The Ultimate Safari Study Guide

The Ultimate Safari by Nadine Gordimer

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Introduction

Nadine Gordimer's short story "The Ultimate Safari," first published in Great Britain's literary publication *Granta* in 1989, and later included in her 1991 collection, *Jump and Other Stories,* follows the story of an unnamed narrator and her family as they leave their Mozambique village for a refugee camp across the border in South Africa. In an unrecorded talk she gave at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1991, Gordimer attributed the inspiration for the story to a visit she made to a camp forMozambique refugees. The so-called "bandits" alluded to by the story's main character and narrator are, presumably, members of Renamo, the Mozambique rebel group that tried for years, with the clandestine support of South Africa, to overthrow Mozambique's Marxist government. By the time the events of this story take place, liberation movements in countries across Africa had long since swept whites from power, withSouth Africa being the single exception. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt to protect itself and its white power structure, the South African government supported the destabilization efforts of rebels in its black-controlled, neighboring countries by financing armed incursions and raids, such as the ones that the narrator describes in the story.

"The Ultimate Safari," like nearly all of Gordimer's work, addresses the effects South Africa's system of apartheid had on its people and its neighbors. Published in book form the year she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the story continues Gordimer's long-standing efforts to gauge the effects of apartheid by delving into the minds of characters of all races and genders; in this case, Gordimer takes on the persona and adopts the voice of a young black Mozambique girl to narrate the family's arduous trek through Kruger Park and to the refugee camp.

Author Biography

Nadine Gordimer was born in Springs, South Africa on November 20, 1923 to Isidore Gordimer, an immigrant Jewish watchmaker, and Nan Myers, who had immigrated to South Africa fromGreat Britain as a young child. The younger of two girls, Gordimer led a solitary life growing up due to a prognosis, at the age of 10, of heart problems. As a result of her condition, Gordimer's mother put an end to her daughter's strenuous activities, including dancing lessons, pulled her out of the convent school she had been attending, and a hired a tutor for her for three hours a day. From the ages of 11 to 16, Gordimer had very little contact with children of her own age and spent most of her time either with her parents or alone.

Although Gordimer would later describe the severe loneliness she experienced during those years, she used her time to read and write voraciously, and at the age of 13, she published her first short story in the *Johannesburg Sunday Express.* By the time Gordimer was 16, she stopped being tutored entirely, and except for a year of general studies at the University of the Witwatersrand inJohannesburg in 1945, Gordimer never took another class of formal education.

In 1949, the year following the election of South Africa's National Party□the political party that would formalize South Africa's system of racial segregation, or apartheid□Gordimer published her first collection of short stories, *Face to Face,* and a few years later, in 1953, her first novel, *The Lying Days,* was published.

In 1949, Gordimer married Gerald Gavron (also known as Gavronsky), and in 1950 her daughter, Oriane, was born. Gordimer and Gavron divorced in 1952. In 1954, Gordimer married the German art dealer, Reinhold Cassirer, with whom she had a son, Hugo. Gordimer and Cassirer remained married until his death in 2001.

In the fifty years since her first book was published, Gordimer has published more than 30 novels, short story collections, and collections of essays that have won numerous awards. Her 1960 collection *Friday's Footprint and Other Stories* won the W. H. Smith Literary Award. Her 1970 novel *A Guest of Honor* was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize; *The Conservationist* received Great Britain's prestigious Booker-McConnell Prize in 1974, as well asSouth Africa's CNA Literary Prize. In 1991, Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Also in 1991, Gordimer published *Jump and Other Stories,* the collection which includes "The Ultimate Safari."

Long regarded as one ofSouth Africa's leading political activists and intellectuals, Gordimer saw many of her books banned in her own country at the time of their publication due to her stance against the apartheid policies of the government. All of her books, including her collection of short stories titled *Loot and Other Stories* (2003)□published nearly a decade after apartheid's official demise□in some way address apartheid or its effects.

Plot Summary

"The Ultimate Safari" opens with the narrator's cryptic and mysterious statement that tersely sets the tone of the story: "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." The narrator of the story, a young black Mozambican girl, never finds out what happened to her mother, or to her father, who had also left one day never to return. The presumption, however, is that both her parents are dead by the time her story unfolds; her people are at war, and her village has been beset by "bandits" that have left the villagers destitute and frightened, and all evidence points to those so-called "bandits" as the cause of her parents' disappearance.

The story that the girl relates is a deceptively simple one: After losing everything at the hands of the bandits who have repeatedly raided their village, and in fear of their lives, the girl's family□her grandmother, grandfather, and older and younger brothers□set out on a long and arduous trek through Kruger Park, the popular national reserve in northeast South Africa that borders Mozambique and has for years been a tourist destination for rich foreigners wanting the experience of the ultimate African safari.

Along the way, the grandfather, who has been reduced to doing little more than making "little noises" while rocking "from side to side," wanders off and is lost in some high grasses and must be left behind. The young girl recounts how little her family had to eat in the park, despite the aromas of campfire grills from the park's tourists. Even the buzzards, she notices, have more to eat than the refugees. Eventually, the remaining family members, all of whom remain nameless throughout the story, are led by the grandmother to a refugee camp where they are given space in a tent in which to live. There the grandmother eventually ekes out a living carrying bricks while the girl attends school. At the story's conclusion, we learn for the first time some of the basic facts about the girl and her family when "some white people" come to the camp to film the camp and a reporter interviews the grandmother. For instance, we learn definitively that the girl and her family are black, that they are originally fromMozambique, and that the story has taken place over the course of nearly three years.

"The Ultimate Safari" is set along the Mozambique-South African border sometime during the 1980s, at a time when Mozambique was ruled by a black Marxist government and South Africa was the lone remaining African country still being run by its minority white population. The "bandits" alluded to by the narrator are members of Renamo, the rebel group supported by the white South African government whose goal it was to destabilize Mozambique by pillaging rural villages and causing civil unrest. One of the consequences of these incursions, or "raids" as the narrator calls them, was a large-scale exodus by poor villagers fromMozambique into refugee camps that lined the border between the two countries. Many of these refugees languished for years in the camp whileSouth Africa continued its military and economic domination of the region. Some estimates suggest that the civil war that was fueled by Renamo was responsible for a million deaths inMozambique alone. In 1992, when apartheid was officially abolished and blacks began to exert control over the South African political structure,

the destabilizing efforts were halted, though the region continues to suffer the consequences of the years of instability.

Summary

The Ultimate Safari is the story of a family from Mozambique that sets off on a long journey by foot in search of refuge from war. The narrator is a young girl who, like the other characters in the story, remains nameless. The girl has an older brother and a baby brother. The story begins on the night that their mother ventures out of the house in search of cooking oil. She never returns home.

The children's father disappeared some time ago. He is a solider fighting the war against "bandits" who have destroyed the country. The narrator worries that her mother might have come across some of the bandits. When the bandits cross the paths of civilians, they always kill the civilians. The young girl explains that the first two times the bandits came to their village, they stole everything. The third time they came, there was nothing left to steal so they set the houses on fire. The narrator's mother found pieces of discarded tin that she used to cover the damaged parts of the house exterior. The children are scared to leave the house. They can see people in the village running about and hear their screams. Without their mother, the children do not know where to go. The narrator's eldest brother keeps a piece of broken wood in his hand all night for protection.

The children wait for their mother all of the next day. They don't know what day it is since the village church and school are no longer open. When the sun goes down, the children's grandparents arrive. Someone in the village had told them that the children were left alone. Their grandmother is big and strong, while their grandfather is small and quite old. The grandmother takes the children back to her house.

The remainder of the family waits for another month, but the children's mother does not come back. The family is starving. A woman from the village breast-feeds the infant boy to keep him alive. The grandmother searches for wild spinach to feed the rest of them but soon there is no spinach left. Some of the women bring food, and it is gone after two days. The grandfather and some younger men go out to look for the children's mother but they do not find her. Women visit the grandmother. They sing hymns together. The grandfather had three sheep, a cow and a vegetable garden; the bandits took it all. When planting season comes around, he has no seeds to plant.

The children's grandmother decides that the family should leave the village. They want to be away from the bandits and the place where their mother never returned. The narrator is happy to think of such a place as "away." The grandmother exchanges her church clothes for dried "mealies" to take with them. They can cook them with river water. The family doesn't find a river and they are forced to turn back. They do not go all the way home but they find to a nearby village that has a water pump. Here the grandmother sells her shoes in exchange for a plastic container to carry water. At the village, the family meets other people who are also leaving. The family follows this group, because they seem to have a better idea of where they are going.

They travel through Kruger Park, an enormous reserve of animals. Some of the animals in the park used to be in the family's country before the war. The bandits and soldiers killed many to sell or eat. The narrator recalls that a crocodile had once bitten a man from her village. She comments that their country is a country of people, not animals. As the group journeys toward the park, women who carry children on their backs grow tired. The park is surrounded by an electric fence. It will be a long trip to get around the fence. The first hour that the group walks through the park, the narrator sees no animals. When they see animals, a little later on, there are only monkeys, birds and tortoises.

The narrator's brother catches a tortoise for the family to eat. The man who leads the groups explains that they can't make a fire because the smoke would signal the police that they are there. If the group is found they will be sent back to where they came from. They must move like animals among the animals and keep away from roads and white people's camps. A loud noise frightens the children. The narrator thinks it's the police, but it is just a herd of elephants. The leader tells them to stand still and stay quiet until the elephants pass. The elephants are too big to be frightened of anything - smaller animals run from them. The group follows the animals to their waterholes.

The group does not run out of water, but they do run out of food. They must eat what the baboons eats, dried figs that are filled with ants. The narrator comments that it is hard to be like the animals. During the day, when the sun is hot, the group sees sleeping lions. The lion blend into the color of the grass - the leader spots them and leads the group the long way around them.

They are all getting tired. The narrator's older brother is difficult to wake once he falls asleep. Flies crawl on the grandmothers face and she doesn't even swat them off. The granddaughter is frightened. They walk day and night. At night they see the fire of white people and can smell meat cooking. They watch hyenas follow the meat smell. In the dark, the eyes of the travelers and the hyenas meet. The groups can hear voices in their own language coming from one of the camps. One of the women wants to ask the campers for help or ask them for food. She cries out, and the grandmother has to cover the woman's mouth to block out the noise. The leader says they must keep out of the way of the park workers. If the park workers were to help them, they will lose their jobs. All the workers can do is pretend they didn't see them.

Sometimes, the group stops to sleep at night. They sleep close together. One night they hear lions approaching, and group gets closer together. The ones who are sleeping on the edges want to be closer to the middle. The narrator prays for the lions to leave. The leader shakes a tree branch and shouts out to scare the lions away. They lions leave, but the group can hear them growling from far away. The grandfather is tired. The leader and oldest grandson have to carry him from stone to stone when the group crosses rivers. The grandmother is still strong, but her feet are bleeding. She can't carry her basket on her head anymore so she has to leave their belongings behind. They can carry nothing except the youngest brother.

The group eats some strange fruit that makes them sick. The grandfather wanders off to be by himself when he is sick. The rest stay near each other in the long elephant grass. The leader tells them they have to move on, but the family asks the others to wait for the grandfather to catch up. The grandfather doesn't come back. The hum of insects makes it impossible to hear the grandfather moving in the grass, and he is too small to see over the tall grass. They believe that he mustn't have gone far since he is so weak and slow. They call to him softly and wait for him all night, but he doesn't return.

They look for the grandfather the next day by splitting up in groups. No one can find him. The narrator and the grandmother spot a vulture soaring overhead. The leader tells them they must move on. He says that if the children don't eat soon, they will die. The grandmother doesn't respond to the leader. He tells her he will bring her and the children water before the others leave. The narrator is worried that the police will find them. She cries, but the grandmother doesn't notice. The grandmother gets up and tells the children they must follow the others. The narrator repeats, "We started to go away again," in reference to the earlier comments about going "away."

The group comes to a big tent that the narrator describes as being much bigger than a church or school. This is a refugee camp. A woman helper from the clinic says there are two hundred people - not counting babies. Some of the babies had been born in Kruger Park to women who had traveled just as the family had. The tent is like a village. People made blocked off living areas inside the tent with cardboard to mark their space. Some used ground rocks to draw designs on sacks. The narrator says it is living inside a mountain because rainwater comes in the sides of the tent and runs down the little streets between the different family's living areas. The spaces between are small. Only one person at a time can move through them.

Small children play in the mud but not the narrator's youngest brother. The grandmother takes the young boy to the clinic on the day the doctor comes to the camp. The doctor thinks there is something wrong with the boy's head, since he didn't get enough food at home during the war and at Kruger Park. He has not developed properly. The youngest brother lies around all day. He seems like he wants to say something but can't. Sometime he smiles, but he doesn't laugh. The narrator and the older brother were like the youngest when they arrived too. The people from the nearby village took them to the clinic. Here they had to sign a paper that stated they had come "away" through Kruger Park. The children were given something to drink and shots to keep them from getting sick. The children are asked to stand in a line at the clinic, but are too weak to stand.

The grandmother is still strong. She signs the children in and gets them a place in the tent near one of the sides. A woman shows her how o make sleeping mats from grass. She gets a card punched and gets "mealies" for the family to eat.

Once a month the church leaves old clothes for the refugees. The grandmother gets another card punched for the children to pick out some clothes. The people in the village next to the tent let the children join their school. They speak the same language. Before there was an electric fence around Kruger Park, the park was the only thing that separated the countries. Both countries had the same king.

The family has now been in the tent a long time. The narrator is five and her youngest brother is now almost three. The youngest boy still has not developed properly. Some of the refugees plant crops beside the tent. They fence off their gardens with tree branches. No on is allowed to look for work in the towns, but some of the women have found work in the village.

Because the grandmother is still strong, she works where people build houses. The houses in the village are made of brick and cement, not mud like in the village where the family came from. The grandmother carries bricks and fetches baskets of stones that she carries on her head. She buys tea, sugar, milk, and soap with the money she earns. The store gives her a calendar that she hangs in the tent. The narrator does well in school. The narrator and her older brother have to do their homework in the afternoon before dark because candles are too expensive. There is no room in the tent - - people have to lie down close together, as they had in Kruger Park.

The grandmother still hasn't been able to buy herself any shoes but she bought her two eldest grandchildren shoes for school. The children clean them every morning and the grandmother inspects their cleaning job. No other children in the tent have real shoes. The narrator says some days in the tent it feels like home before the war, like they had never gone away. White people come to take photos of people in the tents. They say they are making a film but the narrator doesn't know what this is. A white woman asks the grandmother questions that are translated by someone into their own language. She asks how long they have been there.

The grandmother says they have been there for two years and one month. The woman asks what her hopes are for the future. When the grandmother says she has no future hopes, the woman asks what her hopes are for the children. The grandmother hopes they will get an education, get good jobs and have money. The woman asks if the grandmother wants to return to Mozambique. She says that when the war is over, they will not be allowed to stay here. The grandmother says she will not go back; there is no home; there is nothing.

As the narrator listens to her grandmother's statements, she wonders why she won't go back. The narrator wants to go home. She would take the long voyage back through Kruger Park after the war is over and the bandits are gone. She wants to see her mother again and assumes that she will be waiting there. She expects that her grandfather will be there too, that somehow he made his way back slowly. She says, "They'll be home and I will remember them."

Analysis

The Ultimate Safari is a selection from Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories*. The protagonist is a young girl who sets out on a long journey along with her siblings and grandparents to seek refuge from a war happening in their home country of Mozambique. The narrator and the other characters in the story remain nameless. The anonymous characters foreshadow that the group of travelers are just a few of many

who flee from the violence of the bandits who have destroyed their country. This is vindicated later on in the story when the family arrives at a refugee camp and finds out they among hundreds of refugees who seek shelter.

Throughout the story, Gordimer juxtaposes animals with humans. The family travels through Kruger Park to get to the country on the other side of the enormous park. The narrator is curious about seeing the animals in the park. She explains that few animals are left in her country since the bandits have come. She says their country is a country of people, not animals. When the travelers move through the park they must try to not be seen by the park guards.

The narrator says they must move like animals among the animals. Similarly, when they search for food she says they must eat what the baboons eat - dried figs filled with ants. The young girl says that it is hard to be like the animals. The author writes that at night the big brown eyes of the travelers and the hyenas meet. The comparisons between humans and animals in the story are symbolic to the dehumanizing effect that the war has caused. The refugees are forced to live like animals as they flee their country. Their only hope is for survival.

The author's clever reiteration of the word "away" throughout the story plays into this. In the beginning of the story the narrator says that her grandmother tells them they must go away. She emphasizes that she is pleased at this idea at first. The protagonist dreams of what the word "away" means, in the hope that there is a better place for them to live. After the girl's grandfather is left behind in Kruger Park she says, "We started to go away, again," in reference to the earlier comments about going "away."

Finally, when the group arrives at the refugee camp the narrator says the must sign a paper that says they have come "away" through Kruger Park. The use of this word is symbolic to the fact that the narrator does not know her fate. She simply knows that the family's only choice is to leave their home country. Realistically, none of the travelers know their fate. This is evident in the fact that the family joins with another group of travelers where one man serves as the leader. The narrator explains that this man seems to have a better idea of where he is going; the other refugees follow him.

Gordimer uses a simple narrative style because the narrator is a child. This narrative perspective gives hints to the readers who may guess what is happening throughout the tale. This is true from the very beginning of the story where the protagonist states that their mother has gone out and not returned. The children don't know what has happened to her. The author utilizes a number of vague statements throughout the story, and at the same time, gives a variety of definitive descriptions through the narrator to allow the readers to put the pieces together. The child's perspective adds a tragic element to the end of the story. After the family has lived at the refugee camp for two years, white reporters interview the narrator's grandmother. They ask her if she hopes to return to her own country after the war.

The grandmother says there is nothing to return to. The protagonist doesn't understand her grandmother's response. The young girl imagines that her mother will be at home

waiting for them and that her grandfather would have also made his way home. In the last line of the story, the narrator states that these two family members will be home. She promises she will not forget them. This last line in symbolic. Without the narrator realizing it, her memory of home has become the memory of her lost mother and grandfather.

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Characters

The Bandits

So called by the government, the bandits raided the narrator's village repeatedly, forced her and her family into hiding, and ultimately forced them into the long trek that takes up most of the story. The identity of the bandits is never revealed specifically, although they are presumed to be one of theMozambique rebel factions supported by the South African government, trying to overtake the government by wreaking havoc in the rural areas.

The Daughter

A young girl of nine or ten when the story opens, the daughter, who is also the story's narrator, reveals very little about herself, but it is through her eyes that the story of her and her family's arduous trek away from their village to the refugee camp is told. She understands very little about the war, or the reasons behind it, except to comment about the fear the bandits have instilled into her people and to describe the effects their raids have had on her life. An astute observer, she conveys much of the tone of the story through her descriptions of the trek: her grandfather rocking to and fro making little noises; flies buzzing on her grandmother's face; her older brother becoming silent like their grandfather. Although we ultimately learn very little about the narrator herself, it is through her descriptions that the story unfolds.

The Father

Although he never appears in the story, the father's absence, and presumed death in the war, is significant as it helps to set the tone of the story, and without him, the narrator's family must survive on their own.

The Grandfather

Once the owner of three sheep, a cow, and a vegetable garden□all of which have been taken away by the bandits by the time the story takes place□the grandfather does little more than rock side to side and make little noises in this story. He is clearly suffering from some form of dementia or the effects of a mental breakdown, and in the course of the trek throughKruger Park, he wanders off through the high grasses, becomes lost, and must be left behind by the family.

The Mother

Similar to the father, we know nothing about the mother except that she left one day for the store and never returned, forcing the narrator's grandparents to take over responsibilities for the children during the war.

The Grandmother

As the matriarch of her extended family that includes her husband and her grandchildren□the narrator, and the narrator's younger and older brothers□the grandmother is the strongest adult character in the story. It is through her vision and leadership that the family is able to escape the danger wrought by the rebels and travel throughKruger Park to a refugee camp across the border. Once her family settles into the refugee camp, she finds work hauling bricks, and she oversees her grandchildren's education.

The Little Brother

Less than a year old when the family is forced to leave their village, the little brother is three when the story ends. In that time he suffers greatly from malnutrition, and as he grows older, his older sister notices that he barely speaks, a result, she believes, of having too little food during their journey.

Themes

Apartheid

Between 1948 and 1992, theRepublic of South Africa had an institutionalized system of racial segregation known as "apartheid"□the Afrikaner word meaning "separateness." Effectively stripping all South African blacks, coloreds, and Indians of their citizenship rights, apartheid was instrumental in helping whites to maintain power in the predominantly black country. As countries acrossAfrica regained their independence from Europeans, the South African government, fearing the liberating influence of its recently liberated black neighbors on its own black population, financially and militarily supported the efforts of rebel groups to destabilize neighboring governments. This desperate measure to protect the apartheid system and the white control of the South African economic and political structures resulted in the long-term displacement and deaths of millions of southern Africans over the years. Nearly all of Gordimer's work addresses, in some way, the effects apartheid has had on whites and blacks alike.

Family

Prior to the events of the story, the narrator had lost both her father and her mother to the war. Her grandmother and grandfather took over parenting responsibilities, and when the grandfather lost his only means of livelihood to the bandits, he suffered from a mental breakdown of some sort, and the grandmother took over sole responsibility of raising the family. It was through the commitment of the grandmother to keeping her family together that the narrator and her siblings were able to trek hundreds of miles across the wilds ofKruger Park to the relative safety of the refugee camp.

Homelessness

One of the major effects of the South African policy of apartheid was the displacement of millions of blacks in the region. InSouth Africa itself, where apartheid dictated where blacks were legally allowed to live, many poor families were forced to live illegally in shanty towns outside of cities where they hoped to find work, living effectively as homeless people in corrugated iron shacks and temporary structures. In the larger southern African region, many poor villagers were forced by military incursions financed bySouth Africa to abandon their homes in favor of refugee camps where they lived for years in desperate conditions. At the end of the story, a white reporter asks the grandmother if she ever wants to return home. While the young girl dreams of a day she will be reunited with her mother and grandfather in their home village, the grandmother responds directly by saying, "There is nothing. No home."

Lawlessness

Even though many countries around the world particularly inAfrica have successfully liberated themselves from their European colonial rulers, most of them are still economically and militarily vulnerable to outside forces. In southern Africa, many of the border areas surroundingSouth Africa were effectively reduced to anarchy and lawlessness by the repeated incursions by quasi-military groups funded and supported by the South African government. While some of the military groups had legitimate political issues they were addressing, most of them were little more than groups of vigilantes whose sole aim was to destabilize the areas through brutal force that included raids, pillaging, and military attacks. It was this environment of lawlessness that finally forced the narrator and her family to make the arduous trek with other refugee families through Kruger Park and to the refugee camps inSouth Africa.

Oppression

One of the goals of apartheid was to help whites, who made up less than 20 percent of the South African population, maintain complete economic and military control. The effect of their policies was the widespread oppression of otherwise innocent blacks in bothSouth Africa itself as well as in the neighboring countries.

Racial Conflict

Apartheid effectively contributed to the complete economic and political control by whites of the non-white population in and aroundSouth Africa through the institutionalization of race-based classification systems and laws. Apartheid effectively fueled racist tendencies among the populace, and one of the effects was the dehumanization, in the eyes of the white populations, of blacks. Although there is no "racial conflict" per se in "The Ultimate Safari," the widespread racial conflicts that the area had been experiencing for years led to the environment that forced whole families and villages into desperate living situations. Without that racial conflict, it would have been difficult for whites to justify the widespread refugee problem, and there would have been greater pressures for more humane and peaceful solutions to the problemsSouth Africa believed it was facing.

Rites of Passage

The family's trip through the wilds ofKruger Park can be viewed allegorically as a rite of passage for the young narrator. Through the journey, the girl must confront the loss of yet another family memberher grandfatherand she must take over the parenting responsibilities of her younger brother whom she must physically support. The narrator, though she is only 11 years old at the story's completion and although she still clings to the naïve hope that she has a home to return to where her grandfather and mother will

be waiting, has begun the process of passing through the rites that will eventually lead her to womanhood.

Role of Women

In a society ruled by war, the women of the villages were forced to take over all parenting responsibilities, becoming both the homemaker and wage earner. In "The Ultimate Safari," the burden of this dual responsibility falls onto the shoulders of the grandmother, who must not only lead her grandchildren to safety, but who must also take over the care of her own husband whose dementia has rendered him useless. To a lesser degree, the narrator must also take over parenting responsibilities by carrying and caring for her infant brother who begins to grow weak from malnutrition during their trek.

Warfare

The warfare that the villages experience in the course of Gordimer's story is "guerilla" warfare; that is, the Renamo rebels trying to overthrow the government do so in ways that create instability in the outlying areas without ever directly confronting the government's military forces themselves. Guerilla warfare is an effective military tool for groups of limited resources, as fewer soldiers are needed to inflict serious damage, and the psychological effects on the population are far greater than they are through conventional warfare.

Style

Diction

Throughout the telling of her story, the narrator of "The Ultimate Safari" employs a simple, colloquial diction with sentences that are sparse and stripped of all ornamentation. In fact, the diction that Gordimer has given the narrator contributes to the surprise readers may experience upon learning that the narrator is a blackMozambique refugee. While the story she tells is consistent with a refugee's experience, her diction hints at her being a young white English-speaking girl. There are no idiomatic expressions, slang phrases, or sentence constructions that hint at the narrator's being black or Mozambican. One effect the girl's diction has is to break down the barrier between the non-African white readers and the narrator: by portraying the girl as being more like her largely white American and European readers, Gordimer has succeed in creating a more sympathetic character than would have otherwise been possible.

Dialogue

Although the narrator summarizes conversations she overhears or is a part of, there is no dialogue to speak of in the story until the final scene when a filmmaker interviews the grandmother. This technique offers perhaps a truer representation of how a girl of the narrator's age would recall conversations, and it also has the effect of giving the story more of a dream-like or mythic atmosphere. By not engaging us directly in the conversations as they happened, the narrator effectively keeps the entire story in her head, presenting it to us entirely from memory. And even with the small amount of dialogue at the story's conclusion, Gordimer chooses not to use quotation marks to set the dialogue off, giving the story the continued dream-like effect.

Imagery

Gordimer uses stark, often-violent imagery to help set the tone of the story and to help us understand the grim circumstances the girl and her family are facing. The narrator, for instance, begins her description of entering Kruger Park by telling of a man in her village who lost his legs to crocodiles, reminding the reader of the dangers lurking before them and adding to the story's menacing tone. Once in the park, she describes the animals surrounding them as being continually on the prowl for food while she and her family have nothing to eat. "We had passed [the vultures] often where they were feeding on the bones of dead animals, nothing was ever left there for us to eat," she tells readers.

Irony

By giving the story the title, "The Ultimate Safari," and by prefacing it with an epigraph from a London travel advertisement luring rich tourists to Africa for the "ultimate safari," Gordimer is employing irony to underscore the vast differences between the wealthy, foreign whites and the poor, black refugees that populate southernAfrica. For many people from the narrator's village who were forced out of their homes and into Kruger Park for the arduous journey to the refugee camps, this would certainly be their "ultimate," or last, "safari." Many, such as the narrator's grandfather, would die in the park itself, and many would ultimately die in the refugee camp, never able to see their homes again. Meanwhile, as the group travels through the game reserve that rich European tourists spend thousands of dollars to visit, the roasting meats of the tourists waft by, and the refugee children grow hungrier and hungrier, with less even to eat than the buzzards.

Point of View

By employing the first person point of view, and using a young black refugee girl as the story's narrator, Gordimer is able to imagine for herself and for us what it is to be "the other." Since the story is not told from a third-person omniscient point of view, the experience of being a refugee fleeing war is personalized, and the reader is able to experience not only the facts of the journey, but also, in a limited way, the emotions and personal experiences of the girl herself.

Tone

Gordimer effectively sets the tone of the story with the first two sentences: "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever." In a quiet, dispassionate, almost distant tone of voice, without a hint of sentiment or pity, the narrator has just reported the presumed death of her mother. The remainder of the story is told in a similar, matter-of-fact way: regardless of how despairing her circumstances are, there is a profound sense of acceptance and fatalism hinted at in the girl's voice. At the same time, the sentences introduce the continual sense of loss that the narrator will experience throughout the course of the story, as well as a menacing aspect. This will be a stark story, one filled with loss and foreboding, and the telling of it will offer very little in the way of analysis or description. One purpose of using this tone to tell the story is to help underscore the girl's overall sense of optimism. At the end of the story she continues to dream of a day she can be reunited, in her home, with her mother, father, and grandfather. The girl, despite her hardships and her bleak surroundings, never gives up hope, however illusory that hope may be.

Historical Context

South African Apartheid

It is impossible to understand Nadine Gordimer's fiction without having an understanding of the system of racial segregation, known as apartheid, under which South Africans lived between 1948 and 1992. Gordimer's work, perhaps more than the work of any other South African writer (including fellow white writers André Brink and J. M. Coetzee), is inextricably linked to her political views and lifelong resistance to apartheid. With the lone exception of an early autobiographical work, all of Gordimer's work addresses the effect of apartheid on South Africans of all classes and races, so much so that the Vice President of International PEN Per Wästberg, writing on the official Nobel Prize web site, calls Gordimer "the Geiger counter of apartheid."

Briefly, apartheid was a system of laws set up by the South African government designed to control the movements of the majority, non-white population. The laws dictated where blacks, Indians, and so-called "coloreds" could live and work and who they could marry. The purpose of apartheid was to allow the minority white population, which comprised less than 20 percent of the population, to consolidate political power and control over the majority population.

As liberation movements during the 1960s and 1970s spread throughAfrica, many colonial powers lost control of their power bases and were forced to cede power to blacks.South Africa remained the lone exception, and until civil unrest began to spread through the country in the late 1980s and effectively undermine the government's control over the black population, the South African government continued to exert its political hold. However, the liberation movements throughout the continent spread to the South African borders, with Mozambique andZimbabwe being transformed into black-controlled, leftist governments. As a defensive mechanism designed to keep the ideas of liberation and equality from being spread through its own black population, South Africa financially and militarily supported rebel groups in the border areas of Mozambique andZimbabwe; throughout the late 1970s and 1980s the rural populations of those countries suffered through the effects of guerilla warfare. Entire villages were uprooted, and refugee camps made up of civilians fleeing the war were established along the South African borders.

This is the political and military background to "The Ultimate Safari." The narrator's family are, by all accounts, nonpolitical rural peasants who are forced into the war. The father is presumably killed in combat, and though the mother's fate is less clear, it is presumed that she was kidnapped or killed by the rebel forces. After a series of rebel raids that have left the villages destitute, the narrator's family, along with other members of their village, are forced to make the long trek throughKruger Park to one of the South African refugee camps.

Censorship and the Works of Nadine Gordimer

As part of the efforts to control its black population, the South African government strictly controlled the news and dissemination of information during much of Gordimer's writing career. The press was either state-run or state-controlled, and severe measures of censorship were taken to control the information coming into and going out of the country. An outspoken critic of censorship, Gordimer saw several of her works banned upon publication, including her novel *Burger's Daughter,* which was banned as a result of theSoweto uprisings. Because of this publishing climate, many of Gordimer's novels and stories, including "The Ultimate Safari" and several other of the stories that make up the collection *Jump and Other Stories,* were published in Great Britain and the United States before being published in her native South Africa.

Ironically, for several years following the demise of apartheid in 1992, Gordimer's 1981 novel *July's People* was banned in a South Africa school district for being "deeply racist, superior and patronising. ..." The ban, which also affected several other notable works, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* was eventually lifted after hundreds of writers from around the world protested, but not before Gordimer publicly compared the school board to the censors of the old apartheid regime.

Critical Overview

Because it was released shortly before Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, *Jump and Other Stories,* the collection in which "The Ultimate Safari" was published, is not considered to be one of Gordimer's major works. Nonetheless, the book received widespread reviews in the major media of the day, and several reviewers remarked specifically on the story itself.

John Banville, writing in the *New York Review of Books,* wrote that the story, one of the "three fine stories" in the collection, "fairly quivers with angry polemic, yet achieves an almost biblical force through the simplicity and specificity of the narrative voice."

Writing in*America,* Jerome Donnelly writes that the collection as a whole achieves a "unity" that is "remarkable" considering the multiplicity of voices Gordimer uses, and the "simple, controlled narrative of wonderment filtered through a mind too unknowing to be terrified generates powerful understatement," and that the story moves on "without indulging the temptation to sentimentalize the moment."

The Spectator critic Hilary Mantel described Gordimer's new stories as having "complexity and resonance, sometimes grandeur," and that they are all "worth reading and re-reading." She describes the new work "as trenchant and committed as her novels," and the sentences of *"The Ultimate Safari"* as "stripped down, simplified...."

Dan Cryer, on the other hand, in a review for *Newsday,* suggested that while much of Gordimer's work had made her "Nobel Prize-worthy," it was important to separate Gordimer's "superb novels" such as *A Sport of Nature* and *The Conservationist* from works such as *Jump and Other Stories.* "The majority of these stories," Cryer writes in reference to several of the collections stories, including "The Ultimate Safari," "achieve the limited objective of bringing the headlines to vivid life."

Critic Jeanne Colleran, in an essay included in the collection *The Later Fiction ofNadine Gordimer,* discusses Gordimer's views that a short story collection, in many ways, is more able to convey the multiple truths of South Africa than a novel due to its ability to represent "the even greater multiplicity of voices, attitudes, and constituencies that comprise South African society. ..." While much of the collection, with the "obsessive image of recent South African history, the dead .. . children [that] haunt the collection," portrays the dire legacy of apartheid, "The Ultimate Safari," written through the eyes of a young black southern African girl, offers some hope for the future. The girl, despite her refugee status, fully plans to return home where she believes her missing mother and grandfather are waiting.

In a major critical review in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* titled *"Jump and Other Stories:* Gordimer's Leap into the 1990s: Gender and Politics in Her Latest Short Fiction," University of the Witwatersrand professor Karen Lazar contextualizes the collection with respect to South Africa's political climate at the time, as well as

Gordimer's previous work. In particular, Lazar is interested in exploring the trajectory of Gordimer's political thought, particularly the evolution of her views of women.

While Lazar believes that the collection shows that Gordimer's political thinking has continued to evolve, Lazar finds her continued representation of women as tending more to the "uni-dimensional" relative to her treatment of men, and that "various aspects of South African womanhood [in *Jump and Other Stories]* are split off, dichotomised and assigned to individual figures, such that the representations of women tend to be truncated, reduced and static, giving women a marginal and decentered status relative to the more lively and layered status of men." While in many respects Gordimer "jumps" into the 1990s with this collection, according to Lazar, Gordimer's sometimes "static" and "truncated " representations of women continue to be a concern.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

White is the publisher of the Seattle-based literary press, Scala House Press. In this essay, White argues that Gordimer's decision not to reveal the race of the narrator in "The Ultimate Safari" resulted in the creation of a more empathetic character with whom her white American and British readers could identify.

The art of "writing in voice," or "writing in character," is a common literary technique that has been used by countless writers over the years. In one of literature's most famous examples, Herman Melville adopts the persona of Ishmael, an itinerant seaman, in *Moby Dick,* and in two of the more popular examples from the late twentieth century, Alice Walker, in *The Color Purple,* adopts the voice of Celie, an uneducated, abused southern girl, and Arthur Golden writes from the perspective of a Japanese geisha in *Memoirs of a Geisha.*

While it is not at all uncommon for a writer to take on the character of someone outside his or her own economic and social status, asWalker did, what is far less common is for a writer to adopt the character of a different ethnic background or race, as was the case with Golden. And least common of all□perhaps because of the highly contentious and politically charged nature of black-white relationships□is when a white writer adopts the voice of a black character, as Nadine Gordimer does in her short story "The Ultimate Safari."

In "The Ultimate Safari," Gordimer, a white South African writer well into her sixties when the story was published, takes on the voice of a young nameless black refugee girl fromMozambique. While Gordimer had written from a black perspective several times throughout her career, what sets this particular story apart is the fact that through most of its telling, the reader is not made fully aware of the narrator's race. While the few details of the story's setting and the narrator's circumstances that are offered from the outset hint strongly that she is black, it is not until the story's final scenes that the girl's nationality and race are confirmed. Gordimer's conscious manipulation of these facts is one of the techniques she uses that ultimately gives this story its poignancy. By keeping the reader uncertain about the girl's background, Gordimer effectively holds out the possibility in the reader's mind, on some level, that the narrator could be "the girl next door" and not simply another distant and nameless African refugee. While this may seem insignificant to the overall meaning of the story itself, in light of the fact that the vast majority of the story's readers at the time of its publication were not only white, but also non-South African, this technique effectively helped Gordimer to maximize the empathy the story's readers felt for the character and effectively contributed to her agenda of enlightening the world to the dehumanizing effects of her country's system of apartheid.

Throughout most of her fifty-year career, Gordimer has used her writing to explore, expose, and opposeSouth Africa's long-standing system of racial segregation known as apartheid. With the major exception of her early autobiographical work, *The Lying Days,* nearly all of Gordimer's fiction in some way addresses apartheid, so much so that fellow

writer and the Vice-President of International PEN Per Wästberg, writing on the official Nobel Prize web site, calls Gordimer "the Geiger counter of apartheid."

Officially struck down in 1992 after nearly 50 years as the government's official policy of racial segregation, apartheid□the Afrikaner word meaning "separateness"□was a system of laws that effectively stripped all South African blacks of their citizenship rights and was instrumental in maintaining white control over the majority black population. However, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as countries across Africa regained their independence from Europeans, the South African government, fearing that their recently liberated neighbors such as Zimbabwe andMozambique would encourage liberation movements in its own country, responded by financially and militarily supporting the efforts of rebel groups to destabilize those countries. These desperate measures to protect the apartheid system, which often took the form of military raids into the rural border areas, resulted in the long-term displacement and deaths of millions of southern Africans over the years, with an estimated million deaths accounted for in the Mozambique civil war that was fueled bySouth Africa. Fleeing from their war-ravaged homes, many villagers who survived the war inMozambique ended up as refugees in any number of the South African refugee camps.

A related piece of historical information that should also be kept in mind when reading "The Ultimate Safari" is that, because of her public opposition to the government, coupled with the overtly political themes of her work, many of Gordimer' stories and novels were banned in her own country at the time of their publication; as a result, the first readers to most of Gordimer's work were usually not South African but rather British and North American. "The Ultimate Safari," in fact, was first published in the British literary journal, *Granta* before being published in book form by American publisher Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in the collection *Jump and Other Stories.* It is with these facts in mind that the techniques Gordimer uses in "The Ultimate Safari" can be best understood.

"The Ultimate Safari" is written in a deceptively simple style. The story's first two sentences□ "That night our mother went to the shop and she didn't come back. Ever."□not only set the mysterious and foreboding tone of the story that is about to be told, but they effectively announce Gordimer's style as well. The sentence structure and diction are simple, yet not so simple as to indicate that the narrator is a person of lesser intelligence or capabilities. The narrator speaks in plain, everyday English; there is nothing remarkable in terms of vocabulary, syntax, or dialect that would indicate her to be anything but an English speaker of ordinary intelligence and sensibilities. She does not speak in dialect; she could be from any number of English-speaking locations. And Gordimer leaves few idiosyncratic clues that give her racial, cultural, or ethnic identity away.

Aside from knowing that the story's author is South African, there is little to indicate at the outset of the story that the narrator herself is from the region. She tells us immediately of "the war" and of "the bandits," and she references her "village" and the "bush"□both of which would hint at an African setting of some kind□but because the overall tenor of the narrative voice is anything but African, it is easy to overlook these

clues at first reading. As the story progresses, the girl gives us further clues as to the setting with her description of the "dried mealies" her grandmother boils for her and, most importantly, her family's journey through Kruger Park, one of South Africa's popular game parks. Within a few pages, then, we have come to understand that she is in fact from southern Africa, but the overriding sense, as indicated by her narrative voice, is that she is a proper English-speaking girl, and the reader can't help but wonder, on some level, what this girl is doing wandering as a homeless refugee inSouth Africa.

Of course, since Gordimer writes in English, and her audience mostly comprises English readers, her stories must also be written in English. It would make no sense whatsoever were "The Ultimate Safari" to be written in the girl's native tongue. But when taking on the voice of a character, especially when that voice's "true" voice is non-English, the writer usually provides the reader with early clues as to the narrator's background□whether explicitly through a remark by the narrator or implicitly through his or her choice of diction.

In the case of *Moby Dick,* for instance, the book's very first sentence□"Call me Ishmael."□ announces the identity of the narrator, and very shortly thereafter Ishmael describes his background and the reasons for his pending journey. In *The Color Purple,* Celie speaks in a southern black idiom that leaves no question as to her racial or regional identity. In Gordimer's story, until the final scenes in the refugee camp, the narrator provides few clues as to her race or ethnicity. It is in the refugee camp that the narrator finally confirms that she is of African descent, even if the details as to which tribe she belongs are left out. "The people in the village have let us join their school," the narrator says, "I was surprised to find they speak our language; our grandmother told me, That's why they allow us to stay on their land. Long ago, in the time of our fathers, there was no fence that kills you, there was no Kruger Park between them and us, we were the same people under our own king, right from our village we left to this place we've come to."

Yet even here, when she references "our language," the possibility still exists that she is referring to English, and that perhaps this narrative is taking place in a world turned upside down, in a mythical future where the (white) English-speaking families are forced to wander the continent as refugees, and where their land has been carved into artificial political boundaries that separate people of the same tribe and ethnic backgrounds from one another. This possibility is eliminated, however, in the story's final scene when the narrator describes the "white people" who have come to film the refugee camp (implying, of course, that the refugees are not white), and we are told with certainty what her nationality is when a reporter asks of her grandmother, "Do you want to go back to Mozambique□ to your own country?"

While Gordimer has always been committed to her writing as a form of art, and not simply as a tool to advance her politics, she has also always been unapologetically committed to using her writing to advance her antiapartheid stance. With her readership being made up of mostly, though not exclusively, British and American whites, and by giving the narrator many of the qualities that a typical young white English or American girl would have□she is observant, articulate, intelligent, selfless, and emotionally even-

keeled□Gordimer created a character with whom readers could empathize, but not necessarily pity. Ultimately it is not pity that Gordimer wants to elicit from her readers, but rather she wants her readers to come to a profound understanding of the human toll of apartheid. Holding off until the last possible moment before revealing the girl's race has the effect of giving her white audience every possible reason to feel for the girl as "one of us," rather than reasons to feel sorry for the miserable conditions of yet another poor anonymous black African. In other words, by effectively creating a character who closely resembles her readers, or who at least resembles people with whom her readers were familiar, Gordimer gave her audience the vicarious experience of what it was like to be, or know, a refugee, even if for a brief amount of time.

It should also be noted that, in order for the story to pass as a work of art, and not merely political propaganda or journalism, its narrator must remain true to her character. The fact is that most ten-year-old girls, regardless of their backgrounds, would not necessarily consider their race or ethnicity to be important in the telling of their stories.

Race, nationality, and ethnicity are adult constructs that children become aware of to varying degrees over time, so Gordimer's decision not to have her narrator discuss those issues was as much a decision to create a believable character as it was to create an empathetic one. However, the effect of that decision, regardless of its design, was to create an empathetic narrator.

In one of her more famous essays, "Living in the Interregnum," Gordimer paraphrases Mongane Wally Serote, a black South African poet: "Blacks must learn to talk; whites must learn to listen." By taking on the voice of a young black refugee girl, and by offering her readers the possibility that her voice was not simply "black" but also "universal," Gordimer not only created a black voice that whites could more readily listen to, but she also opened a window for her readers into one of the ugly rooms of apartheid.

Source: Mark White, Critical Essay on "The Ultimate Safari," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 2004.

Critical Essay #2

In the following interview, Gordimer discusses her political affiliations and views as well as her more recent works.

[Karen Lazar:] Nadine, I have some questions to ask you about your involvements as a citizen during the 80s and early 90s, and then a few questions about your more recent work.

In the early 80s, what stirred you to become more deeply involved in political organisations? Which groups were you specifically involved in? I know about ACAG (Anti-Censorship Action Group), but wondered about your other organisational commitments at that time ?

[Nadine Gordimer:] What spurred me was a new opportunity to be involved. In the 70s, we had the separatist movement, Black Consciousness, which I understood and sympathised with. There were some whites who were hurt or incensed by it. Even the writers' organisation, PEN, at that time black-led (under the leadership of Mothobi Mutloase but with a non-racial national executive), broke up because of the BC movement. It didn't break up acrimoniously, though it was seized upon by the popular press as having entailed a terrible row. This wasn't so at all. We just decided that we wouldn't carry on as an organisation. The black members had had some pressure brought to bear upon them: we felt that this was not the time for small gatherings of like-minded people of this nature, that it was rather the time for the consolidation of blacks.

Then, of course, in the 80s, the situation changed. I, like many others, had been in the position where there was no organisation with a public profile that you could belong to, unless you wanted to belong to the Progressive Party, as it was called at the time, or the Progressive Federal Party, as it became. So there were liberal organisations that you could belong to, but nothing to the left of that if you were left-inclined. So I was homeless, so to speak, as a social being. I had, of course, my attachments to the African National Congress (ANC) which I'd had all along, but it was underground. But then, with the formation of the non-racial United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983, you could openly avow yourself. So I think that was a great encouragement. Here was some sort of organisation to which I could attach myself, which I did, and I met and worked with some wonderful people.

And COSAW (The Congress of South African Writers) formed later in the 80s?

Yes, COSAW formed later. But COSAW too became possible out of the new climate, the feeling that apartheid wasn't made of granite, that it was crumbling, that there was some kind of attrition from within. The UDF surviving without being banned was proof of that. And there was a more confident mood among blacks that it wasn't necessary to maintain this total separatism. The time was right to start a national writers' organisation, so we called together all cultural groups concerned with writing and

aspects of writing, including theatre, and had a meeting. Out of that came the Congress of South African Writers.

So that is really how my involvement moved. Running parallel with that I was also becoming more and more involved with the ANC, especially with its cultural side. I was one of the people who went toBotswana to the Culture and Resistance festival, as many of us did. Somehow things were really beginning to move. I also had quite frequent contact with Wally Serote overseas, when he was running the cultural desk of the ANC fromLondon.

During the 80s were there any particular and decisive political events□perhaps trials, funerals, assassinations□which might have shaped your decisions as a writer? I'm thinking, for instance, of your portrayal ofWhaila's assassination in A Sport of Nature *and of the graveside scenes in* My Son's Story□*those kinds of scenes in your work.*

Well, the graveside scenes came out of my own several experiences of funerals, one in particular when I experienced teargas for the first time. So that came out of what was going on at the time and my own personal experience of it. What had made me think of Whaila's murder is the assassination of David Sibeko. I had known him virtually as a kid, an adolescent, when he was on the telephone exchange at *Drum* magazine; he first worked there. Then he became active in the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). He was extremely bright and very charming, and he rose steadily in the hierarchy ofPAC. He was one of the people assassinated abroad in the 70s, so that was somehow at the back of my mind. It's interesting how these assassinations first of all took place outside the country□it's a mystery why during that period they were not taking place inside. Now political assassinations in the last few years have taken place inside the country.

/ wondered what had been decisive for you, because for me, Eastern Cape leader Matthew Goniwe 's assassination in 1985 was a totally decisive event. Perhaps one is ripe at a certain point for a consciousness shift.

It's true, and that event can haunt you. Other events start becoming part of a general category after that.

Moving to the censorship side of things: aJohannesburg advocate mentioned to me that you frequently took part in representations to the Publications Appeal Board on behalf of other writers during the 80s. Which literary texts did you appeal on, and on what grounds?

I can't remember the details, but there were quite a large number of texts we appealed on. I was there as a member of the Anti-Censorship Action Group, and ACAG would naturally have chosen a writer if it were fiction in question, a journalist for a banned edition of a newspaper, and so on. So it's quite true that I was called upon, and went, a number of times.

What were your impressions of the Appeal Board, especially coming out of your experience of the banning of Burger's Daughter?

Well, that was really very interesting. They were unbelievably polite and positively smarmy. One of the accusations I had made again and again concerned not only the whole principle□I always started with the principle□but also the incredible lack of qualification of these members of the board to make decisions. Members of the Appeal Board would sit facing us, and there was an old retired schoolmaster from Witbank or somewhere, and a retired dentist at one point, I remember, making decisions like this.

I think one of the texts we appealed on was probably Don Mattera's *Azanian Love Song,* a book of poetry, and there were many others.

In the records of the mammoth Delmas Treason Trial of 1986 9, you testify to the peaceful and legitimate nature of the UDF. Your support for the still exiled ANC and your understanding of why the organisation was forced into violence also come through in your testimony.

That was the real purpose of my testimony. It wasn't so much the UDF because most of those on trial were really ANC people. I suppose we can talk about it now. I had been involved in that trial because Terror (Patrick) Lekota was writing a book in the form of letters to his daughter. I was smuggling out bits of it with the help of the lawyers and then going over it with a friend who did a wonderful job of typing it out. I knew the trialists well, particularly Terror and Popo (Molefe).

Did Terror's book ever come to light?

The book did come to light. It was published by some little publisher. It's a pity. It sank like a stone. The interesting thing about it: I would have thought that the idea that came to Terror was inspired by the letters to Indira Gandhi by her father. B ut he' d never heard of them. It just came to him out of his situation. There were problems because he wasn't near a library and couldn't research or verify the dates or names he couldn' t remember. So we did our best with that but it wasn't strong on fact. But it was interesting because it was one of the attempts to write from the people, to see history from the personal point of view rather than from the historian's point of view.

That was my initial access point to the trial. It is customary for the accused to give the names of people they would like to speak for them in mitigation. I was one of the people that they asked for. And I was then very nastily questioned by the prosecutor. I was not used to this. He asked . . . quite bluntly, was Nelson Mandela my leader, and then he said is Umkhonto we Sizwe your Umkhonto we Sizwe? And I said yes. So I suppose in a way that was a watershed in my political development.

Have you, yourself, written anything about the Delmas trial?

No, nothing. Actually it's interesting. I've been to a lot of political trials over my lifetime but I don't think there's a trial in any of my books. Trials are just natural good theatre, aren't they?

f they aren't very tedious.

They can be, yes. But they can make good theatre if you know something about them.

Nadine, when did you actually join the ANC?

Oh, the moment it was legal. You couldn't join before. What you did meant you were with it or not with it. The moment it became possible to do so, a friend and I went down to JISWA which was the Johannesburg Indian Welfare Association (at that time run by a friend of mine, Cas Saloojee and his wife Khadija) because we were told that this was one of the first places where you could get your ANC membership card. So we went down there. He is a good friend, Cas Saloojee, and we were his first two members. That was the end of February 1990.

A few more questions about your perceptions of left politics in the 1980s. In My Son's Story, *Sonny gets marginalised by his comrades in "the movement" for reasons which are not made entirely clear. When did you become aware of splits in the Congress Left, and what splits were you aware of? Is Sonny's "movement" to be associated unequivocally with a UDF/ANC alignment?*

Oh, I think so in response to the latter. It was clear from the kind of things he was doing. The tensions, the splits are there in every political formation and it doesn' t require any great feat of imagination to concoct something with these things. And I'd already done it before on a different scale in *A Guest of Honour.*

At that stage in the late 80s or in the time that My Son's Story *was being written, did you ever believe that any other liberation sectors might come to centrality within South African politics?*

Such as?

Perhaps worker sectors, PAC, alliances of other kinds? The reason that I ask is that I've noticed the pervasive way in which you use the definite article in that novel: "the movement", suggesting that there is no other.

I used the definite article because, to me, the movement did encompass others. I specially didn't want to make it specific. Of course there was certainly the SACP and the ANC and the rising Trade Union movement that were already allied. Although there was no official recognition of this, they were working together. A very significant development for me in the 80s was the recognition of black trade unions. I can't imagine that we would have moved as we did without the worker power. In my youth in that mining town, Springs, the miners were even kept out of the towns. They were so completely cut off from any normal kind of concourse with people in the town (I'm talking about black townspeople too). And then in the 80s I would go down to Braamfontein to the post office or the bank, and out of the National Union of Mine workers' offices there would come these young men in their T-shirts striding down the pavement. It was to me such a graphic illustration of a huge change. So the Trade Union movement opening up was also important to my thinking. That was clearly encompassed under "the movement".

I think that somehow, the underlying conflict seemed to be between the UDF and the movement: the more direct political forces, ANC, PAC, SACP and so on. I anticipated the kind of thing that happened between the returning ANC exiles and the UDF people in my book *My Son's Story.* Later, when the exiles did come back, one saw people who had done such wonderful work being somehow set aside or getting minor positions.

Did you have any direct contact with FEDSAW (Federation of South African Women), FEDTRAW (Federation ofTransvaal Women) or other women's orgnisations during the 80s, or with the documents and speeches emanating from these organisations?

I always received the documents and quite often went to various functions but I was not an active member at all.

Many feminist reviewers and interviewers, including myself, have attempted to draw you out on your opinions of feminism in recent years. Your description of feminism as "piffling" in the early 80s was followed by your recognition that there are some "harder, more thinking" kinds of feminism in the later 80s. What is your opinion, now, of the role that a political feminism may have in our current moment of governmental and constitutional change ?

My views have changed, and they've changed because the situation has changed. It's interesting. I can't see any vestiges now of that trivial feminism that I was talking about so disparagingly in the early times because I think it deserved to be disparaged. A tremendous division arose in the mid-70s (about '76) between the concerns of white women and the concerns of black women. I'll never forget the attempts of Women for Peace, which was a good idea although it came out of a "White Lady Bountiful " thing. They did have some meetings and some sort of contact with black women. It was based on the idea that we all have children and what happened in '76 was a threat to children.

But what happened then was that, come November, all these white adolescents were preparing for the matric dance and what was happening inSoweto or Gugulethu and all over the place was that black women were running behind their kids with bowls of water and *lappies* to wash the teargas out of their eyes. There was really no meeting point for these women unless the white women had directly challenged the government, which they were not prepared to do. You can't change a regime on the basis of compassion. There's got to be something harder. I'm not saying that compassion is not necessary in our lives but you can't change a regime that way. I think that's one of the faults of a worthy liberal organisation like Women for Peace. At least you could say that the women had moved along that far but I couldn't see how there could be any common feminism unless white women had truly thrown in their lot with black women, as some of the members of FEDTRAW later did.

And now? What do you make of the gender politics of the current moment?

And now, I think the proof is there. We've got quite a lot of women in Parliament. We have got in place of a white male Afrikaner (which we've had for generations) a black woman as Speaker. She's also, significantly, a South African Indian which is for me a

true demonstration of non-racism. Nobody said she isn' t black enough or if they have, I haven't heard it. And I don't think they have said it. I think she is recognised for what she is. And then you have other people like Baleka Kgotsisile and Cheryl Carolus who are in high positions. And there are a number of others. Barbara Masekela is now going to be our ambassador inParis, and as you talk about it you can think of other names. So they are all evidence of a very important kind of feminism from my point of view.

Another thing I'd like to say is that in the interim Constitution, the strong emphasis on no discrimination on grounds of gender is a very important step of the right kind now. They've brought that up on a level with discrimination on grounds of colour or race.

And you think there's the will to enact that?

I think so, certainly among younger black women and some white women.

Nadine, a few questions on your work. When one looks at some of your portrayals ofleftwing or activist women, one can see a kind of physical type coming across. I'm thinking of Joy in "Something Out There" and Hannah in My Son's Story, *both of whom are depicted as sloppy dressers and sexual improbables when compared with your more conventional beauties such as Hillela andAila. Is your depiction of this "alternative "female aesthetic (the Hannah/Joy kind) based on something you've observed in leftwing circles over the years, or could you suggest where it might come from?*

Oh, of course. These are things that come from observation. I think we all fall into some kind of uniform. I remember years ago arriving in America I was going to some meeting atColumbiaand I was put up in a sort of residential complex where we were all writers and painters and artists. And it was a year when if you were a writer or painter, you wore black trousers and a black polo-neck sweater and you wore a certain kind of earring and you would not wear another kind. And one day I looked at myself and thought, you're wearing the uniform. So I think this observation comes from simply living among people. Just like the sweater- and-pearls aesthetic: it isn't true of everyone, but it does define a certain kind of woman, doesn't it?

Some critics have commented that your most recent novel, None to Accompany Me *(1994), is surprisingly sombre in mood, given the largely triumphant political period from which it emerges. Could you comment on this?*

Well, I think there's a certain solemnity when, after a long, long time, extraordinary good things happen, when things open up. Sometimes in the last year, I think we've all had what one might call a sense of awe. And I think this probably comes out in that book.

Your portrayal of the consequences of violence, as in Oupa 's death in your latest novel, seems to me to be more sustained than in any such portrayals in earlier works.

Yes, because such events became so terrible in view of the fact that we were coming to the end of this struggle against the apartheid regime. You know it's rather like, in war, soldiers being killed while the armistice is being signed somewhere else. It pointed to the tremendous waste that took place over years and years and years, and also to the

mindless and criminal violence that has come about in this country as a result of poverty and the conditions of apartheid. So in a way, the prolonged attention to Oupa's death, the whole process of his dying, really encompasses many deaths.

Your protagonist in this latest novel, Vera Stark, moves towards a recognition of the fundamental solitude of the "self' as she grows older. At the same time, she withdraws further and further away from sexuality, such that her relationship with her final male companion, Zeph, is a celibate one (even though he is still sexually active□with younger women). Could you perhaps comment on why Vera's eventual life choices are coterminous with a sexual removal from the world? And what might that say about the ageing process for women in our society ? Does it exert different stresses on women than it does on men?

There's a different attitude to women's sexuality than there is to men's. It's still not recognised in the way that men's is.

By whom ?

By everybody. By other women too, by conventional women. Vera is a strange woman because in some ways she is conventional. She attacks her daily work. Even though it is unconventional work, she goes about it in this rather strict, direct, authoritarian way. She doesn't seem to belong to any women's movement. She's a women's movement in herself, I think. And she bluntly asserts her sexuality. She even quotes Renoir at one point□ "I paint with my prick". But she has her fill of sexuality, and she works her way through it. She's had a very active kind of sensual life and hasn't cared too much about the morality of it.

So you don't see any loss when she moves away from sexuality?

No, it's a conscious decision. You've said something that many other people miss: they say how lonely she is, but you've said she recognises the ultimate solitude of self. If you're going to make a journey towards that, towards accepting that, then you are shedding some things along the way. She sees the baggage of her life as something which she took on and wanted and wouldn't have been without, but she doesn't want it dragging around with her forever.

And sexuality might have been part of that

Yes. And of course, who can say? People's sexuality dies down at different ages. Some people seem to be finished with sex in their mid-forties, or fifties. Terrible! Others take on lovers, both male and female, at seventy. It's a matter of the glands, I suppose. Vera genuinely doesn't want another sexual relationship and doesn' t resent the fact that Zeph has his little pleasures on the side.

I notice some of your work (stories and sections from novels) have been published over the years in the glossy women's press, such as in Cosmopolitan, Femina *and* Fair Lady. *What is your impression of these magazines?*

Well, I've always had very mixed feelings. Quite frankly I don't read them, though I see them around. But I notice, through the kind of contents they splash on the covers, that they have changed quite a lot. Also you see black faces on the local covers these days. Admittedly, they're usually beauty queens. I haven't seen any of our black women writers or actresses on these covers. But, you know, that is the women's magazine culture: to be a beauty queen is the ultimate ambition. It's rather interesting that women have to be very consciously feminist in order to reject the whole beauty queen thing. I suppose quite a lot of young women do get quite financially independent through modelling.

Incidentally, what do you make of the ANC coming out in support of something like the "Miss SouthAfrica" contest?

I suppose this is the kind of thing that political parties do, and the ANC is now a political party. If people say "This is part of the emancipation of blacks", I have no objection to it. It's a little thing. I'm much more worried about us becoming nice big arms dealers.

Nadine, are you a television watcher, and were you watching South African TV and its represention of local politics during the 80s?

No, I never watch it. I'm a newspaper reader.

What newspapers and journals did you subscribe to or read during the 80s, and are you still reading those papers?

During the 80s, the usual local English-language ones (I'm afraid my Afrikaans isn't up to much), and of course the alternative press: *Weekly Mail, New Nation,* etc. And then, literary journals such as *New York Review of Books* and so on. For a long time I used to get *The Observer* and then *The Independent,* and then it just got too much. In recent years, once *The Weekly Mail* started printing pages from *The Guardian,* I thought that will do.

As for local cultural journals, *Contrast* comes to me and *Staff rider* of course (I was involved in that journal in COSAW) and now and then, *The Southern African Review.*

Finally, the mandatory question. Now that we are pastSouth Africa's first democratic election, what are your impressions: of the pace of change, of the receptiveness of South Africans to this change?

I've been pleased, I should say surprised by the receptiveness of South Africans. I think the crisis of expectation which absolutely obsesses people overseas□I can't tell you how many times inAmerica I got questioned about this□is not called for. In my experience, my small experience of talking to grassroots people, and from what I gather from those who do have a big experience of it, what people want is truly basic. I think this has been recognised now in the ANC. It's not recognised by the press, it's not recognised by people who saw April 27, 1994 as the beginning of the millennium. People are not asking for Mercedes Benzes and big houses. You know what they're asking for: a roof over their heads, electricity, education, jobs.

That is nonetheless a tall order for a new government.

It is a very tall order, of course. As for how much has been done, of course it seems too little but one can't say a start hasn't been made. I think the question of how much can be done how quickly should be explained to the black majority in a different way from the way that it is being explained. When dissatisfaction comes up along the lines that the ANC has bent over backwards to placate whites and done nothing for blacks, I think Mandela answers that very well but he doesn't go into it enough, from my point of view, when he says the placating of whites has cost nothing, that no money has been spent on it. What money there was has been spent on providing electricity, water where it's been possible. . . . This is great. To me it's progress. It's not spectacular but it's progress.

What should be explained much more fully, and is not, to the black majority is the reason why whites have to be soothed and kept in place: because the government, ANC-led, does not want any abandonment of our very complicated economic infrastructure here, such as you saw in other parts of Africa, while there is still insufficient black skill to take over such things. So if there are too many concessions to whites, in terms of tax or keeping them in a certain measure of control of various boards, it could be explained that this is only because you cannot move towards greater prosperity and development without using them. In other words, whites are being used, and they should accept it; we should all accept it. Whites have got things that blacks never had, and they are now being used to help provide these things for others. Of course there's also the question of investment from overseas. And this is not put clearly enough to blacks. If you look at material concessions to whites, what have they been? Nothing, except that white life has been left intact. Also people tend to ignore the quiet, slow (too slow) integration of schools. As far as I know from white and black friends, the kids are now going to school together and there's no problem.

So my feeling is of realistic optimism. Of course, new hitches arise all the time. I turned on the radio at lunchtime, and now the farmers on the borders of Lesotho whose cattle are being rustled have made counterattacks and burned down cattle kraals inLesotho where they say their stolen cattle have been housed. I heard one of the farmers say that, unless this rustling over the border is stopped, there's going to be bloodshed. Also, a year ago, who would have thought that we would have the problem of illegal immigration which we now have□that we'd have Koreans selling watches in the streets, Zaireans talking French in the streets. Who would have thought this ? It's something we couldn' t possibly have imagined.

Why do you think this has happened to the extent that it has? Is it that we are seen as a place of bounty or safety relative to these other countries?

Oh absolutely, but we can't afford this. We must think of our own people first, and somehow this has got to be stopped. Of course, this ill becomes somebody like myself who comes from immigrant stock. All of us who are whites here originally do. So who are we to say that the Koreans must be kicked out?

Most whites come from immigrant stock a very long way back.

Precisely, but do you think that really makes such a difference?

/ notice that some critics writing for Jewish journals and papers claim that you have denied or suppressed your Jewish origins and your family's immigrant history.

Well I think it's truly based on nothing. I have never denied that I'm Jewish and I've no desire to deny it. For me, being Jewish is like being black: you simply are. To want to deny it is disgusting. It's a denial of humanity. There's no shame in being black and there's no shame in being Jewish. But I'm not religious, I haven't had a religious upbringing, and whether I'm an unbeliever in terms of Jehovah or Jesus Christ to me is the same thing.

Being black in our society surely amounts to a more politically disadvantaged state than being Jewish, for most people anyway?

Yes, of course, much more. I wonder how these Jewish critics feel about Joe Slovo and others, who've put something else first. I've never seen any criticism of them. I'm not sure why it's happened to me! Perhaps writers are always easy targets. InAmerica I'm asked, do you think your Jewish background has influenced you politically? I've thought about it a lot, and I think not. I would hate to think that you have to be Jewish in order to understand racism, just as I would hate to think you have to be black to understand it. It should be something absolutely repugnant and quite impossible for anybody who is a real human being. So, to say I'm not Jewish so I don't care about the Holocaust or I'm not black so I don't care about Sharpeville or all the other Sharpevilles that followed ... that's appalling.

There are strange little ethnic loyalties, I suppose, that come up. I can't help being pleased, and have been pleased over the years, to think that in South Africa's liberation movements and progressive circles there have been a really disproportionate number of Jews, given the smallness of the Jewish population. I'm rather proud of this. Though of course, you may then get the accusation, as you do inAmerica, that Jews dominate progressive thinking and the press, and so on. So it can be used as a stick to beat you with as well.

Source: Nadine Gordimer with Karen Lazar, "'A Feeling of Realistic Optimism': An Interview with Nadine Gordimer," in *Salmagundi,* Winter 1997, pp. 150-65.

Adaptations

The Nobel Prize committee maintains a Gordimer web page at http://www.nobel.se/literature/lau-reates/1991/ with a link to her Nobel Prize speech and other related sites.

In a separate section of the Nobel Prize web site, at http://www.nobel.se/literature/articles/ wastberg/index.html, writer and vice president of International PEN Per Wästberg offers an extensive overview of Gordimer's career.

Topics for Further Study

A major foreign policy concern of the South African government from the 1970s through the end of apartheid in 1992 was the burgeoning liberation and Marxist movements in its neighboring countries. Why wasSouth Africa concerned about these movements? Which countries, in particular, was it most concerned about? What types of policies did the government pursue to contain those movements?

For years Gordimer was a member of the outlawed African National Congress, or the ANC. Research the history of the ANC under apartheid. What was its political mission? Did its goals change once apartheid was banned? What is the ANC's role inSouth Africa today?

Although Gordimer is one ofSouth Africa's best-known writers, because of censorship laws, many of her stories were first published by British and American publications long before they were published widely in her own country. Research the role censorship played in apartheidSouth Africa. Were there periods of time duringSouth Africa's history when the censorship rules were more strictly enforced than during others? If so, why?

Look up the term "interregnum," and read Gordimer's essay entitled "Living in the Interregnum " from her collection *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places.* To what does Gordimer refer when she talks about the interregnum? Explain how she uses the term in relation to the context of bothSouth Africa and of the world.

Gordimer is one of the few women writers to have been awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. Research the other women Nobel laureates. Are there any similarities in their writing styles or the subject matters they address? Do politics play a role in their writings?

In 1968, American writer William Styron was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner.* Like Gordimer does in "The Ultimate Safari," Styron, who is white, writes from the perspective of a black character. Despite the critical acclaim it received, Styron's book also received widespread criticism for its portrayal of Turner. Research the critical reviews of Styron's book. What were the main reasons for the criticism? Could that criticism also be applied to Gordimer?

Compare and Contrast

1980s: Apartheid laws are still in effect inSouth Africa, with the majority population unable to vote or move about freely.

Today: Apartheid has been abolished, and blacks are allowed to vote in local and national elections.

1980s: Many important works of literature, including works by Nadine Gordimer, are banned inSouth Africa.

Today: With the exception of some school districts occasionally calling for the censorship of certain works, South Africans can read and write without fear of official, state-sanctioned censorship.

1980s: Mozambique andZimbabwe villagers living along the South African borders are frequently displaced because of the guerilla warfare supported by the South African government.

Today: South Africa has long stopped its incursions into neighboring countries, and villagers are no longer forced away from their homes by guerilla raids.

1980s: The African National Congress, of which Gordimer is a long-standing member, is considered illegal by the government, and its members are considered outlaws.

Today: The African National Congress, which Gordimer continues to support, is the majority political party inSouth Africa.

What Do I Read Next?

Gordimer's essay collection *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places* (1988) includes the often-quoted essay "Living in the Interregnum," in which she discusses the role of revolution in the South African political context, and the responsibility she felt as a writer to come to terms with it.

To fully understand Gordimer's fiction, one must understand her political convictions and how they have affected her growth as a writer. *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer,* published in 1990, gives a good background to Gordimer's evolution as a political thinker and as a writer just prior to her writing of "The Ultimate Safari."

Of the many novels that Gordimer has written in her career, *The Burger's Daughter* is considered one of her best and was one of her most controversial at the time of its publication. Banned by the South African government, *The Burger's Daughter* follows the story of Rosa Burger, the daughter of a martyred revolutionary leader, as she tries to pursue an apolitical existence of her own.

Gordimer's story collection *Selected Stories* (1975) offers the full range of Gordimer's style and subject matter. Although some of the stories are thirty years older than "The Ultimate Safari," the collection provides a good overview to the evolution and breadth of Gordimer's writing.

Like "The Ultimate Safari," J. M. Coetzee's Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Life and Time of Michael K* (1983), tells the story of a black family displaced by war. Coetzee, along with André Brink and Gordimer, has long been considered to be one ofSouth Africa's leading white intellectuals and opponents of apartheid.

Further Study

Brink, André, *Reinventing a Continent: Writing and Politics in South Africa, 1982-1995,* Secker & Warburg, 1996. One of South Africa's foremost novelists and opponents of apartheid brings together this collection of essays about the role of the writer inSouth Africa.

Davis, Geoffrey V., *Voices of Justice and Reason: Apartheid and Beyond in South African Literature,* Amsterdam, 2003.Davis provides a detailed overview, with an extensive bibliography, of South African writing under apartheid, with a focus on black writers.

Finnegan, William, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique,* University of California Press, 1992.

A Complicated War is an eyewitness journalistic account of the civil war in Mozambique that was sponsored bySouth Africa and ultimately killed over a million Mozambicans.

Karodia, Farida, *A Shattering of Silence,* Heinemann, 1993. Karodia gives a fictionalized account of the adventures of a young Mozambican girl who loses her family to the civil war in her country.

Vines, Alex, *Renamo: Terrorism in Mozambique,* Indiana University Press, 1991.

Vines provides an historical overview of Renamo, the rebel movement supported by South Africa that fueled the civil war in Mozambique.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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