

Life in south africa:
nadine gordimer
essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

On November 20 of 1923, in a mining town on the Eastern Witwatersrand, South Africa, was born one of the worlds most influential novelist, Nadine Gordimer.

Though being born in South Africa, she was of Jewish heritage, her mother was from England but soon emigrated to South Africa with Gordimer's grandfather, who was a diamond miner. Her father was from Russia but was also a Latvian Jew who immigrated to South Africa and had a jewelry shop in Springs. Gordimer's life was mostly spent living in South Africa, as a child her life was nothing but solitude and a vast amount of reading. It was this great exposure to literature that caused her to adjust her view of native people.

As she grew older into a more knowledgeable adult she studied at the Witwatersrand, where she received her education as a day scholar and then continued her studies as a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, but most of her life was spent realizing and writing the events that happened in her life each and everyday. After learning what she needed to learn, she then left the University and returned home after a year to concentrate on her fiction. A few years later in 1949, Gordimer married Gerald Gavronsky. The two had a daughter and then were divorced in 1952. Gordimer was re-married again in 1954 to Reinhold Cassirer. Together they had a son. Throughout her time, she had written several novels that had won prizes such as the James Tait Black Memorial prize for A Guest of Honour. She had also won the Noble-prize in 1991 for being outstanding in Literature with her short stories and novels.

Nadine's stories were primarily based on movements of racial segregation and the apartheid, which was a major separation of Africans between 1948 and 1994. Growing up in a hostile South Africa meant total chaos to all who lived there, especially different races that were caught in the cross-fires of civil war. Gordimer used these everyday observations of the events around to flow into an overwhelming work of art in a story. As many readers would say, it's fairly easy to find the precise detail used in every one of her stories to display both the settings of South Africa and the human predicaments of a racially frustrated world. Gordimer began to write as a child. Her mother often pestered her and kept her home for her mother's "reasons of her own".

At the age of fifteen, Nadine had successfully written and published her first ever short story in a very popular magazine called Forum. As time went on, Gordimer's works were seen more and more in these magazines until it came a point where it would be uncommon to not see her in one. As said before, Nadine had focused mostly all her work on the Apartheid and racial movements in South Africa. Her writing has always dealt with moral and racial issues because as she says there is no enlightenment with all the hate and warfare around her, so what better way than to construct a story out of every event that related to these times.

She had a great knowledge of activism, which she saw through her mother, as well as a great concern for the poverty and discrimination in South Africa that she discovered a "creche" or a haven for black children. A huge roadblock was placed on this girl's life because not only did she fight against racism and poverty, but also she struggled against censorship as well as

state control of information. Nadine had always resisted censorship because she thought it was unfair to most writers because you can't truly express your emotions through the book if people are telling you what and not what to write. Censorship is never over for those who have experienced it. It is a brand on the imagination that affects the individual who has suffered it, forever. "(Nadine Gordimer, enotes. com) During this time, the South African government found censorship needed everywhere. Nadine had two books banned around the 70's, one called *The Late Bourgeois World*, which was banned for ten years, and the other, *A World of Strangers*, which was then banned for twelve.

Gordimer simply refused to let the South African Broadcasting Corp. air her work due to the fact that the government was corrupt and was controlled by the Apartheid government. Despite the fact that Nadine was writing in a very unsuccessful environment, she still kept creating and publishing various novel which were most noticeably messages to whom it pertained, that they are being taken in and controlled by economics and a unfair government.

In South Africa at the time and still until this day, a corrupt government wasn't all that they Africans had to face. A sweeping epidemic that still takes the lives of millions each year, and that is (HIV/AIDS). This was another implement of Gordimer's writing style. Numbers of her stories consisted around the sadness and harmful truths about (HIV/AIDS) but they were never subjected to the specific topic of the disease. Nadine would write stories as she usually would, with a not so hidden message, but with words that would emphasize sympathy in the reader's perspective about the human conditions of the disease. She would do so in a way that would make the reader's and

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everyone that was told this story, that even the most “powerful” of the world’s culture’s can be compared to the opposing culture around them. In another way, this means that these people from different places are fighting with each other because they are all different or healthier, even superior but little do they know that they all share something in common.

This comparison is a far greater deal than superiority, something that can take the life of an entire village. Until this day, Gordimer has been found partaking in (HIV/AIDS) charities and activities around the world. Another huge issue that she struggled through was racism and discrimination. Nadine Gordimer is by far one of the most influenced and powerful writers against racism. “There is one thing I’m sure of: racism is wrong” (Nadine Gordimer, *Rising Freedom*, [www. arabesques-edition.com](http://www.arabesques-edition.com)).

In South Africa, you were either racist or you weren’t, there was no in between. If you remained neutral you were surely to die or be chased out of where ever it was you were staying because racism then was all about conformity. Obviously if you’re white you can’t be conformed to a black person or vice versa but you could be conformed to religion and beliefs. That’s what it all was about. People wanted ultimate power and knowledge of everything and the fact that other cultures worship other god’s angered the culture that glorified one god. The Africans thought that people abused power as well and therefore, hostility and violent acts of racism were underway. Despite these acts of violence, Gordimer rejected violence because she believed, along with others, that violence was not the key to anything.

“ I can completely understand the violent efforts to overthrow the apartheid system. But being a writer means that one will reject such violence. It is the denial of humanity. It kills the victim and perpetrator. ” (Rising Freedom, Nadine Gordimer, www.enotes.com) The Apartheid movement brought violence upon village after village.

This was tragic for all who it involved around. Parents could not raise their children around this because there was nowhere to go. Fighting was everywhere, on the streets, on water sometimes, even in places no one even knew where anywhere near to them. This was an everyday routine for Gordimer.

If she didn't see fighting, she didn't know whether she was home or not. She also had to face government repression first hand as a teenager. The police one day raided her home, to check to see if they had been sheltering the enemies of the government or had been hiding anything else. The police had trashed and confiscated good amounts of letters and diaries from a servant's room. After this, she had never taken anything like that from anyone again. Gordimer had then became active in the anti-apartheid movement and also had joined the African National Congress during the days when the organization was banned as a way of “ getting even”. Nadine Gordimer never had a dull moment in her life. Besides the writing, she was also physically active in defense of innocent people accused of wrongdoing.

In 1986, Gordimer testified as a defense witness in a trial of eleven black activist fighters standing up against the accusation of treason and terrorism. As well as this trial, she had held stand in various other trials for the people

she stood up for and was found in every raffle or charity possible in relief of struggle and equality. Nadine had witnessed many people be arrested for things they had never done or things they had done but for a good cause. A good friend of hers, Bettie du Toit, was arrested in 1960 for sticking up for her brother against the police when the boy had done nothing but walk down a street. Another, Nelson Mandela, was arrested for almost the same reason.

This man had really no hope in life or so he thought, because his family was mostly killed in a riot where the police had raided the homes of a whole village in Springs. Mandela would always tell Nadine of his suicidal thoughts after this because he figured he would receive the same fate as them but she kept him hoping and kept him thinking of a new life and as a request, she was one of the first people he saw after his release from prison in 1990. These arrests and civil tragedies were primarily the main reason Gordimer was so heavily involved in the anti-apartheid movement. One of Nadine's biographer, Ronald Suresh Roberts, had differences with Gordimer due to the depiction of her husband's illness and death but as well his criticism of most of her political views.

Also, Ronald Suresh Roberts had claimed that Gordimer's essay "A South African Childhood" was not entirely autobiographical as it claimed to be so this was another upset in her life because Roberts well a well-known biographer and for her to find one as important as him would have been not likely. The reason it was such an upset was because in Africa, most people didn't really care about books because some would write things just to show their own personal feelings not everyone else's. Gordimer's could not be considered a waste of time, but if no one can help her to write the biography, <https://assignbuster.com/life-in-south-africa-nadine-gordimer-essay/>

how would her books reach her target? After a while they made peace with each other and began to write together again. Her life was not that different to the poverty stuck people on the streets. It was not easy road to success; she earned it by hard work, determination, and effort to stay alive. Her family was tight on money as well as the rest of society due to the rioting and apartheid progression. When she was married to things was decent because two people could help support one another but after the divorce, Gordimer had a hard time trying to make money to help provide for herself.

Her friend, Bettie du Toit came up with an idea to send her stories to an English settled society like the United States. She had send in Nadine's stories to a publisher in New York. Not only were her stories accepted for publication, but she signed a contract to write a novel, too. All in all, you can safely say that the life of author Nadine Gordimer, was a life well respected and worth talking about for generations and generations. She had faced so many things that would shut down a person's life for good, ut she stayed far from deterioration and kept producing works of amazement. The way she wrote and still writes her stories moves reader's as well as show's them the actuality of South Africa during a time of crisis and chaos, let alone the setting and visuals she detailed in every piece to let you see what it looked like, even if you were never there before.

A message I think she would like to send out is to understand the meaning of power and understand the meaning of equality. People to this day continuously argue over who's more superior to the others. This arguing leads to anger, which leads to fighting and so on and so forth but Gordimer really tells you that you should stand up for what you believe in but don't do

things you would not normally do such as take place in acts of violence against one another. If you have an idea, you should go with it because you can share this idea with whomever you want as long as you have a effective way of putting it out there. She is alive today, and we can expect to be seeing a few more stories put out before the end of her time.