

Nadine Gordimer Biography

Nadine Gordimer is one of the most eminent South African writer. She has been an active sociopolitical activist therefore her writings mainly dealt with the ethical, moral and racial issues in the apartheid South African society.

Born on November 20, 1923, in Springs, Gauteng, Gordimer was raised by a Jewish immigrant family. Her mother was an English assimilated Jew, while father was a secular from Latvia. Her perspective of racial and social equality was constructed under the influence of her parents. Her political identity was formed by her father's opinion but he was not particularly concerned about the state of affairs in South Africa. It was her mother who facilitated her in evoking the sense of injustice against discrimination and extreme poverty faced by the black people.

Gordimer received her education from a Catholic convent school. However, majority of her time was spent home-bound as her mother was afraid to let her out in those conditions. Having bare minimum connection with the outside world Gordimer found solace in writing at an early age. By the time she was fifteen she had her first short story, titled *The Quest for Seen Gold*, published in 1973 by *Children's Sunday Express* and "Come Again Tomorrow" in *Forum*. When she reached sixteen she penned an adult fiction novel. She attended University of the Witwatersrand for a year but could not complete the course and in 1948 moved to Johannesburg where she settled permanently. She wrote for the local magazine alongside studying.

Gordimer had a career break as her story "A Watcher of the Dead" was published by the *New Yorker* in 1951. Publishing a story in an established magazine gained her large audience. From then on she was published in a number of literary journals besides the *New Yorker*. Three years later she penned a novel, titled *The Lying Days* (1953). Critics have divided opinion on the semi-autobiographical nature of the novel. It is a Bildungsroman that revolves around a white young adult, Helen. With growing awareness she develops sense of justice and awareness of racial divide faced by blacks in South African town.

She was one of the closest friends of Nelson Mandela and a part of anti-apartheid movement. Her short stories and novels echo her concerns for the discriminated South African societies. Unable to muffle the voice of the social activist the South African government began censoring literary works criticizing government or spreading social awareness. Gordimer also became target of the censorship as her novel, *Late Bourgeois World*, was banned in 1976. Another book, *A World of Strangers*, was also banned for over a decade. When her *Burger's Daughter* was unbanned after a month, Gordimer labeled the verdict as hypocritical decision since the black writers' literary works were still banned.

Eventually, her works were internationally recognized and earned several prestigious accolades. Most of the content of her work centers on the social, political and racial injustices. The major themes in her novels include love, peace, humanity and political aspects damaging South African society. Her stories are about ordinary people and discuss the concept of morality and its ambiguities. Her other popular works include *July's People* (1981), *My Son's Story* (1990), *The Pickup* (2001) and many more. For years of hard work and complete devotion toward the social cause, Nadine Gordimer had been awarded the most prestigious and internationally recognized Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991.