep hidden. In this instance, Gordimer used it to describe South Africa's apartheid and how it oppressed much of the human feelings and strength of its people. The sophisticated stories of Nadine Gordimer have captured minds for decades ever since she started writing in the late 1940's. Whether it be the story of a chief trying to rid his town of dangerous rebels, or a lion dashing perilously across the freeway, her stories will always be locked in the minds of those who read them. It may be hard to understand what she has written, but that is only because she puts so much wisdom and experience into every sentence.