



## Selected Stories

*Nadine Gordimer*

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**Selected Stories** Nadine Gordimer

Selected Stories by Nadine Gordimer. Penguin Books, Inc., 1975

## Selected Stories Details

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# From Reader Review Selected Stories for online ebook

## S says

A good surprise.

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## Denae says

Short story collections are difficult to rate or describe. Overall, this is very good with at least four stories that I would give 5 stars. Well worth reading.

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## Thomas Armstrong says

I liked the stories. I particularly liked those stories that focused on issues related to apartheid, such as the one about the missus of a household that saw her housemaid going through all these terrible things in her own home and did almost nothing to help her or even be compassionate with her. Also "The Smell of Death and Flowers" where a white woman finds herself in the African's ghetto world (compare to her novel July's People), and also the one where the upscale white party goers' pick up a black woman on the road. It's this contrast (and clash) between races and cultures that really defines Gordimer's writing as exceptional in my view.

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## George Rife says

As in most short story collections there were some I liked a lot more than others. Some of them I liked a very great deal, the quality of her writing was amazing at times. This collection has a LOT of stories in it, so I took my time; you don't want to read them all in a couple weeks probably, better to mix in with something else you're reading concurrently.

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## Vaidya says

31 stories, none of which *go* anywhere, just are, just show you glimpses into people's lives as they go about it. There are quite a few political undercurrents considering the stories are from the 1960s-70s and written in Apartheid South Africa. And her observations are typically pithy, coming from someone with an unerring eye for picking up the details of interactions - a nod, a type of smile, a way of talking. Almost like an outsider looking inside at everything. And that's a remarkable achievement, cos she ends up not taking sides, just showing things and letting the readers make up their minds.

*As a child she did not inhabit their world, a place where whether the so-and-sos would fit in at dinner, and whose business it was to see that the plumber was called, and whether the car should be traded in or overhauled were the daily entries in the ledger of living. The sum of it was the comfortable, orderly house,*

*beds with turned-down sheets from which nightmares and dreams never overstepped the threshold of morning, good night kisses as routine as the cleaning of teeth, a woman stating her truth, 'Charles would never eat a warmed-over meal,' a man defining his creed, 'One thing I was taught young, the value of money.'*

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### **Ruth Browne says**

I'd somehow never read Nadine Gordimer before this year, despite her status as eminent South African activist responsible for some of the very best writing this country can boast. These short stories confirmed that reputation a dozen times over. The stories target race, class and gender in the main, but with such a matter-of-fact, colloquial style that Gordimer somehow avoids sounding repetitive or didactic. She gets right into the thick of things, not only the contentious issues that white South Africans find deeply discomforting, but also the messy insides and undersides of being alive in the world: the strangeness of youth, death and displacement, the peculiarities of disparate communities. I found that I moved hungrily from one story straight into the next one, pausing only at brief intervals to digest, like a snake. These were stories gathered from older collections of her work, and I have heard that her more recent material is more strictly literary--perhaps. Either way, I'd recommend this collection heartily.

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### **Joanna says**

An excellent collection of short stories by this Nobel Prize winning author. The stories are arranged chronologically by publication date and range from stories published in the 1950s to those in the mid-1970s. This arrangement really gives the reader the chance to watch the development of race relations in South Africa during those decades.

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### **Dawn says**

Rare insights into the lives of common folk in South Africa. A book of stories to pick up and read any time, any place. A keeper!

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### **Lowell Brower says**

Packed with perfect stories - "The Soft Voice of the Serpent" and "Six Feet of the Country" chief among them.

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### **James O'Connor says**

Powerful, gut-wrenching, realism in fiction. Remarkable linguist. Each story forces you to recognize and FEEL the human tragedy of Apartheid.

Gordimer's depictions were from days past, presented chronologically as she experienced Apartheid & its

ultimate demise in real time.

The parallels to current socio-political tragedies, both global and domestic, are unmistakable. It hurts to read this book, therefore I recommend it as a MUST READ.

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## **Dan says**

There are no duds, and many gems in this collection. Her characters are varied and vivid, her writing is flawless and her ability to describe psychological states is exceptional. For a history of South African life, through literature, from the 50s-70s, this is a perfect volume.

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## **Mala says**

4.5 stars for this book.

Nadine Gordimer has a very impressive literary output, but surprisingly; outside the academia & readers specially keen on SA lit, she doesn't find that many takers!

It's a pity because she writes beautifully.

This book is a significant one as the stories here, have been hand picked by the author herself, from her various short stories collections over the years. Also, as the selection has been made in a chronological order, it not only shows the development of a writer's mind & art but more importantly, a historical perspective as the characters & situations show a gradual shift in the social & political landscape of Africa.

All the featured 31 stories are good in their own way but some like 'Abroad', 'Six feet of the Country', 'Not for Publication', 'Africa Emergent', & 'Something For The Timebeing' are simply outstanding.

From the opening tale 'Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet' to the closing one 'Africa Emergent', the collection completes an arc wherein almost all the racial stereotypes find an expression but there is no moralising here.

With sheer finesse, she lets the stories speak for themselves: the mark of a superior writer.

Few years back, I happened to read her short story 'The Ultimate Safari' in my daughter's English textbook. It moved me to tears & I made a mental note to read anything by this writer.

It saddens me to hear people react to Gordimer with "Oh that White lady who always writes about Black folks! But isn't Apartheid over, what's the point?"

What's the point!!! It's like saying Holocaust is over so why read about it?

Sins like Apartheid & Holocaust are humanity's collective guilt which we shdn't be allowed to forget lest we repeat them with other people, in other times & other places.

Shelley called poets "The unacknowledged legislators of the world". If writers & artists don't give expression to the beauty/ horrors/ aspirations of their times, who will?

It's not for nothing that Gordimer has been called "The conscience of South Africa". True, there is her obsession with racial issues but then as she writes in the preface:

"... there are some stories I have gone on writing, again and again, all my life, not so much because the themes are obsessional but because I found other ways to take hold of them; because I hoped to make the revelation of new perceptions through the different techniques these demanded."

I can vouchsafe that not a single story is repetitive here: like a kaleidoscope they all show a different perspective, reveal a new insight. From the secluded, privileged life of the Whites, safe behind barbed wire fences, to the Indian ghettos (remember Gandhi's South Africa connection?), to the appalling deprivation of the 'locations' (think of them as the Red Indian's reservation area).

There are people here from all walks of life, tentatively making a connection & then recoiling, out of fear, doubt, distrust, prejudice, moral ambiguity & what not!

The stories capture class differences, conflict between the races (with maximum effect in stories like 'Which New Era Would That Be?', 'The Catch' etc), but mainly conflict within an individual himself. There are some amazing psychological character portraits & some torrid affairs with so much emotional honesty in them as to make one wonder about certain claims of Gordimer's biographer...

What stands out most is the quality of her writing: there is never a false note, her understanding acute, her sympathies broad, her observational skill dead on, her imagery always exact.  
Highly recommended.

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