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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

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HINWEIS

Diese Diplomarbeit hat nachgewiesen, dass die betreffende Kandidatin befähigt ist, wissenschaftliche Themen selbstständig sowie inhaltlich und methodisch vertretbar zu bearbeiten. Da die Korrekturen des Beurteilenden nicht eingetragen sind und das Gutachten nicht beiliegt, ist daher nicht erkenntlich mit welcher Note diese Arbeit abgeschlossen wurde. Das Spektrum reicht von sehr gut bis genügend. Die Habilitierten des Instituts für Anglistik und Amerikanistik bitten diesen Hinweise bei der Lektüre zu beachten.

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“Remember” by Don Mattera

Remember to call at my grave

When freedom finally

Walks the land

So that I may rise

To tread familiar paths

To see broken chains

Fallen prejudice

Forgotten injury

Pardoned pains.

And when my eyes have filled their sight

Do not run away from fright

If I crumble to dust again.

It will only be the bliss

Of a long-awaited dream

That bids me rest

When freedom finally walks the land . . .

List of Selected Apartheid Laws¹

1911	Mines and Works Act
1911	Natives Labour Regulation Act
1913	Natives' Land Act
1924	Industrial Conciliation Act
1928	Liquor Act
1949	Mixed Marriages Act
1950	Group Areas Act
1950	Immorality Act
1950	Population Registration Act
1950	Suppression of Communism Act
1951	Bantu Authorities Act
1951	Separate Representation of Voters Act
1953	Bantu Education Act
1953	Reservation of Separate Amenities Act
1956	Riotous Assemblies Act
1959	Extension of University Education Act
1959	Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill
1970	Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act
1971	Bantu Homelands Constitution Act

¹ This list of Apartheid laws is incomplete in the extent that not all the official laws the South African government instated during the Apartheid era are included here. Solely the ones which were mentioned in this diploma thesis are illustrated in this list.

List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BMBF	Bildungsministerium für Bildung und Frauen - Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CP	Conservative Party
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
GWU	Garment Workers Union
HNP	Herstigte Nasionale Party - Reconstituted National Party
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NP	National Party
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SANAC	South African Native Affairs Commission
SANLAM	South African National Life Assurance Company
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SANTAM	South African National Trust Company
SAP	South African Party
TATA	Transvaal African Teachers Association
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UP	United Party

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1. Introduction

The South African past is coined by hostility towards foreigners, a profound and visceral aversion to “the other” and xenophobia. It can be assumed that throughout history, there has always been a kind of fear of anything that is foreign and unfamiliar. This anxiety often resulted in the discrimination and marginalization of entire ethnic groups by the more powerful ones, those were often white, Christian Europeans. In South Africa, the inhumane treatment of the indigenous population culminated in the second half of the 20th century and it is known under the term “Apartheid”. Fortunately, there have always been people who fought against this discrimination and some of them did this by composing literary pieces like texts, novels, short stories, poems etc. As this topic is extremely important in the context of world history and in order for future generations to never forget about this, one can claim that teaching about apartheid should be part of every teacher’s agenda. Therefore, the title of this diploma thesis is “A Selection of South African Short Stories: Texts for Teaching in the Austrian (AHS) English Classroom”. Three of these literary opponents towards the maltreatment of non-whites and non-Europeans in South Africa are Nadine Gordimer, James Matthews and Es’kia Mphahlele. All three of them are authors of fiction and their way of fighting South Africa’s oppressive minority regime was by composing literary pieces dealing with racial issues. Three narratives have been chosen for analysis: “Six Feet of the Country” by Nadine Gordimer, “The Park” by James Matthews and “Mrs Plum” by Es’kia Mphahlele. This diploma thesis aims to reveal what it meant to live under the apartheid regime as a member of the black community. The mistreatment of blacks, the injustice and the cruelty the Europeans brought on the Africans are clearly depicted. Moreover, as this topic is also a crucial part of South African and world history, it is shown how the selected short stories can be used in the Austrian English classroom with students who have reached the language level of either B1 or B2.

First and foremost, chapter 2 introduces the history and the development of apartheid in South Africa. As this is a complex topic with many angles it is rather extensive, therefore, this chapter has been divided into several subchapters. The first subchapter deals with the historical background and it clearly demonstrates how Europeans entered the most Southern country of the African continent, how they went about to colonize it and its people, and how it was possible to introduce a minority government, to rule and enslave

the indigenous people for centuries. The second subchapter discusses the time of segregation, which was the period before apartheid was introduced and before non-whites were fully discriminated. The third subchapter then is concerned with the second half of the 20th century, from the time after apartheid had officially been implemented, until it ended in the 1990s. The final subchapter deals with the topic of resistance against this oppressive regime and it especially focuses on the resistance and the various uprisings of the black population. The next chapter provides an extensive analysis of Nadine Gordimer's "Six Feet of the Country". Here one is introduced to the author's biography, as her background is essential to the subject of matter presented in the text. Then, one is briefly introduced to the plot followed by the analysis of the short story, in which the focus is on the setting and background, the characters and the characterization. The analysis and the critical assessment of the short story is included in the character analysis as well. Chapter 4 deals with James Matthew's short story "The Park" in which the reader is presented with an author's biography, a quick summary of the plot, a description of the characters and the characterization and finally, a critical assessment of the short story itself. In chapter 5, the third short story, "Mrs Plum" by Es'kia Mphahlele, is analyzed using the same approach. The didactic part forms the last chapter of this diploma thesis. Here five lesson plans for the use in an Austrian AHS English classroom have been developed. The first lesson plan serves as an introductory unit in which the topic of apartheid is introduced to the students. Then three lesson plans, each dealing with one of the short stories, are presented and at last, the topic of role of the white authorities is dealt with in greater detail. The worksheets created and the pictures used for these teaching units are included in the appendix. The lesson plans have been developed according to the guidelines of the predefined model developed by the Centre for English Language Teaching of the English Department at the University of Vienna. Moreover, the pools of topics for the new Austrian Matura are also included here, as the texts and the topic itself, are very suitable for this examination.

The main focus of this diploma thesis is, on the one hand, on apartheid itself, its development and history, its influence and its impact. Another focus is on the use of the short stories selected in Austrian schools. This thesis will clearly show how South African literature can be used in English lessons and it will show that this topic is important. Teaching this topic will demonstrate that South Africa's racism and the vehement fight against anything that is different and foreign has not ended too long ago. The main goal

is to get them thinking about this issue and to concern themselves with the fact that not only blacks but many other ethnic or religious group that are different to what Austrians are used to, are in danger of being discriminated. Especially, at a time when xenophobia and the fear of anything opposed to Austrian, and in a larger extent, European culture is on the rise, it is essential to show the younger generations that racism and discrimination is never the right way.

2. The Development of Apartheid in South Africa

Since the topic of this diploma thesis is South African short stories composed during the apartheid era, a brief introduction about the development of this oppressive regime is inevitable in order to understand the pain and suffering the non-white-population had to endure during this period. This chapter will focus on how it was possible for this regime to be instated, therefore, it is essential to start at the very beginning, when Europeans first encountered South Africa and when they started to settle the country and occupy this land.

2.1. Historical Background

The history of the earliest forms of humans in South Africa can be dated back at least 3.5 million years and the first fossil remains of the *homo sapiens* trace back to over 110,000 years. Before the Europeans came and founded their first colonies three Bushmen groups developed and lived in the area of Southern Africa. Those are the “Bushmen” or “San”, hunters and gatherers, the pastoralists speaking Khoikhoi/Khoisan and the agriculturalists speaking a Bantu language (see Ross 7-8). Although European ships sailed along the South African coast from the 15th century onwards, the first settlers arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company founded its first settlement in Cape Town. As the company was highly involved in trading from Europe to Asia, it used the geographic position of Cape Town to resupply their ships with goods from the native Khoi². At first, the Europeans did not want to establish a colony in South Africa, but after the Khoi refused to agree with the poor terms of the Europeans they were forced to do so. The Dutch were successful in driving the natives from their land and establishing their own farms, which some of the settlers operated themselves (see Clark, Worger: 2011 10-11).

Starting in 1658 slaves from West Africa and other African countries, as for example, Mozambique, Madagascar, Angola etc. were deported to Cape Town to work on these farms. Slowly other Europeans, especially Germans and French Huguenots fleeing from religious tracing, started migrating to South Africa and settling there. With a first wave

² “Khoisan”, or short “Khoi”, is the term for the combination of all early groups of Africans living in the area of the north-western Cape, southern Angola and Botswana. They were previously known as Khoikhoi, Nama, San and Thsu-Khwe but are now referred to as the peoples of the “Khoisan” (Clark, Worger 10-11).

in 1775 and a second one in 1806 the British joined the colonizers in the South of Africa and occupied the Cape. After seeing the harsh treatment of the slaves by the Europeans the British forbade slave trading in the British Empire, including Britain itself, the Cape and the Caribbean. This frustrated the Dutch, the so-called “Boers”³, and thus they abandoned their settlements and hoped to acquire new farming land. They resettled north of the Orange and Vaal rivers and on the Eastern coast of Africa founding new states – Transorangia, Transvaal and the Natalia Republic. However, the British soon invaded and annexed the Natalia Republic establishing their own colony, Natal, and the Boers fled to the other two colonies where they lived rather separated and sealed off from the rest. By the 1860s there were several different tribes and colonies living in South Africa, and two distinct groups developed due to the mix of Khoisan, Griqua⁴ and slaves calling themselves “Coloured” (see Clark, Worger: 2011 10-13 & Clark, Worger: 2004 ix).

Numerous different peoples lived in South Africa by the middle of the 19th century, however, the country did not particularly attract many immigrants. This severely changed after diamonds and gold were discovered for the first time in 1869 and 1886. Due to these resources, foreign industries moved to South Africa and the gap between rich and poor, white and black, British and Boer increasingly diverged. After the British had conquered these resourceful African areas, they purchased the land, introduced new tax laws and thus they were in control of the labor market in this branch. Initially, Africans would work in the mines according to their own terms, but this changed in order to keep labor as cheap as possible. Therefore, the British introduced new, mainly discriminating laws against the workers and unintentionally laid the foundation for the discrimination that, in the 20th century, became known as “apartheid” (see Clark, Worger: 2011 13-15).

The greed for gold naturally became the trigger for a conflict between the Boers and the British, as gold has been discovered in the Transvaal, which was not under British but under the rule of the Boers. As a consequence, the British tried to occupy this land as well. The struggle for this territory culminated in the South African War, also known as the Boer War, or the Second War of Liberation, which lasted from 1899 to 1902 (see Ross 77-78). In the beginning, the British were defeated in numerous battles, but the Empire

³ “Boer” was the term for the Dutch descendant settlers who settled at the Cape (Ross 52-53).

⁴ Griqua” is the term used for the people who developed from the mix of escaped slaves with Africans (Clark, Worger 12).

under King Edward VII kept sending troops and money for support and in the end the British won. Boer men, women and children were removed to “concentration camps”, their homesteads and farms were burnt down and African men were either sent into service for the British army or to work in the mines under appalling conditions. A peace agreement, the Treaty of Vereeniging, was signed in May 1902. During the war, both parties became increasingly worried about the empowerment of the blacks and while discussing the terms of the Vereeniging-treaty the fears about a “Native uprising” were debated. However, as the British lost interest in South African labor due to the low wages and the Dutch were displeased by the British plan of rebuilding a mainly British society, cheap labor was scarce. As the mine owners were not willing to pay the Africans a reasonable wage, thousands of Mozambicans, who were under Portuguese rule, and Chinese workers were imported to work in the gold mines (see Clark, Worger: 2011 15-17 & Ross 83-84).

Racial discrimination against Africans, Coloureds and Indians arose and strengthened at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, mainly due to the key features of the segregationist policy of the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC). With his policy, Godfrey Ladgen, chairman of SANAC, laid the foundation for South Africa's racial segregation on which, later on, the principles and laws for the institution of apartheid⁵ were built. Due to the social injustice they had to face, Africans, Coloureds and Indians formed political bodies, among others, the South African Native Congress (1898), the Native Vigilance Association (1901), the African Political Organization (1902), the Transvaal Native Vigilance Association (1902), the Natal Native Congress (1900) and the Natal Indian Congress (1984). All of these were protecting the rights and were interested in the rights of Africans, Transkeian natives, Cape Coloureds, South Africans regardless of their color and Indians (Clark, Worger: 2011 18-19). Soon a countermovement established, led by Mohandas Gandhi and Abdullah Abdurahman, who organized demonstrations and stop-work protests, which were supported by thousands of opponents of the British rule. But not only the politics of the indigenous people started an uproar, also the Dutch, who constituted a majority of white voters, took further steps. They started developing their own “Christian-National” schools, “Afrikaans” as language rather than a dialect of Dutch and, subsequently, their own

⁵ “Segregation” is the term used for the racial discrimination imposed from 1910 to 1948; after 1948 it was termed “apartheid”.

identity as “Afrikaners”. Two political parties were established, the Het Volk by Louis Botha in the Transvaal in 1905 and the Orania Unie by J.B.M. Hertzog in the Orange River Colony in 1906 (see Clark, Worger: 2011 19-20 & Ross 84-85). In the same year the Liberals under Henry Campbell Bannermann won the elections in Great Britain and he, as an antagonist of the South African War and the mistreatment and barbarism towards the Africans, agreed to the self-government for the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony in 1907 (see Welsh 2).

From October 1908 until May 1909 white representatives of the four colonies in South Africa discussed the terms for a South African Union and on May 31st, 1909 this Union was formed, committing to segregation and institutionalizing white supremacy. This caused an uproar especially by Ghandi and the Natal Native Congress, who claimed that all peoples without distinction of color should be allowed to take part in the representation and participation of the new state. The white authorities naturally disagreed and thus the voting rights in the four colonies were restricted to white males only. Louis Botha was the first prime minister of the South African Union, appointed by the British governor general (see Clark, Worger: 2011 20-21). This era “laid the economic, political, and institutional foundations of segregation and apartheid” (Butler 13).

2.2. The Prelude to Apartheid – Segregation from 1910 to 1948

The racial discrimination preceding apartheid was established by new laws and policies which were enforced in the first half of the 20th century. The principle of segregation has to be distinguished from the supremacy the whites always felt over the others. Segregation was not just the subjection of blacks in different fields of life, as the work place, the place of living or the political venue. The main goal of this policy was rather, on the one hand, the separation of races, thus, affecting the rights and freedom of South Africans, especially blacks, Coloureds and Indians and, on the other hand, the English dominance in every aspect of life (see Butler 14 & Worden 80-81). The newly implemented policies were solely in favor of the whites and against the interests of Africans. Representing approximately merely 20% of South Africa's population, whites were in sole control of the country's economy and exploiting the Africans for cheap and underpaid labor under strict regulations. The *Mines and Works Act* of 1911 was the first severely discriminating law introduced, banning Africans from almost all “skilled categories of work in the

mines” (Clark, Worger: 2011 22) and thus dedicating these jobs to whites only. Not long after this, the *Native Labour Regulation Act* was initiated, ruling that the workers are to be obtained in the rural areas, they had to be fingerprinted and they were given a “pass” which they had to carry at all times and which gave them permission to enter an urban area. As Africans did not understand why they had to subjugate to these terms, they started protesting and resisting these harsh and repressive conditions. The government reacted by initializing the *Industrial Conciliation Act* of 1924 limiting the right of Africans to discuss their working conditions. To avoid the cruel circumstances on white farms, many Africans earned their money by farming on their own land and withstanding the tax force of the whites, who enforced taxes on nearly everything, amongst others, on dogs, huts, heads etc. This was done to compel the Africans to work in the gold mines. Even though many refused to accept this and increased their agricultural production, a new law was issued in 1913, the *Natives' Land Act*, which forbade Africans to possess their own property. However, the state gave them seven percent of South African land increasing it to thirteen percent in 1936, but the soil was of very poor quality and, consequently, many had to join the growing mining industry (see Clark, Worger: 2011 22-24).

The impact of segregation was disastrous for the Africans as they could not find any work in the cities and, therefore, had to move to the countryside where they almost starved to death due to the scarce land. This increased the demands for more rights, entailing protests, strikes and demonstrations laying the foundation for black African resistance which culminated at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s (see Clark, Worger: 2011 24). African resistance began to grow in 1911 and, subsequently, on January 8th, 1912 the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which later became the African National Congress (ANC), a resistance group opposing white supremacy, was formed. The founder was John L. Dube and its members were academics of the educated elite of South Africa opposing their country's racial injustice and discrimination and arguing for their rights before the law. “They called not for an end to British rule but for respect for the concept of equality for all, irrespective of colour [sic]” (Clark, Worger: 2011 24). The African people resisted the new laws which were forced on them. African women, who, in 1913, were required to carry passes for their identification, protested these laws and gathered at the police stations, burning their papers and demanding to be arrested. After more demonstrations for their rights, the government withdrew this law until forty years later. Furthermore, the SANNC solicited the British king after World

War I for his understanding and asked him to eliminate the “discrimination on account of colour [sic] or creed' in South Africa” (SANNC qtd. in Clark, Worger: 2011 25), but he refused to be entangled in this conflict. Therefore, in 1919 members of the SANNC travelled to the peace conference in Paris where the Treaty of Versailles was enacted and “they called for the principles of self-determination to be extended to colonised [sic] peoples and not only to Europeans” (Clark, Worger: 2011 25).

Moreover, the workers in the gold mines first went on strike in 1918, followed by a strike for a minimum daily wage in 1919 and a nation-wide campaign initiated by the SANNC against the pass laws. Clements Kadalie, an immigrant from Nyasaland, then a British protectorate and now known as Malawi, founded the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU). In February 1920, the ICU organized the biggest work strike in African history gathering 70,000 men and abandoning their work. They were held at gunpoint by national security forces and eleven were killed. Nonetheless, the ICU continuously gained new members who all fought for the same: “better wages, the extension of voting rights to all tax-paying Africans, the end of the pass laws, more land and freedom of speech” (Clark, Worger: 2011 26). The opposition against the government grew and numerous unions formed, the most significant one being the African Mineworker's Union (AMWU). The membership figure grew rapidly from 1941 to 1943, enhancing the government's fear of, on the one hand, a repetition of the mineworker's strike in 1920 and, on the other hand, the predominant rise of “Bolshevism” (see Clark, Worger: 2011 27).

In the first three decades of the 20th century the number of Africans who identified themselves as Afrikaners, and thus, with J.B.M Hertzog's policies he proclaimed in his newly founded National Party (NP), rose drastically. The NP stood in opposition to the Botha-Smuts South African Party (SAP) and strongly condemned their decision to take South Africa into World War I, supporting Britain and fighting against Germany. Hertzog and his proponents wanted to create their own Afrikaner identity and this meant firstly, an increase of the Afrikaans language and the augmented publication of books and magazines in Afrikaans. Secondly, the members of the NP claimed to have their own financial institutions and thus, founded the South African National Trust Company (SANTAM) and the South African National Life Assurance Company (SANLAM). This was done based on the conviction that Botha and Smuts only were interested in favoring the mining industry and thus, the British and not benefitting the lives of all white South

Africans equally. On the basis of this newly found mindset, adherents of the Dutch Reformed Church created an organization solely for Afrikaner called the Broederbond, the Brotherhood. This rather nationalist organization protected and celebrated the Afrikaner culture and within a few years they completely averted the British/English-speaking whites of South Africa (see Clark, Worger: 2011 27-30).

In the 1930s, Hertzog took up negotiations with Smuts and in 1933 a formal union between the NP and the SAP was formed, called United Party (UP), with Hertzog as its head and Smuts as the deputy. Many members of the Broederbond opposed Hertzog's decision to form a union with Smuts as they wanted South Africa to become a neutral state not depending on Britain and not being forced to war for them (see Clark, Worger: 2011 30). The entry into the First World War on the side of the British effected protests among Afrikaners, the entry into the Second World War alongside the British caused an even greater uproar in the Afrikaner population (see Welsh 3). Despite the newly founded union between two representatives of these two ethnic groups, the opposition between the Afrikaner and the English grew throughout the next years, especially during World War II. However, both groups had one thing in common: they were profoundly convinced that the white race is superior to the blacks, Coloureds and Indians. They were persuaded that the numerous ethnic and racial groups had to be clearly separated from one another on the basis of “race, language, wealth, politics, residence [and] jobs [etc.]” (Clark, Worger: 2011 33). The government's concern about the gap between the “advantaged and disadvantaged” grew as the conditions in the country destabilized considerably. Their answer to this issue was the control of all non-whites, thus, ruling over them and passing new laws which would substantially restrict their lives to an even greater degree than during the time of segregation. (see Clark, Worger: 2011 33).

2.3. The Era of Apartheid – from 1948 to 1994

Friday, May 28th, 1948 is one of the most crucial days of South African history, as it is the day the NP won their first of many elections in alliance with the AP under the motto of “apartheid”. D.F. Malan became the new Prime Minister and this party was in power for almost half a century, until 1994 the year South Africa had its first democratic elections, where people of every color and gender were allowed to vote. However, the understanding of the concept of apartheid in 1948 was very different to the apartheid of the 1960s and the exact meaning of this policy was not yet completely defined. But, on

September 2nd, 1948 Malan explained to the parliament what apartheid means, namely that

complete apartheid, or territorial apartheid was the ideal, its implementation at that stage was not feasible because many sectors of the South African economy were reliant upon black labour. Nevertheless, separate spheres, not necessarily with absolute territorial divisions, would be established. Within these spheres, each population group would be able to develop fully its own ambitions and unique capabilities. (Scher 329)

The government was of the opinion that the separation between whites and the others was crucial to maintaining their identity and safety. Before Malan and the NP were in power, many segregationist laws were enacted, but beginning in 1948, the “legislative discrimination was taken much further than before” (Worden 104). One of these new legislations was the *Population Registration Act* of 1950 which classified South Africa's population into four strict racial categories: White, Coloured, Indian/Asiatic and Native (later referred to as Bantu or African). This division of the people provided the basis for the discrimination of the era referred to as “high apartheid” of the 1960s (see Butler 17). More laws were passed restricting the lives of everyone classified as non-white, some of these laws are presented here:

- The Prohibition of *Mixed Marriages Act* of 1949, criminalizing the marriage between Whites and non-Whites and this was taken even further with the
- *Immorality Act* of 1950 which prohibited the sexual engaging between Whites and non-Whites.
- The *Group Areas Act* of 1950 created residential and business areas in the cities for the different races, barring other races from living, engaging in business or owning land there. The main goal of this Act was to divide the country into numerous areas where each race would live completely separated from one another. A famous example for this was the resettlement of 55,000 people from District Six in Cape Town to the Cape Flats.
- The *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act* of 1953 appointed the four previously determined races to different amenities such as toilets, buses, trains, beaches, parks, sporting facilities etc.
- Before 1953 black education was mostly conducted by mission schools, but the government feared that anti-government ideas would be given to the students and

thus endangering the white society. Therefore, the *Bantu Education Act* was enforced in 1953 which meant that there were different schools for whites and non-whites throughout the country. And the schools for blacks were controlled by the Department of Native Affairs under the direction of Dr H.F. Verwoerd. The *Bantu Education Act* rapidly devastated the quality of black education. This Act was extended to the University level in 1959 with the enforcement of

- the *Extension of University Education Act* which prohibited blacks from attending white universities or colleges and thus, educational institutions for Africans, Coloureds and Indians were established, but these were entirely controlled by the government.
- These two acts were instituted to restrict the non-Europeans to jobs that were more for them, as the white officials did not think that they were worth receiving the same high-class education. Thus, the nationalist government was of the opinion that this Bantu education is the right tool to “produce” productive workers for their economy (see Butler 17 & Clark, Worger: 2011 51-55). The following quote by Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, South Africa's prime minister from 1958 to 1966, taken from the official Bantu education policy, perfectly mirrors the society's mindset of that time in terms of blacks being different from whites:

By blindly producing pupils trained on a European model, the vain hope was created among Natives that they could occupy posts within the European community despite the country's policy of “apartheid” This is what is meant by the creation of unhealthy “White collar ideals” and the causation of widespread frustration among the so-called educated Natives. (Verwoerd 7)

The School must equip him [the Bantu student] to meet the demands which the economic life of South Africa will impose upon him. (Verwoerd 15)

The Bantu teacher must be integrated as an active agent in the process of the development of the Bantu community. He must learn not to feel above his community, with a consequent desire to become integrated into the life of the European community. He becomes frustrated and rebellious when this does not take place, and he tries to make his community dissatisfied because of such misdirected ambitions which are alien to his people. (Verwoerd 15)

My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu

society. [...] The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour [sic]. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. [original emphasis] (Verwoerd 23-24)

Verwoerd became Minister of Native Affairs and he never questioned the difference between whites and non-whites. He was convinced that total separation is the main goal of apartheid, as black and whites are not supposed to live together in the same communities. Verwoerd became South Africa's prime minister in 1958, a time when many African states would fight for gaining their sovereign independence as Ghana did in 1957. Thus, Verwoerd induced that instead of the prevalent white domination of the black's self-government in their areas they were given "the right [...] to self-determination and independence, while ensuring at the same time that there would be no risk of white people being dominated by other races in South Africa" (Scher 338-339). But, in 1959 Verwoerd introduced the *Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill* which divided the country into eight homelands in which the black were allowed to create their autonomous communities. As a consequence, many black people in urban areas had to "return" to their so-called homelands as their permanent residence in a white area was not acceptable. This also meant that the blacks were no longer represented in the parliament by whites as it had been in the past, but this also entailed that the interests of blacks were no longer discussed in the parliament at all, as he declared it as impossible for blacks to argue in the parliament. This should prevent the country from becoming a multi-ethnic state and the ultimate goal was to create a "white South Africa with separate black national units that would be politically independent but would be bound to white South Africa through economic co-operation" (Scher 339).

If one compares the Union of South Africa to the rest of the Western world after the Second World War, it becomes clear that rather than progressing politically and socially the country was regressing towards a largely nationalistic and entirely racist state. This was also noticed by Harold Macmillan, then Prime Minister of Great Britain. On February 3rd, 1960 he held his famous "wings of change" speech in Parliament in Cape Town, where he officially rejected and condemned apartheid and the course the government under Verwoerd pursued. Many Afrikaner were shocked by his reaction as he had clearly distanced South Africa from Great Britain. This was also the case for Verwoerd,

therefore, he decided to call for a referendum where it should be voted on whether or not the Union of South Africa should leave the British Commonwealth and become a republic. Many factors came in favor of Verwoerd:

- the people's displeasure with Macmillan's attitude and conviction towards apartheid and the development of South Africa's government
- Verwoerd was seen as a “pillar of strength” at a time of turmoil and chaos in some townships
- in April 1960, he was assassinated in Johannesburg; he survived the assassination attempt and saw it “as miraculous, and as a sign from God” (Ross 127)
- he used the outbreak of violence in the Congo as propaganda claiming that South Africa has to adopt a different political course in order to prevent the country from descending into a similar state of chaos. (see Scher 340-342)

Within eight months the referendum was held, where the narrow majority was in favor of Verwoerd's proposal, the announcement of South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth at the Commonwealth conference was made and the Republic of South Africa was proclaimed on May 31st, 1961.

During the time of Verwoerd's reign South Africa's economy boomed and the support for him and the NP grew as they were regarded the answer for the fight against black nationalism and at the South African general elections in 1966 won the obvious majority. This was also the period when things for coloured people and Indians slightly improved. Verwoerd refused to let them join the Parliament, but he granted them the right to self-government in their own restricted areas they were assigned to. He clearly pronounced against the equal treatment with the whites. Moreover, the Indians who did not take the offer of repatriation to India were given permanent citizenship and furthermore, a Department of Indian Affairs was instituted. Nonetheless, this did not give them equal rights as the whites, as they were still restricted by many apartheid laws (see Scher 345-346).

In September 1966, Verwoerd was stabbed to death in the Parliament in Cape Town and, as a consequence, he was replaced as Prime Minister by B.J. Vorster. At the beginning of his first term of office, his major goal was the execution of the homeland policies on the

basis of the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act (1970)/the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act (1971). This meant that every black society would, in the course of some years, become an independent state in its allocated territory. Each society would have its own government, administration and amenities. This would result in every black person gaining his/her citizenship in the respective territory and consequently, losing his/her South African citizenship and his/her right to permanent residence in an area reserved for whites. Unfortunately, there was great turmoil in the NP as Albert Hertzog and others left the NP to form their own party – the Reconstituted National Party (Herstigte Nasionale Party – HNP), which brought these discussions to a temporary halt. Nonetheless, Vorster gained great political power during his second term as he negotiated with many Western European countries, the US and African states. He established a remarkable infrastructure all causing the economy to grow and the political power of the NP to increase and causing UP's position to crumble (see du Pisani 349-355). Furthermore, Vorster limited the rights of the Coloured as he dismissed the Cape Provincial Council and the Coloured Advisory Council. Both being the only kind of indirect representation Coloureds had in the parliament. This caused an uproar in protests by the Coloured youth and at the University of the Western Cape in 1972 and 1973. As their radicalness increased drastically they approached the Black Consciousness Movement. Vorster continuously held fast onto the old apartheid system which brought him much criticism from the rest of the world pressuring him into abandoning this repressive system (see du Pisani 357-359).

Vorster's successor was the very determined, relentless, impulsive and strong Pieter Williem Botha. In the beginning it seemed as if things were about to change in South Africa. Botha's words let the blacks begin to hope for a brighter future, as he referred to them as “fellow South Africans” (see Giliomee, *“Adapt or die”* 397) and he declared himself against “offending or belittling coloured or black people on the basis of their colour [sic]” (Giliomee, *“Adapt or die”* 398). Nonetheless, he did not want to retract the Population Registration and the Group Act which formed the basis of apartheid. He proclaimed that South Africa had a “minority problem” rather than a “race problem”. He would not rescind the Group Act as every minority was supposed to have its right to have their own section with its own government or authority. Moreover, he was also willing to have Coloureds and Indians in the government, he simply accepted them where they would not be able to interfere with the whites' power. One of the apartheid laws was that the skilled work had to be reserved for whites only and this resulted in a shortage of

workers altogether, as there were not enough skilled white workers in the country who could fill every vacancy. In the 1970s, this resulted in the dependence on the skills of black and coloured workers in “the mines, factories, shops and in the public service” (see Giliomee, *“Adapt or die”* 400). Starting in 1973, blacks were allowed to be employed as skilled workers which encouraged them to demand being treated as full citizens of South Africa and thus, being entitled to vote. Only six years later blacks had the right to officially form trade unions, resulting in the representation of their interests in the negotiations about better salary. Even though they had workers' rights they still did not have any political rights whatsoever. Furthermore, the system for black education changed for the better in the 1970s, resulting in a great number of educated black children and adolescents who, even though they were educated, could not get a fixed employment. This caused the Soweto uprisings of 1976, where the participating majority were school children and unemployed adolescents (see Giliomee, *“Adapt or die”* 400-401).

As mentioned earlier, South Africa's economy boomed during the early years of apartheid and especially while Vorster was Prime Minister. Then the apartheid system did not have a negative effect on the country's economy, this changed drastically in the 1960s when the country's economy dropped mostly due to reasons the apartheid regime had created. The major problem was that due to the economic growth the number of skilled jobs increased, but the government ordered to give these employments only to skilled white people. Besides the fact that this, of course, was based on a racist ideology, this act created a problem, as there were not enough skilled white people to fill the number of the increasing job positions. In 1973, the economic growth started to slow down and it fell from 4.5% between 1948 and 1976 to 1.65% between 1976 and 1994. This had a devastating impact on the rate of unemployment, as the population grew annually by 3%. Additionally, the salary gaps between whites and blacks and whites and coloureds were reduced. This had as a consequence that the employers did not employ as many workers anymore but demanded much more work from them and they also started to mechanize the factories. So, in order to balance the budget, the government had to allow people from other racial groups to receive semi-skilled and skilled labor, to withdraw their support for farmers, to reduce the difference between white and black salaries and pensions (see Giliomee, *“Adapt or die”* 400-404). This integration of the other races and Botha's planned constitutional reform caused unrest in some members of the NP. The parliament wanted to integrate Coloureds and Indians and create a parliament with three chambers.

On February 24th, 1982 Dr. Andreas Treurnicht, who was the leader of the conservative wing of the NP, and 21 other members formed the Conservative Party (CP). This signified the end of the highly valued Afrikaner unity (see Giliomee, *"Adapt or die"* 405-406). The tricameral parliament was instated in September of 1984, consisting of a white, a Coloured and an Indian Chamber, each chamber having its separate cabinet and budget. Most importantly, "the majority party in the white chamber could not be voted out (and thus lose power) because the opposition parties in the white house could not team up with parties in the coloured and Indian houses" (Giliomee, *"Adapt or die"* 406). The black population regarded this new parliament again as an exclusion from politics and "as a rejection of their demand for full citizenship" (Giliomee, *"Adapt or die"* 407).

After the tricameral parliament was instated the uproar against the government intensified at the end of 1984 and the beginning of 1985. In many townships a small-scale civil war broke out between the residents against the black political leaders of the townships. The number of boycotts, protests, strikes, protest marches, which were mainly supported by the youth and students, stayaways grew and many black residents in urban areas refused to pay any service charges or their rent. The local protests often resulted in great violence. This was also the time when a multitude of black policemen were victims of killings, as they were accused of collaboration and espionage for the whites. The chief purpose of the protests and riots was to bring the local governments in the townships to a complete collapse. Also Oliver Tambo, ANC's leader, called upon ANC's followers to "make South Africa ungovernable" (Giliomee, *Uprising, war and transition* 412-413). During that time Botha held his, beforehand auspiciously sounding, Rubicon speech. Nationally and internationally one expected him to turn away from apartheid, but expectations were destroyed. All in all he claimed that "without white South African and their influence the country would decline into strife, chaos and poverty" (Giliomee, *Uprising, war and transition* 413) and he strongly condemned Mandela and other opponents. Consequently, international sanctions were imposed on the country, investments were retracted and international banks refused to grant new loan applications. The government was forced to change their policies as too many international investors withdrew from South Africa, thus they abolished some apartheid laws: blacks from the six homelands that did not want to become independent were given the South African citizenship, this meant political representation and thus, a political voice, moreover, urban blacks were allowed to live in white towns and cities, the Mixed Marriages Act was abolished, as well as sexual relations

between whites and blacks were allowed, the pass law was repealed, blacks were allowed to use all public facilities etc. Nonetheless, the government did not want to eradicate the Population Registration Act (see Giliomee, *Uprising, war and transition* 414-415).

Starting in 1988, Botha allowed his most valued officials to take up talks with Nelson Mandela, who then was still in prison. Mandela demanded the following:

A system would have to be created which would ensure that white dominance was not replaced by black dominance. The aim with the armed struggle [...] was not to overthrow the state but to force white people to give a hearing to the justifiable demands of black South Africans. (Giliomee, *Uprising, war and transition* 420)

After suffering a stroke in January 1989, Botha resigned as president and on August 14th, 1989 F.W. de Klerk was the newly elected state president. In 1990, it was him who argued his cabinet into lifting the ban on the ANC, PAC and similar movements, releasing political prisoners (including Mandela on February 11th, 1990) and beginning negotiations with more political parties about a new constitution. In 1991, the ANC announced the end of their armed struggle and this was the year when negotiations started through the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) with the goal to build a multiracial government. Just a year later, de Klerk and Mandela agreed to hold the first non-racial, free, national election in 1994. Then on April 27th and 28th, 1994 every African citizen was allowed to take part in the country's first free elections. The ANC won these elections by far:

ANC	62.7% (94% of these votes came from black people)
NP	20.4%
IFP	10.5%
Viljoen's Vryheidsfront	2.2%
DP	1.7%
PAC	1.2%

Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's new president on May 10th, 1994 and he made de Klerk one of his two deputy presidents and together they united South Africa forming the "New South Africa" (see Giliomee, *Uprising, war and transition* 420-433 & Clark, Worger: 2011 xvi-xvii).

2.4. Black Resistance Against Apartheid

There had been a movement among black Africans against the discriminatory and racist government even before 1948 but after all, the ANC became the leading resistance movement against the oppression in South Africa. In 1952, the ANC issued an ultimatum to the government requesting the abolition of, among others, the *Group Areas Act*, the *Bantu Authorities Act*, the *Separate Representation of Voters Act* and the *Suppression of Communism Act*. The government dismissed their appeal adding that anybody opposing them and their laws will be prosecuted. Nevertheless, African nationalists launched the so-called Defiance Campaign which fought against the racist laws of the country. Furthermore, in June 1955 representatives for the Africans – ANC, the whites – Congress of Democrats, the Indians – SAIC and the Coloured – the Coloured People's Congress and the multiracial South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) met and drafted a new constitution. They called it the Freedom Charter, which determined that South Africa is in fact a multiracial country belonging to every ethnic group and not just to the whites. Only a year later 156 leaders of the ANC and other organizations were arrested and accused of high treason. Amongst the arrested activists were ANC's president Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Z.K. Matthews, Walter Sisulu, Len Lee-Warden and others. This trial, the Treason Trial, was dragged on for five years. It kept most leaders of opposition groups from participating or organizing, however, in the end all accused were found not guilty. The black resistance continued to grow throughout the country, forcing the government to issue the *Riotous Assemblies Act* in 1956. Due to this law, people were banned from gathering in public places and furthermore, “banned” people were not allowed to participate or approach in public meetings (see Scher 343-344 & Clark, Worger 59-61).

In 1959, a team of members from the ANC broke away and formed their own group, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) with Robert Sobukwe as their president. In contrast to the ANC they did not want to accept a multi-ethnic Africa, thus they did not want to collaborate with communists or whites (see Frankental, Sichone in: Barkan 161). As the PAC felt that the ANC was not involved enough in fighting against the government, they took things to a new level. They greatly opposed the pass laws and thus, on March 21st, 1960 PAC supporters were asked to leave their passes at home and to go to the closest police station, offering themselves to be arrested there. In the township Sharpeville things

got out of hand and 69 people were shot by the police and almost two hundred were injured. On April 8th of the same year the PAC and the ANC were declared as unlawful by the government and this resulted in the development of underground meetings of these two resistance groups, where military actions, in order to reach equality, were discussed. The military group of the PAC was called Poqo and ANC's group, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), was led by Mandela who was “committed to a programme [sic] of sabotaging installations without loss of life” (Scher 345). The secret underground meetings of the MK were held just north of Johannesburg, on the Lilliesleaf smallholding in Rivonia. In 1963, the police raided the estate and many of ANC's leaders were arrested and charged with the following felonies:

1. recruiting persons for training in the preparation and use of explosives and in guerrilla warfare for the purpose of violent revolution and committing acts of sabotage
2. conspiring to commit the aforementioned acts and to aid foreign military units when they invaded the Republic
3. acting in these ways to further the objects of communism
4. soliciting and receiving money for these purposes from sympathisers [sic] in Algeria, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Tunis, and elsewhere

Mandela, Sisuslu, Mbeki, Motsoaledi, Mlangeni, Mhlaba and Goldberg were found guilty in all four charges (see *South African History Online*. “Rivonia trial sentence is delivered” & “Rivonia Trial 1963-1964”). During the trial, Mandela's address to the court became famous as he, again, explained that he would give his life for the establishment of equal rights for all:

During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Mandela 48)

Through the conviction and imprisonment of nearly all anti-apartheid activists, or them living in exile and also, the banning of the ANC and PAC, the white government could enjoy a period of less resistance. Also, this was a time of economic wealth, which meant

that the white class enjoyed a life in prosperity while the majority of blacks faced immense poverty and suppression (see Scher 346-347).

Both, the national as well as the international resistance against apartheid grew and in the 1970s a new political philosophy for black awareness emerged, called the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). Its key figure was the medical student Steve Biko who saw it as his duty to convince the black population that they have to free themselves from the thought of inferiority to the whites. Besides the fact that he and the ANC and PAC wanted the same, he strongly disagreed and distanced himself from their approach, as he solely believed in non-violent methods to reach equality. After organizing strikes, Biko was put under house arrest where he was tortured and died in September 1977. Moreover, the ANC and PAC received international support by the World Council of Churches, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the World Peace Council and the United Nations (UN) which installed a Special Committee Against Apartheid that regularly criticized South Africa's government. Furthermore, the ANC set up numerous military training camps for their guerrilla groups in different African countries, such as Mozambique, Zambia and Angola. On June 16th, 1976 a violent student uprising broke out in the township Soweto. The students peacefully protested in marches against the Bantu Education Acts in general and specifically the new law that stated that Afrikaans had to be used as second compulsory language for instructions, next to English, in schools. Thousands of black students joined this protest march and the police opened fire on them killing 176 students, as well as killing hundreds more in the weeks to follow and wounding thousands. This caused an uproar throughout the country and Vorster ordered the police to use force to put a stop to these unrests, causing the death of many. Moreover, he prohibited meetings in the townships, the black consciousness organizations and the newspaper *The World*, which readers were mainly black (see Grobler 374-391 & *South African History Online*. "The June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising").

Thousands of people joined the ANC after these riots and the ANC continued to organize guerrilla attacks against the regime via strategic attacks, as the ones in Pretoria and Johannesburg where explosives were planted, but these killed innocent civilians. It has been estimated that around 1,200 of these guerrilla attacks took place from 1976 to 1989. Moreover, in 1983 the United Democratic Front (UDF) was founded and during the mid 1980s this organization was intent on making the country ungovernable. They were

responsible for convincing millions of black, Coloured and Indian South Africans to participate in nationwide boycotts, stayaways and protests which eventually forced the government to declare a nationwide state of emergency. Furthermore, school boycotts were held on a regular basis all over South Africa by 1985, which were organized by a front organization of the UDF, the COSAS (Congress of South African Students). These were held under the motto “No education before liberation”. And numerous university libraries and administrative buildings were burnt down in order to protest the preclusion of blacks from white educational institutions. The reason why the protests increasingly multiplied in the mid 1980s was the concurrence of numerous factors: the installment of the new tricameral parliament, the Bantu education, the considerable increase in rent by government councils that were broadly considered to be corrupt and the deteriorating state of the economy. The protests and the struggle against the white minority government continued throughout the 1980s on a regular basis. What distinguished the protests in the 1980s from the ones before, were the wide-reaching scope of these protests, as they reached thousands of people throughout South Africa and the world, the increase in armed struggle and the militancy, as well as the mass politicization and mobilization of the oppressed. As resistance reached its peak in 1990 with millions of people participating in the protests, it became quite clear that the government will not be able to continue their discriminating policies any longer (see Grobler 392-395 & Welsh 275-278 & *South African History Online*. “The Liberation Struggle in South Africa”).

3. Nadine Gordimer – “Six Feet of the Country”

After the great success of Gordimer's first short story collection “The Soft Voice of the Serpent”, she published her second one in 1956 called “Six Feet of the Country”. It contains seven short stories altogether: “Six Feet of the Country”, “Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants”, “A Chip of Glass Ruby”, “City Lovers”, “Country Lovers”, “Not for Publication” and “Oral History”. All these short stories, as the ones previously issued, deal with the themes of race differences, people's reactions and behavior towards these differences and the deceptions and illusions people apply to avoid dealing with the too unpleasant aspects of reality and the human conditions. Compared to her first short stories, the theme of the ones comprised in the second collection changed, as “The Soft Voice of the Serpent” mainly deals with external racial barriers that prevent human interaction. This obstruction is accepted by the characters in the stories as this is the way things are in South Africa during this time. This differentiates the first and the second collection as in “Six Feet of the Country” Gordimer lets her racially different characters interact with one another. Nevertheless, the very present barrier of her first stories has not vanished, it developed more into a psychological barrier, mostly within the minds of the whites. Gordimer centralizes the impacts apartheid has on the blacks' lives and “[she] writes with intense immediacy about the extremely complicated personal and social relationships in her environment” (Kumar, 2013). In this chapter the first short story in Gordimer's eponymous short story collection “Six Feet of the Country” is going to be analyzed.

3.1. Author's Biography

In 1923 Nadine Gordimer was born in the small mining town Springs, which is located close to Johannesburg, into a family of immigrants. She was born in a time of social discrimination and her family experienced this discrimination themselves as the recent immigrants to South Africa were naturally subordinate to the early English, Dutch, German and French colonists. Thus, she and her family were on a lower level of the social hierarchy, nevertheless, still being superior to the black Africans who worked in the gold mines in Springs who found themselves on the lowest existing social level. Gordimer came after her mother who did not want to accept the social injustice of South Africa's political system, and thus founded a daycare center for black African children. Her mother withdrew her from school due to a, maybe imagined, weak heart condition of her daughter

and from then on she was educated at home. The young Gordimer who longed for friends and social interaction found a new world in the midst of the world of literature. After writing various children's short stories and even publishing her first one called *Come Again Tomorrow*, she released her first short story for adult readers in 1939 in the local Johannesburg newspaper *Forum*. She started her study of English language and literature at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, then her writing activity increased. Nevertheless, she did not graduate but settled down in Johannesburg in 1948, the year the NP won the national election and started proclaiming the policy of apartheid ("Nadine Gordimer". *Academy of Achievement*).

Only a year later her first short story collection *Face to Face* was published and soon thereafter two more followed, *Town and Country Lovers* and *The Soft Voice of the Serpent*. She became known outside of South Africa and beginning in 1951, her stories were published in *The New Yorker* magazine. Shortly after, her first novel *The Lying Days* appeared which tells the story of the twenty-four year old Helen Shaw, a white Protestant middle-class girl brought up in a mining town near Johannesburg. Throughout her life Gordimer refused to write an autobiography, but *The Lying Days* is considered as the most autobiographical work of her, as it includes so many details of her own life. It is a first-person narration by the twenty-four-year-old Helen Shaw, a white conventional middle-class Protestant girl who lives in a mining suburb near Johannesburg (Stern "The Lying Days" *The New York Times* & "Nadine Gordimer: South African author" *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

In South Africa the 1960s were marked by an upheaval of oppression against black Africans and against their supporters and critics of the regime. When Gordimer was a student at Witwatersrand she became friends with Bettie du Toit and after her arrest and the Sharpeville Massacre of black protester her opposition to the South African regime strengthened. She continued to pillory the apartheid regime in her works and received numerous prizes for her literary masterpieces. She became a member of the forbidden ANC and was very open about it and in 1976, her novel *The Late Bourgeois World* was banned by the South African government, this should not be the last time one of her novels was banned. This occurred again, only three years later, although the ban on this novel called *Burger's Daughter* was repealed. She continued to write about the injustice of apartheid and in 1990 South African history changed for the better. After his release,

Gordimer was one of the first apartheid-opponents Nelson Mandela asked to see. After the apartheid regime was over Gordimer continued her work and focused on the difficulties the South African society had to face and overcome in the post-apartheid era (“Nadine Gordimer”. *Academy of Achievement*).

Throughout her life she published fifteen novels, one play, sixteen short story volumes and various other essays and she received numerous awards during her life. Amongst others, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *A Guest of Honour* in 1971, the Booker Prize for Fiction for *The Conversationist* in 1974, but 1991 formed the highlight of her life when she was given the Nobel Prize for Literature. She was the first South African ever to receive this prize and the first woman in twenty-five years. *No Time Like the Present*, which is her fifteenth and final novel, appeared in 2013 and Nadine Gordimer passed away only a year later, in 2014 at the age of 90 (“Nadine Gordimer” *South African History Online* & Holcombe “Nadine Gordimer” *British Council*).

3.2. Plot Summary

“Six Feet of the Country” tells the story of Lerice and her husband, whose name we do not find out in the course of the short story, two white middle-class South Africans, who live on a farm with numerous black South African workers and their families. It was Lerice's wish to buy the farm in order to rejuvenate their marriage, although this wish is not fulfilled as one quickly realizes while reading the story. Their relationship is in a very bad state and their love has almost completely vanished. The husband and protagonist of the short story is a partner in a travel agency, who does not help his wife on the farm, but they have several workers working for them. One night Albert, one of the workers, comes to see them and tells them that one of the boys is sick and that they need their help immediately. When the protagonist goes to see after him, he finds the boy already dead, lying in one of the beds in the huts where the workers live. As it turns out the boy is not one of their helpers, but the brother of Petrus, one of the workers. Petrus's brother was an illegal immigrant who walked from Rhodesia to Johannesburg in order to find work and to improve his life. The narrator tells Petrus that his brother has to be taken to the authorities who will determine the cause of his death. The officials diagnosed his death as a result of pneumonia and they buried the body without notifying either the protagonist or Petrus, or receiving permission to do so. Petrus naturally demands his brother's body in order to arrange a traditional funeral for him. The protagonist struggles with the

authorities to get the body back and he is told that it would cost twenty pounds to do this. With the help of the other workers Petrus somehow acquires the money for the exhumation and shortly thereafter the body is returned. Petrus's father made his way to them from Rhodesia to the farm to participate at the funeral and on a Saturday afternoon all arrangements have been made to bury the body. When Petrus, his father and two other men are carrying the casket to its grave the old man suddenly stops as he feels that the casket is too heavy for having his boy in there. The workers forcefully open the coffin and in it there does not lie Petrus's brother, but someone else's body whom nobody has seen before. The protagonist tries to talk to the authorities to get the body back, but they just keep on making empty promises, claiming that they are trying to sort things out and to find the right person. After days of arguing and negotiating the protagonist is notified that the body cannot be found anymore. When he tells Petrus about this he has the courage to ask if it were possible to get the money back and Lerice and her husband try, but in the end the officials tell them that they cannot help them anymore and that they will not get the twenty pounds back. After the husband takes the news to Petrus and his father, the old man returns to Rhodesia, but before he leaves Lerice gives him one of her late father's old suits so that he does not return home completely empty-handed.

Before engaging in the analysis of the various characters and the critical assessment of the short story, one needs to determine the local and temporal framework of this piece.

3.3. Setting and Background

When analyzing a short story, naturally, the place where the story is taking place becomes relevant. In Gordimer's "Six Feet of the Country" the action of the narrative is set in two places, the city of Johannesburg, where the narrator works and where he has to concern himself with South Africa's bureaucracy, and the farm they are living on. The reader does not find out the exact location of their smallholding, the only indication of position is made at the very beginning of the story when the narrator lets the reader know that it is "ten miles out of Johannesburg on one of the main roads" (Gordimer 25). Moreover, the reader also finds out the African name for Johannesburg, which is "*Egoli*" and means the "City of Gold" [original emphasis] (Gordimer 34). These are the only two places where the protagonist, his wife and the workers stay throughout the short story. Furthermore, another place becomes of importance, namely Rhodesia. This is the home of the worker Petrus, his brother and his father. Petrus obviously left the former British colony to start

his life in Johannesburg and this is what his brother was determined to do as well. Their father made his way from Rhodesia to their smallholding close to Johannesburg to bury his son and to return home afterwards.

Apart from the importance of the place, the time in which the story takes place is equally essential and needs to be analyzed. Unfortunately, one does not find out the exact time when the story is set, but Gordimer provides some subtle hints, so that one can narrow down the time frame. When the narrator talks about their relationship to the blacks he claims that they treat them very well and they give them a lot of freedom, as they are allowed to “brew their sour beer without the fear of police raids” (Gordimer 30). This is a clear indication that the story has to be set after 1928 when the Liquor Act was imposed which prohibited blacks from consuming alcohol (Chanock 84). The whites implemented this as they argued that alcohol impairs the black workers’ productivity, enhances their “savagery [as it was only] intermittently suppressed when sober[, and alcohol released criminal violence from blacks” (Chanock 84). The narrator makes another indication of time when he recalls that he “had not seen a dead man since the war” (Gordimer 32), and here one can assume that he is talking about the South African War which lasted from 1899-1902. Moreover, the story takes place after South Africa became the Union of South Africa and before it became a republic, thus it has to be set, between 1910 and 1961. One does not find out the exact time when the story is set, but this short story collection was published in 1956, thus one can assume that the story is set around that time. This means that we are already dealing with a story set during the time of apartheid, which of course determines the message of the short story.

3.4. Characters and Characterization

Being familiar with the temporal and local framework of Gordimer's literary piece, one has to have a closer look at the different characters, who, according to Abbot (2005 123) are the second principal components of a story, and who form the basis for the interpretation of this story. Gordimer created numerous persons who are somehow diverse, but also stuck in the roles the society accredited them with. Forster (1974 48) distinguishes between so-called round and flat characters, whereas round characters are more complex than flat ones, as they can “be [easily] summed up in a single sentence”. Hence, one can suggest that in “Six Feet of the Country” Gordimer created four round characters – the main protagonist/the husband, Lerice, Petrus and also Petrus's brother –

and four flat characters – Franz, Albert, Petrus's father, the white authorities represented by the police sergeant. What is significant about Gordimer's writing style is that even though this is a short story she creates such vivid characters and through her style the reader can see into the characters' minds (Schatterman 131). Moreover, in 1977, Toni Morrison⁶ perfectly summarizes Gordimer's style, as he claims: "Nadine Gordimer [...] write[s] about black people in a way that few white men have ever been able to write. It's not patronizing, not romanticizing – it's the way they should be written about" (Watkins 47). What is significant here is, most notably, the year this quote is from, as in 1977 the Apartheid regime had been particularly successful. Nonetheless, Gordimer, as many other South African authors as well, was not intimidated by the government and she wrote stories about the injustice brought to the blacks by her own people.

3.4.1. The Narrator / The Husband / The Protagonist

The first round character of this short story is the main protagonist who is also the first person narrator. Throughout the short story the reader never learns the name of the protagonist, his wife Lerice does not refer to him directly via calling his name and the black workers of their farm simply call him "baas" (Gordimer 32), which was the respectful form of address of white men black Africans had to use back then. He is a partner in a travel agency and neither does he support his wife on their smallholding, nor is he interested in doing any manual labor at all. He does not want to concern himself with the farm and the work his wife does there. Nonetheless, he enjoys living there and he appreciates the beauty of the land and the nature and he values it more than the artificial nature of the gardens and backyards of the suburbs where they used to live:

The farm is beautiful in a way I had almost forgotten – especially on a Sunday morning when I get up and go out into the paddock and see not the palm trees and fishpond and imitation-stone bird bath of the suburbs but white ducks on the dam, the lucerne field brilliant as window-dresser's grass, and the little, stocky, mean-eyed bull, lustful but bored (Gordimer 28).

Besides liking the rough landscape more than the artificiality of the suburbs, he also feels superior to the other white people who live in these suburban areas of Johannesburg. Nevertheless, he is not thankful to Lerice, whose wish it was to buy a farm, for changing

⁶ Toni Morrison is a bestselling American author mostly known for the works "The Bluest Eye", "Beloved" and "Song of Solomon". For the novel "Beloved", she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and in 1993; she was the first African-American woman to ever receive the Nobel Prize for Literature ("Toni Morrison Biography" *The Biography.com Website*).

his life. He does not appreciate the work she is doing on the farm and he does not admit to himself that it is only because of his wife that he could escape that artificiality of the suburbs and live a life in liaison with nature. Moreover, the narrator feels superior to Lerice as in his opinion, it is only due to his success in the travel agency that they can afford to live on the farm and that it is only due to his money that they can enjoy this extravagancy: "I am a partner in a travel agency which is flourishing – needs to be, as I tell Lerice, in order to carry the farm" (Gordimer 28). He does not realize that his life improved due to Lerice, instead of being appreciative, he criticizes her because of how her appearance has changed since she has started working on the farm. Throughout the short story he criticizes how her looks and her feminine features have suffered. The protagonist is very considerate of the looks of his wife towards himself, and maybe also towards their black workers. For him it is more important that Lerice looks pretty and clean than her taking care of the animals on the farm. He despises the fact that she is not looking after herself as much anymore and that she is not as feminine as she once was, "I had come home and been infuriated to find her in a pair of filthy old slacks and with her hair uncombed since the night before" (Gordimer 41). Her hands changed and although she was not the most feminine woman, who would wear jewelry or manicure her nails before either, he claims that now her hands "are hard as a dog's pads" (Gordimer 28) and not as soft as they once were. It is irrelevant to him that Lerice is happier and more satisfied with the work she does on the farm than in her previous occupation as an actress. It seems as if he does not take a lot of interest in the happiness of her and he therefore seems very superficial, self-absorbed and egocentric. He concerns himself more with his wife's appearance than she does and sometimes he is ashamed of her looks. "She is the kind of woman who doesn't mind if she looks plain, or odd" (Gordimer 34), this statement emphasizes this because Lerice obviously does not care so much about how she looks and how others see her, but he does. So again, he seems to be a very superficial person.

It seems as if he has given up on their marriage and as if he does not even want to try to put any effort in improving their relationship anymore, he often deserts their marital bed to sleep somewhere else in the house, and it appears as if the fact that he does not want to share a bed with his wife is quite normal to him. He simply feels foolish the next morning at breakfast because he knows that his wife is disappointed and hurt, nonetheless, he does not refrain from occasionally sleeping in a different bed, "how is it I always feel a fool

when I have deserted her bed? After all, I know [...] that she is hurt and humiliated at my not wanting her” (Gordimer 31).

The protagonist feels that he and his wife are better people than the rest of the white population in Johannesburg because of how they treat their black workers on the farm and he “[...] [prides himself] that the poor devils have nothing much to fear [when living with them]” (Gordimer 30). In the city people sleep with “guns under the [...] pillows and [...] [they live with] burglar bars on the [...] windows” (Gordimer 30) to protect themselves from the black Africans, but he and his wife trust their workers enough that they do not have to implement the same measures. They “have no burglar bars [and] no guns” (Gordimer 30), they are kind enough to allow their workers to live with their families on their farm and, if need be, Lerice even looks after their children. He thinks that he is a good person because in his mind he treats the blacks with more respect and more humanely than the whites of the city do. He, in fact, considers himself a better person than most of the white people that lived during that time and, especially, than the white authorities he has to deal with later on in the short story. Nevertheless, this does not mean that he fully respects the black population, this simply implies that he is better than most other white South Africans. Throughout the short story he makes comments to his wife, sometimes in presence of one of their workers, or thinks to himself very disrespectful things about the blacks. It appears as if, mostly, he does not even realize how discourteous or racist these comments are, but often finds them rather amusing. As mentioned above, in his mind their workers live great lives on their farm, they have everything they need and he thinks that the blacks trust them and that they also feel as if they can come to them with any problems. The protagonist is very surprised and somehow disappointed when they realize that the workers do not feel the same way. The blacks do not come to them when they need help because they think they cannot trust the whites and the couple's realization that their workers have a different opinion about them than they initially thought is very hurtful and disappointing to both of them.

It has been established that the protagonist has a feeling of superiority towards white South Africans who are condemned to live in either the suburban areas of Johannesburg or in the city itself, but he also feels superior to the black South Africans who work for them. After he had talked to the authorities and they discussed how to proceed he had to explain to Petrus that the body of his dead brother had to be taken away to conduct an

autopsy, “I had to explain to Petrus why the health authorities had to take away the body for a post-mortem – *and, in fact*, what a post-mortem was” [emphasis added] (Gordimer 36). Those three words “and, in fact” obviously show the reader that he is feeling superior to Petrus because he is more knowledgeable than him, he has a better education and he knows medical terms which Petrus has never heard before. He prides himself with being able to explain what a “post-mortem” is. Furthermore, when he elucidates what his brother has died of, he does not use the medical term pneumonia, but he simply says “his brother died from that pain in his chest”. The protagonist does not even try to use the correct term because he assumes that Petrus would not understand it or know the disease anyway. These conversations between the narrator and the blacks remind one of conversations between an adult and a child. Moreover, the protagonist feels particularly superior when it comes to handling money. He, as a white person on the one hand, who is used to possessing money and dealing with financial matters, knows very well how it is supposed to be handled, but then Petrus on the other hand does not. When Petrus gives his employer the required twenty pounds for the authorities, he thinks to himself “[t]hey’re so seldom on the giving rather than the receiving side, poor devils, they don’t really know how to hand money to a white man” (Gordimer 39).

Moreover, the protagonist is very unsympathetic towards Petrus, whose only wish it is to bury his brother himself and to pay his respects to him with a traditional funeral. When Petrus appeals to his employer and asks him to go back to the authorities to ask for his brother's body, the protagonist seems astonished at this request. He is very upset about Petrus's incomprehensibility that it is not possible to exhume the body from one of the pauper's graves he was probably buried in, even though he is not even certain of this. So, before talking to the authorities about this matter, he tries to convince Petrus that he does not even have to ask them because they will not be able to get the body back. The protagonist does not understand why Petrus does not let the matter rest and simply accept that nothing can be done, he is annoyed by all the work and effort he has to take on to sort this out. After he had found out that it is feasible to get the body back and after he learns how much it would cost to conduct this, namely twenty pounds, he is satisfied and happy, because he thinks that because the cost is so high, Petrus will not be able to proceed with this matter. In his eyes the spending of so much money, is an unnecessary extravagance that the blacks, who obviously all supported Petrus in raising the money, cannot afford. He does not find it extraordinary that they helped each other to raise enough money, he

is simply astonished by “the uselessness of this sacrifice” (Gordimer 40). The protagonist is generally very indolent and work-shy. He does not want to take on any more work than he has to, concerning, on the one hand, the support of his wife on the farm, but, on the other hand, also the managing of the authorities. With great effort of persuasion he tries to convince Petrus that it does not make sense to even try to talk to the authorities as they will not return the body. When Petrus does not give in and, moreover his wife urges him to deal with the situation, he is annoyed by every phone call and every conversation he has to have in order to sort out the problem. Again, the reader is confronted with his unwillingness to help, when Petrus, his father and two other men from the farm carry the casket to its grave and he can hear “the old man's breathing” (Gordimer 43) which is clearly a sign of his exhaustion and struggle with the weight. He he is not willing to support Petrus's father and to take over for him, he just stands awkwardly by the fence, looks at the funeral cortege and does not even pretend to make an effort.

It has already been established that the narrator thinks of himself to be very open minded, accepting and friendly towards the black Africans on the homestead, but as the reader can, on the one hand, read what he says to them and his wife and, on the other hand, gets insight into his thoughts, it becomes quite clear that he is not aware of his racist and often degrading comments towards the Africans. He compares the people who joined the cortege with the two donkeys who pulled the cart with the coffin from the city to the farm. The narrator does not think that it is an inappropriate comparison and he does not even think about the fact that he compared human beings to animals. Through this comparison he takes up the very common stereotype that black people have animalistic features. He again makes the same comparison when he sees the old man sitting on the ground catching his breath and unable to speak. He observes that “he was no good any more” (Gordimer 45) and this can again be seen as a comparison with working animals. One cannot make use of the old man anymore because he cannot fulfill his duty and work due to his old age and lack of strength. This is how farmers usually talk about their animals and they put them down when the time has come and they cannot make use of them anymore. The reader is again confronted with his irreverence when he complains to Lerice about all the work the mistaken identity of the body has caused him. One day he comes back and while Petrus is still in the kitchen and can obviously hear him he says “God, half the time I should be in the office I'm driving around the back end of town chasing after this affair” (Gordimer 46). This comment was directed at Lerice, but of course Petrus heard it as well,

as he was still standing next to him in the kitchen. The narrator does not even realize that he said something incredibly discourteous and hurting as he is simply surprised by the look both, Lerice and Petrus, have on their faces. They look at him in disbelief at what he said and also at the fact that he rather puts his occupation over sorting out this matter.

After the reader is confronted with all the negativity surrounding this character one is quite surprised at how he handles the situation after it has been discovered that the wrong body has been given to them. Besides the fact that the reader does not find out how the narrator feels about this at all, because only the reaction of the black workers is described, he puts a lot of work and effort and time into sorting out this issue. Compared to before, when Petrus had to convince and beg him that he would be so kind and try to talk to the authorities into giving them back the body, this time the reader is taken directly into the matter of him taking the initiative and trying to sort out the mistake. He dealt with them for about a week and this is astonishing for the wife as well, as it seems that she did not expect her husband to concern himself with this matter with such great devotion. One night Lerice even asks her husband why, all of a sudden, he is so indignant about this matter and he simply states that “[i]t's a matter of principle. Why should they get away with a swindle? It's time these officials had a jolt from someone who'll bother to take the trouble” (Gordimer 47). This shows the reader that the narrator is condemning the officials strongly due to their incompetence, he does not want justice for Petrus and his father, he simply wants to denounce the authorities. Thus, it is remarkable that he cares about this altogether, but his intentions are wrong, in the eyes of Lerice, who solely responds to his explanation with a somewhat disappointing “Oh” (Gordimer 47). The reader is somehow torn between sympathizing with the protagonist, of the one part, because of the effort he puts into dealing with the issue and condemning him, of the other part, because of his disrespect towards Petrus, his father and his dead brother and also because of his wrong intentions.

To summarize this, the reader is confronted with the mind of a very self-absorbed, superficial narrator who is of the opinion that he is a good human being for letting the black Africans stay on their farm with their families, for trusting them and not installing gates on their windows or sleeping with a knife under his pillow, compared to the white people in Johannesburg. He is convinced that he is different from other white-middle class Africans, those who live in the suburbs and whom he deplores strongly, but as the

reader is confronted with the thoughts and doings of the character he/she quickly realizes that it is more or less all in his head. He might not be openly racist towards the helpers on the farm, but his mindset has not changed towards a class-free society yet and it becomes clear very quickly that he thinks that black people are inferior to the white supremacy. Furthermore, he is adverse to manual labor, but is quite successful at his job in the travel agency as he worked his way up towards being a partner in this company. Nonetheless, he does not help his wife Lerice on the smallholding and he does not support her whatsoever. Besides, he is very shallow when it comes to his wife. He appreciates the natural beauty of the land they live on and the nature, which he owes solely to Lerice as it was her wish to buy the farm and move to the countryside. Nevertheless, he does not appreciate the natural beauty of his wife. He condemns her for being dirty all the time and for not looking after herself as much as she did before, he despises her for wearing dirty clothes and not combing her hair but it does not come to his mind that when working on a farm with animals one does get dirty. He never sees Lerice's side of things and he does not talk to her about it. Additionally, the reader realizes that the husband has given up not only on his wife trying to look after herself but also on their marriage in general. Their new life on the farm was supposed to strengthen and rejuvenate their relationship, but this clearly was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, one has to admit that despite of all, he is different to the other white Africans one is confronted with in the short story. The police sergeant, for example, is not interested in sorting out the issue and one can assume that it is because the person that is affected by this is black and not white. And also the protagonist clarifies this when he says that this person is clearly an advocate of the “master-race theory” (Gordimer 36).

3.4.2. *Lerice*

Lerice is the protagonist's/the narrator's wife and the second round character in the short story. She used to be an actress but already on the first paragraph of the story the reader learns that she has never been successful in that field of occupation, at least if one believes the narrator who tends to degrade what she has done as an actress. He does not believe either in her talent as an actress or in her as a farmer as he thought the farming-project would fail just as her career as an actress has failed: “Lerice, who I thought would retire there [at the farm] in Chekhovian sadness for a month or two, and then leave the place to the servants while she tried *yet again* to get a part she wanted and become the actress she

would like to be [...]” [emphasis added] (Gordimer 25). The words emphasized “yet again” indicate that she has tried numerous times to become a more successful actress, but that she has failed. One can assume that it was Lerice who wanted to buy the farm as she is also the one who is involved in the farming business. Despite what her husband initially thought would happen, that after some months she would come back to her senses and return to trying to succeed in the acting business, she is extremely involved in the farm and is running it by herself with the help of her black helpers but without the support of her husband. This is of course quite unusual, as at the time the short story is set in, it was surely something different and peculiar that a woman is doing manual labor, and running a farming business all by herself without the help of a man.

Lerice is a hard-working woman and it is only because of her determination and strength that the farm is doing well. She is taking care of the cattle each day of the week, even on Sundays as she cannot expect any help from her husband, particularly on a Sunday, when he is enjoying the beauty of the farm and she is working with the fowls. The narrator does not even go near the runs as “the sweetish smell of the fowls Lerice breeds sickens [him]” (Gordimer 28). It appears that Lerice has taken on the labor one would usually connect with men – she is doing manual labor which requires muscle strength and thus, she is breaking the rules and opposing the stereotypes of which occupation is suitable for women. Moreover, she does not match the female stereotype when it comes to her appearance. She does not care about her hair or her clothes as much as she once did when she was still an actress and they were living in the city. This has changed due to her work and as she does not need to dress up when handling the animals. She does not give in to her husband's wishes who, throughout the short story, criticizes her appearance continuously. It does not make sense to her to dress nicely or do her hair when she is only going to get her clothes and herself dirty, she does not want to abide to his wishes as she finds them more or less ridiculous and the effort she would have to put into looking nice is merely unnecessary for her.

The reader does not find out a lot about Lerice or her thoughts, as it is a first-person narration and the narrator is her husband, but due to his mental commenting on her facial expressions after he said something, or even when she just looks at him, one can infer quite a lot about herself, her personality and her relationship towards her husband and the black helpers on the farm. For one thing, it appears as if she has given up on their marriage

and on her husband. There seems to be not much love left between them, at least from her husband's side, as the reader does not read a nice word about the woman the narrator married, throughout the whole short story. It appears as if Lerice has not given up on them and their love completely, as the narrator comments on how she interacts with him whenever he has deserted their marital bed for the night: “[H]ow is it I always feel a fool when I have deserted her bed? [...] I know from the way she never looks at me when she talks to me at breakfast next day that she is hurt and humiliated at my not wanting her” (Gordimer 31). This passage shows that she is disappointed in what their marriage has turned to, she realizes more and more that her husband does not love her anymore, although one can presume that this does not apply to her. She is deeply hurt every time the narrator abandons her and does not want to share their marital bed. She does not only feel hurt when he abandons her at night, but also when he will not talk to her or discuss certain issues with her, as, for example, when they found out about the dead body in one of the huts. Instead of sitting down and discussing the matter or comforting her he simply ponders on his situation, “I really haven't the time or inclination any more to go into everything in our life that I know Lerice, from those alarmed and pressing eyes of hers, would like us to go into” (Gordimer 34). So he realizes that she needs her partner to talk about this, but he refuses to do so and, after some comments about her looking plain and odd, he ends the conversation with the sentence: “Now I'm the one who'll have to do all the dirty work, I suppose” (Gordimer 35). It seems as if she still loves him and she would like for them to try to work on their relationship. She probably hoped that their move from the city to the farm would change and help them, but disappointingly this was not the case.

Lerice interacts with the black workers on the farm throughout the day, they collaborate there and she is of the opinion that she and her husband are especially good to them, in contrast to many other white-middle class people they know. It has been established that the protagonist is quite surprised and disappointed that their helpers thought they cannot trust them, but for Lerice this was an even bigger shock. She is quite upset about the lack of trust of her, one could call them, co-workers in her. After the narrator was asked to come with Albert, one of their helpers, and he returns to the house to inform Lerice about what has happened, she said to him the next morning, “You would think they would have felt they could tell *us*” [original emphasis] (Gordimer 34). She is hurt by their distrust in her and does not understand why they did not come to her for assistance, for medical care

or any help for that matter. She feels quite close to them due to their daily cooperative work on the farm. Also her husband realizes her frustration and thinks to himself, “[w]hen she is getting intense over something, she has a way of standing in the middle of a room [...] I had noticed that in Petrus's presence in the kitchen, earlier, she had the air of being almost offended with him, almost hurt” (Gordimer 34). She is surprised and confused that in her mind she thought they would rely on her and they would come to her whenever they have a problem because she thinks that she and her husband are different to other white people. Once the wrong body has been discovered and after Petrus had the courage to ask for the money to be returned, Lerice did not leave it only to her husband to fight for Petrus but she tried to talk to the authorities as well, albeit without any success.

Thus, one can claim that Lerice is a liberalist and she is indeed more liberal than her husband, as she treats their workers with more respect than he does. One could assume that she sees herself and the black workers as equals, at least within the limits of the farm and she treats them better than her husband and not as inferiors, or at least not to the same extent as the narrator. Lerice is often shocked by how her husband interacts with the blacks and how he comments on the happenings on the farm. When he denotes the sorting out of the issue of Petrus's dead brother as “dirty work” (Gordimer 35), she just stares at him without knowing what to say. This is repeated when the protagonist is worried about what the boy might have died of and declares that it could have been something contagious or “God knows [what]” (Gordimer 35). She again does not know how to respond to his disrespect towards them and so she leaves the room and they do not discuss the issue any further. Lerice is sympathetic with Petrus and she respects and understands his wish to get his brother back to pay him his respects in a traditional funeral. She is the one who has persuaded her husband to “at least phone” (Gordimer 38) the authorities so that he can tell Petrus he has tried everything in his power. Lerice was presumably shocked by the mistaken identity of Petrus's brother and the person in the coffin and when her husband shows more annoyance than sympathy for Petrus and his father, when he complains about all the time he is investing in sorting out this issue with the authorities, she does not know how to respond and she is as shocked as Petrus. Moreover, it appears as if she were positively surprised about her husband caring and trying to solve this matter as she asks him, “What makes you so indignant, so determined about this now?” (Gordimer 46). But after he explained to her that it is a “matter of principle” (Gordimer 47) and that he wants to condemn the authorities for their mistake rather than getting

justice for Petrus's brother, she seems very disappointed and solely answers with the expression "Oh" (Gordimer 47). Nevertheless, her reaction on the morning after her husband was shown the dead body is very striking and does not fit into the scheme of the liberal-black-African-friendly-employer. Instead of discussing the tragedy of his death, she merely complains about the workers not coming to them for help earlier.

Lerice obviously has been very shocked by the incident and she is presumably very upset and angry with the officials. Even after Petrus asks the narrator if he can try to get the money back he makes, what he thinks is a funny comment about it and when Lerice simply will not laugh or even react to it, he merely thinks, "Lerice had got so intense about this business that she couldn't even appreciate a little ironic smile" (Gordimer 48). This clearly indicates that Lerice is on Petrus's side and that she finds the injustice and the atrociousness of this incident unbearable. She tries to help Petrus and his father to at least get the money back, if they cannot even have their brother and son. When Petrus's father realizes that it does not make any sense to stay at the farm any longer because he will not be able to bury his dead son, he makes his way back to Rhodesia. Before he leaves, however, he receives an old suit from Lerice's father as a gift. The narrator writes, "The old man from Rhodesia was about Lerice's father's size, so she gave him one of her father's old suits, and he went back home rather better off, for the winter, than he had come" (Gordimer 48). It is unclear what Lerice's intentions were when she gave the old man that suit, but to claim that with the suit the father is better off with than when he came is simply wrong. The father lost his son and could not even see him anymore after his death and to claim that he is better off after he has been given an old suit seems very naïve. Maybe Lerice had rationally minded and good intentions, nevertheless, this "present" seems quite ridiculous and inappropriate when thinking of what the father has lost.

To summarize this character: Lerice is the narrator's and this story's protagonist's wife. She is in charge on and of the farm, she contrasts to the typical stereotypes of women back then, but also today, as she does not want to be reduced merely to her physical appearance, her clothes or hairstyle. She is very focused on her work and is pursuing her new dream of working and succeeding as a farmer which is very different to her previous career as an actress. Lerice knows that her husband's love for her has vanished over the years, but whenever he abandons her she is again disappointed and hurt by his actions.

She hoped that their new life on the farm, away from the city of Johannesburg would renew their marriage but this hope of hers has been shattered. Besides being hurt by her own husband she is moreover greatly disturbed by the fact that her black helpers, the people she works with and sees every day, did not come to her for advice or help when Petrus's brother became sick. She does not understand why they do not trust her. Lerice is always of the opinion that she and her husband are very well liked by their helpers, but she has been disappointed by them as well. Nevertheless, she is definitely more liberal and open-minded than her husband and she is very sympathetic with Petrus, and she urges her husband to at least try to sort things out with the authorities as she is shocked by what had happened. In the end she tries to talk to the authorities herself but does not succeed and before Petrus's father returns to Rhodesia she gives him one of her father's old suits as a gesture of goodwill.

3.4.3. White Authorities / White Officials

In the story the reader encounters two types of white authorities, on the one hand, there are the narrator of the story and his wife Lerice, and on the other hand, there is the white police sergeant who personifies all the white authorities and officials the narrator has to deal with throughout the short story.

The narrator and his wife do not see themselves as authoritative to their black employees, they are of the opinion that the black workers do not think of them as authorities but rather as co-workers. They are greatly surprised and also disappointed when it becomes clear that this is a one-sided opinion only and that the helpers do not think like that whatsoever. They do not see themselves as an authority to the blacks and they claim with what they are saying and thinking that they do not feel superior to them. Nonetheless, the reader quickly realizes that the narrator's thoughts and occasional comments prove this to be wrong. The situations in which the narrator feels superior to the workers on the farm have already been established and also his wife's occasional comments have been analyzed before. Therefore, it can be stated that Gordimer created a characterization for the couple that is nuanced, she reveals more through their actual actions and their choice of words than through their claimed beliefs and convictions. The husband and his wife claim to be on the same level as their workers, at least within the borders of their farm. However, the reader can extrapolate their helpers' opinions about them due to their thoughts and

comments about and towards the blacks and due to their acceptance or rather non-acceptance by the black Africans.

Nonetheless, one has to distinguish between them and the other white officials the narrator deals with, when sorting out the issue of Petrus's brother. The police sergeant, a flat character, personifies the majority of the white xenophobic South Africans who believe that they are worth more and are standing on a higher social level than the black Africans, or as the narrator puts it, “[those] who are possessed by the master-race theory” (Gordimer 36). The police officer is surprised that the “natives” on his farm obviously enjoy a lot of freedom and when he keeps questioning the protagonist about the farm and the workers the narrator flares up, shouts at the officer and tells him that it is not his business how his workers live on his farm. The policeman clearly thinks less of the protagonist, as he merely grins at him and at his stupidity that he trusts them and that he gives them so much, too much freedom. Only due to this freedom it was possible that someone unknown, an illegal immigrant died on his premises. If he controlled his “natives” more and if he had been stricter with them, this would not have happened. The sergeant thinks that he is superior not only to the black Africans, but also to the narrator and his wife, because he is of the opinion that they handle the blacks the wrong way. The majority of white Africans held black lives in a very low esteem, they considered a black life worth less than a white life, and thus they think that this gives them the power to treat the black poorly.

If one compares those two very different types of white authoritative power, the narrator and Lerice are clearly the better people. Nevertheless, neither were they able to convince their own workers that they feel equal to them, merely because their actions speak louder than what they praise themselves with, nor can they convince the reader of their proclaimed equality. Nonetheless, it must be said that they are better people than probably most other white people during that time because they at least respect the black Africans to a certain extent and do not treat them as complete savages.

3.4.4. Petrus, Albert, Franz and Petrus's Father

Petrus, Albert and Franz represent the entirety of black South Africans working for a white authority. They are aware of the fact that they are inferior to their employers and although they were lucky to have superiors that are rather respectful towards them, they know that they are not on the same social level as the narrator and his wife. It is clear that the alleged master-servant-relation is only seen as good by the master, but not by the servants. They do not feel comfortable when interacting with the narrator as they are being undermined and subliminally discriminated by him and her, on occasions, due to their social status. What is very striking is their names – Petrus, Albert and Franz are all German names. This appears peculiar as they are Africans, who one would expect to have an African name. One can assume that they have been given new names by their masters. This once again demonstrates the discrimination the blacks had to cope with during the time of segregation and apartheid. The rechristening was done on a regular basis during the time of apartheid; African children who went to school were given a Christian name⁷.

Petrus hoped for a traditional burial of his deceased brother in order to pay him his last respect. However, he was once again forcefully reminded that their lives are lesser valued than the lives of somebody with white skin color. They are very well aware of this fact and they are shown their inferiority every day simply by where they have to live and sleep in, namely “huts” and an “iron bedstead, with [...] brick stilts” (Gordimer 32). Nonetheless, Petrus and the others are being treated better than the majority of black South Africans during that time, as the reaction of the police sergeant indicates. In his opinion, they have too much freedom and their masters are not strict enough with them, which speaks for Lerice and the narrator.

3.4.5. Petrus's Dead Brother

The reader never learns Petrus's dead brother's name and one does not find out a lot about him throughout the whole short story, besides the fact that he is related to one of the workers on the farm and that he is an illegal immigrant, due to the law that bans Rhodesian natives to enter the Union. Furthermore, one knows that he went on the long journey from

⁷ Nelson Mandela was also renamed when he attended Primary School. His initial first name was Rolihlala, but in school he was renamed by his teacher and from then on called by the Christian name Nelson.

Rhodesia to Johannesburg in the hope of finding work and thus, improving his living conditions and starting a new life. Moreover, it becomes clear that he is not a rich man by any means, as he does not even have enough clothes to keep him warm during the cold nights, as “[he] had caught a chill from sleeping out along the way” (Gordimer 33). It can be assumed that the author did not give this person a name because his name does not have to be known as he stands for all the other black Africans who died on their way from Rhodesia to Johannesburg with the prospect of a better life. He, as so many others, was stripped of his identity by the white authorities. He struggled to reach his goal, he risks his life on the journey and all that without avail, as he is not able to experience at least a little bit of the dream he was hoping for. In the end he is just one of many who dies without an identity and the white officials do not have any interest in him or in helping his family pay their respects to him.

To conclude this character and general analysis of the short story, one is confronted with a first-person narrator who himself claims that he is a liberal, or at least not a racist. But, as the above stated arguments show, this is certainly not the case. He does not openly insult the black workers on his farm, but due to the fact that Gordimer composed this short story in first person narration, the reader receives an insight into the narrator’s mindset. This contradicts what he claims to be, as his thoughts and also numerous of his comments are, in fact, racist. Both him and his wife are somewhat more liberal, open-minded and nicer to the blacks who they have to deal with on a daily basis. Nonetheless, they do not treat them as equals whatsoever. The reader is confronted with two kinds of white authorities, those are the narrator and his wife on the one hand, and the police sergeant, on the other hand. Even though, the protagonist and his wife do not consider themselves as such, they are authoritative to their workers, for the simple reason that they are white and their workers are black. The police officers is a classic example of a white supremacist and a racist for that matter, as he considers blacks and issues which concern them as inferior and of lesser importance. He considers himself an authority due to his occupation and due to his skin color. Gordimer’s text shows that white supremacists were widely spread throughout South Africa during the Apartheid era, and even nowadays they still exist. She clearly shows that every non-white, non-European person was discriminated and to an extreme they were even discriminated after they have died. In general, the author has made it her aim to depict the “maltreatment of blacks in her

fiction” and with “Six Feet of the Country” she exposed the maltreatment of non-Europeans even after their death (Singh, Kumari 219).

4. James Matthews – “The Park”

In the following chapter, James Matthews’ short story *The Park* is going to be discussed and analyzed. James Matthews is a poet, publisher and writer, his short story *The Park* was first published in the magazine *Présence Africaine* in 1962. He has written five books of poetry, a collection of short stories *The Park and other Stories*, the novel *The Party is Over* and he edited an anthology of poetry. Even though the majority of his literary pieces were banned during Apartheid, they were translated and published in other countries. (*Badilisha Poetry X-change* “James Matthews & PoemHunter.com “James Matthews”).

4.1. Author’s Biography

On May 25th, 1929 James Matthews was born into a working class family in Cape Town. He began his career as a writer early on in his life, as he published his first writings in 1946, when he was only 17 years old. Thereupon, he began his work as a journalist and his articles and literary pieces were published in numerous South African newspapers, amongst others, *Drum* and *The Cape Times*, *The Golden City Post*. Matthews became a leading figure of the Black Consciousness movement, as he critically observed the mistreatment of the non-white population, the racism, the exploitation of black work force, the poverty, the relocation of blacks, Coloured and Indians to the townships in the Cape Flats and especially the de-humanization of non-Europeans, especially the black population. Matthews’ way of fighting this injustice was to voice his discontent in his writing. But naturally, the apartheid regime felt threatened by his works and thus, his first collection of poetry *Cry Rage* was banned, just as a number of his later works and publications. Subsequently, Matthews was denied a South African passport for as long as 13 years and he has been held in detention for four months in 1976. Nonetheless, he kept on fighting the suppressing regime. During his life he has been awarded numerous awards such as the *Woza Afrika Award*, the *Kwaza Honours List – Black Arts Celebration*, the *Freeman of Lehrte and Nienburg* and in 2004 his achievements were recognized at the National Orders Awards. Matthews still lives in the Cape Flats by Cape Town where he continues to give speeches in local High Schools (*South African History Online* “James David Matthews” & *Badilisha Poetry X-change* “James Matthews”).

4.2. Plot Summary

James Matthews' short story "The Park" is a third-person narration and it tells the story of a young black South African boy who is cruelly confronted with the segregationist laws of the apartheid regime. The story begins with the boy, the protagonist whose name the reader never finds out, looking at other children playing in a park, he is prohibited from entering for reasons he does not understand yet. The reader learns that he once entered the park and started swinging on the swings and playing with another, white child on the see-saw until the attendant, a black South African, told him that they, referring to blacks in general, are not allowed to enter the parks whereas the white people are. In the boy's mind this does not make any sense and nonetheless, he is escorted out by the attendant. The narrative then switches to the present, where the boy has to deliver washings to a white madam's house whom his mother works for. It is his responsibility to take these washings to the "*merrum*" and every week when he does this, he passes the park and sees the children playing in there, which constantly reminds him of the painful event of the past. When he returns home he gives his mother the money she earned and informs her that the madam will be gone for a month and thus, the mother will not have to do the washings for her. This results in the mother complaining about the merrum, their poverty and the poor state their "house" is in. But all the boy can think about is the park, he urges to go back there and play freely with the other children. While eating dinner with his mother, father and younger sister he suddenly realizes that he can just go back during the night, when it is already dark and nobody else will be there anymore. He quickly finishes eating and after doing the chores for his mother, he runs to the park, enters and starts playing all by himself. He does not want to confess to himself that playing alone is not as much fun as sharing this experience with other children. While he is swinging on the swing the park attendant sees him and comes back to tell him again that he is not allowed to play here. The attendant deplores the fact that he has to deny the child the pleasure all the other white children are allowed to enjoy but due to the fact that he is afraid of losing his job he threatens the boy with the police and therefore, makes him leave the park again. It is not quite clear how the story ends, but one can assume that the boy does not listen to the attendant and he is forced to call the police, who arrests the boy.

4.3. Setting and Background

James Matthews neither states where exactly this story is set in South Africa, nor does he specify the historical background. He does this for a very good reason, as the reader does not need a specific location for this story to be understood as a realistic narrative, describing the situation of a black South African boy during the time of apartheid. Thus, these events could have taken place anywhere in South Africa. In order to understand the injustice revealed in the story, it is not necessary to locate the events and, therefore, Matthews generalizes the situation. One is made aware that what happens in the short story could have happened anywhere throughout the country, to any non-white child. Moreover, the generalization Matthews achieves does not solely refer to the happenings in the short story, but also to the mindset and the way of thinking of the boy, the struggles of his family, the moral struggle of the attendant who is torn between his own vies and the pressure of the regime he is put under, the condescending treatment of the boy by the white children in the park and, of course, the significant financial gap between black and white revealed in the descriptions of the houses and the neighborhoods. The places that are mentioned in the story are, the park, the white madam's house, the house/hut the protagonist and his family live in, the street where the other black children of his neighborhood play on, the white and the Indian candy store.

Besides the lack of detail in the description of the location, the reader is not aware of the exact time the short story is set in either. The only indication that gives the reader a rough time frame is, when the boy receives the payment from the madam where he takes his mother's washings to. He receives an "envelope containing the *rand* note" [emphasis added] (Matthews 320). The South African Rand was introduced on February 14th, 1961, thus, the action of the story has to be set some time after this (Bronkhorst "A History of South Africa's Currency" *BusinessTech*). Moreover, "The Park" was published for the first time in 1962, thus, at a time when the apartheid regime had been in power for almost two decades already. Therefore, one can assume that this is also the approximate time the short story is set in, as it has to be during the period when the apartheid laws were already greatly determining and influencing the lives of the blacks, Coloured and Indians.

4.4. Characters and Characterization

As in the previously analyzed short story, the author James Matthews also introduces a number of round and flat characters. One can define three round characters, whereas two of those are quite obvious, those are the protagonist, the black South African boy and the black South African man who is employed as an attendant of the park. The third round character is not as obvious as the ones already determined, but when remembering that Forster (1974 48) defined as a flat character as being easily “summed up in a single sentence” the white boy who plays with the protagonist on the see-saw can only be considered a round character. There are several flat characters one encounters while reading the story and these are the boy's parents, his sister, his friends, who are playing with a tire in the street, the white boys in the park, who either ignore him or insult him, the Indian shopkeeper of the candy store, the black maid at the white madam's house and the white madam for whom his mother does the washings.

4.4.1. The Black Boy / The Protagonist

The boy is the first round character the reader is confronted with. Even though he is the protagonist, one never learns his name as he is never directly addressed, neither by his parents nor by his sister, nor by his friends, nor by the madam he takes the washed clothes to. One does not know exactly how old he is, but it can be assumed that he is aged between about six and twelve, as he is still very interested in playing on a playground and it appears that he is not older than this. First and foremost, the protagonist “symbolizes the part of the black society that was not willing to accept the suppressed position Blacks had during the [time of] Apartheid” (Bake 5). This statement by Bake might seem far-fetched but when considering the themes of this short story it can be verified. The boy will not give up until his dream becomes true and this is also true for the entire non-white South African population before 1991. They fought for their right to be equal to the Europeans and thus, a line can be drawn from the story's protagonist to the South African people of color.

The boy's most significant character trait is his emotionality and passion. Whenever he feels something, he does this with his whole body and not just his mind: “He looked at them and his body trembled and ached to share their joy” (Matthews 317). He is generally a very physical character and whenever he thinks of the pleasures denied to him, his entire body is affected by these thoughts: “Even now he could feel that pleasurable thrill that travelled the length of his body as he rocketed himself higher, higher, until he felt that the

swing would up-end him when it reached its peak” (Matthews 317). He is very passionate and with this passion he tries to find a solution to the problem of him wanting, needing to go back and play in the park. This also shows the reader that he is incredibly determined and strong-minded as he does not accept the fact that a simple sign tells him that he is not allowed on the premises.

Besides the circumstance that he is still a child and his mindset and worldview are those of a child, he cannot be and behave like a child of his age. He is certainly aware of the poverty he was born into, he knows about his parents’ money struggles and due to this, he has to work and help out as well. It is his job to take the washings to the people who hire his mother and moreover, he has to help in the household as well. This clearly differentiates him from the white children, who can be free and do not have to worry about these things. They are allowed to be children, they can play and they do not have to concern themselves with these issues, simply because they were not born black, or Coloured, or Indian, but white. Besides the fact that he has to take up great responsibility for a boy of his age, he still acts in a very immature manner in some situations, as for example, when he comes back from the madam's house. He is so angry with the other boys and the rules he has to abide to that, in order to ease his anger, he throws a bag filled with trash over the railing into the park. He runs away from the scene and after realizing what he has done, he admits to himself that “[t]he act has brought no relief, only intensified the longing” (Matthews 321). His acting was very immature, but this is how children are, he behaves and he handles his anger as any child would do. The author created a protagonist that has to face problems and difficulties only adults should have to deal with, although he is very young and immature.

One may conclude that the protagonist is still innocent as he is not aware of the ethnic divide between himself and the white boys, the discrimination imposed by the government, and the need of the whites to establish themselves as the ruling class. Besides the incident in the park, where the black attendant had to throw him out, he has never been confronted with the discriminating laws of the apartheid regime. The boy does not understand why the simple pleasure of him using the same swings just like the white children should be refused to him. Even when the attendant tells him that he has to leave, he does not even think about the circumstance that this rejection is based on him having a different color of skin: “What harm would I be doing if I were to use the swings? Would

it stop the swings from swinging? Would the chute collapse?” (Matthews 318). The questions he is asking himself unambiguously reveal the absurdity of the apartheid laws.

4.4.2. The Black Attendant

The second round character of this short story is the black attendant who works at the park. It is his job to make sure that people abide to the rules and the laws and this consequently means that he has to throw out the boy because the law, presented to them on a white notice board with red letters, tells him to do so. The man is well aware of the injustice he is doing to the boy, he speaks to him in an apologetic voice, pardoning himself for the fact that he has to throw him out of the park even though the boy has done nothing wrong. In contrast to the protagonist, he is fully aware of the fact that the laws he has to execute are racially motivated, but it is not in his power to change this. When the attendant points “an accusing finger at [the] notice board at the entrance” (Matthews 318), he is not accusing the boy of doing something wrong, he is accusing the system that forces him to enforce these principles on him. Thus, he shows great compassion for the boy and for his wishes and if he could, he would allow the boy to stay in the park and keep on playing. Even when he finds the boy during the night he cannot bring himself to leaving the boy alone, because he is too scared of being seen or reported and this would result in losing his job. Due to his anger at the government, he even shouts at the boy: “‘Get off! Go home!’ he screamed, his voice harsh, his anger directed at the system that drove him against his own” (Matthews 325-326). It is hurting him that he cannot grant the boy’s wish to play on the swings, even at night when probably nobody would see him. He is very compassionate with the boy and his anger at the government is intensified due to his experiences in the past. He is very well aware of the unrighteousness of the laws established by the regime, he grew up in a world of racial segregation, and the fact that the government has made him betray “his own kind” is outrageous to him.

As the number of the minor characters is quite extensive, only those who have some thematic or structural function in the story and those who have great value in terms of symbolism will be analyzed here.

4.4.3. The White Boys in the Park

The reader makes his/her first encounter with the white supremacy at the very beginning of the short story. When the boy is longingly looking at the other, white children who are allowed to play in the park, some of them run past him. In this situation two groups of these children emerge: those who simply ignore the black boy sitting on the outside, and those who insult and excoriate him. The ones who are just standing by do not explicitly do anything to harm the boy, they are just watching one of the bigger boys who is stopping in front of the protagonist and is insulting him. He is openly calling him a “brown ape” (Matthews 317), due to this one can assume that this boy has obviously been shaped by the society he is growing up in and has lived in for his whole life. Supposedly, he is being raised by parents who are of the opinion that black South Africans can and should be treated as the lowest, most inferior of human beings, that they have to be excoriated and exploited for the cheap labor they were used for back then. Clearly, these surroundings greatly influenced him and rubbed off on him, even though he is still very young, as one can expect him to be of about the same age as the protagonist. He already has established the mindset telling him that he is superior to any non-white person and thus, he is of the opinion that his skin color gives him the right to treat any black person in whatever manner he wants to. He is degrading the boy, who is already suffering from the pain the segregation of the railings causes him, by swearing at him and throwing a lump of clay at him.

There is one other child who stands out in the park, it is the one who plays with the protagonist on the see-saw. It could be claimed that he is a flat character, as the reader does not find out anything about him, but when thinking about how he acts in the scene he is involved in, there is a lot of symbolism behind his actions, or rather non-actions. This boy does not care about the protagonist’s skin color and as playing on the see-saw by himself does not work, he is probably happy that he has a playing partner. When the attendant starts talking to the protagonist and tells him that he cannot play there, the white boy solely gets off the see-saw and stands next to them and watches the situation, he does not say or do anything, he is simply a bystander. This can be seen as a representation for many other white people during the apartheid era. It is not stated if every white person agreed with the beliefs of the government, nonetheless only very few did something against it and openly fought the oppressive regime. They were, as the boy in the story, bystanders, watching the government discriminate every other non-white-European

ethnic group and they did not act against this injustice. Thus, it can be claimed that with the creation of this character, Matthews subliminally condemns these South Africans strongly.

The one circumstance that clearly distinguishes the white children and the black boy is the fact that he cannot be a child, at least not to the same extent as the white children. They do not have to worry about money or food, they do not have to work and help their parents, as they certainly have black people working for them and doing these things instead of them. The protagonist has to help his parents, he has to carry the heavy load of washings through the town he lives in to take it to the white madam on whose money his mother is dependent.

4.4.4. Madam

The reader does not learn much about the madam to whom the protagonist delivers his mother's washings. Nonetheless, there are some indications that give the reader an insight in her personality and character. When the boy arrives at her house, her black housemaid informs her that the boy is in the kitchen and, instead of greeting him, she solely asks him skeptically if he delivered all her clothes and whether or not he has forgotten anything. Apparently, she questions him about this every week which clearly shows that she neither fully trusts him nor his mother. Nevertheless, the madam cares about the boy to a certain extent as she always has a plate with food prepared for him when he comes to her house and she also gives the boy a small tip in addition to the payment for his mother. This white woman is an example for whites, who use the blacks for their work and they somehow appreciate their labor and also accept them, but nonetheless, they do not fully trust them or treat them as equals.

4.4.5. The Mother / The Family

The boy's mother is the only person of his family the reader learns more about. In order to support her family, she is doing the washings for white people and the money she earns by doing these jobs helps feed her family. She is devastated when she finds out that the madam does not need her services for a whole month as they are dependent on these earnings. She is frustrated and angry that she is treated with disrespect, but moreover, she is probably feeling the same things about the rest of the discriminatory world she lives in. She is and also considers herself a hard-working woman, "I slave away and the pain never

leave my back [...]” (Matthews 322). The reader does not find out anything about the boy’s father and nothing specific about his sister, other than the fact that he is probably older than her. This assumption can be made due to the incident when she has to tell him that supper is ready and he orders her to “Wipe your snot!” (Matthews 323). He does this quite authoritatively, like an elder brother. The boy’s father is mentioned peripherally when they are eating dinner, he does not say or do anything, thus, he does not take on a role in the story.

4.5. Critical Assessment

Reading the first sentence of the short story, the reader is presented with a third-person narration, with a male protagonist whose ethnicity is already suggested with the sentence “[h]e [is looking] [...] longingly at the children on the other side of the railings” (Matthews 317). One is directly confronted with the isolation of the protagonist - here - and the other white children - over there - and this justifies the conclusion that the male protagonist is indeed a black South African. The scene of children playing on a playground is described but the protagonist is sitting outside of this playground. He is “on the ground” (Matthews 317), not only literally but also figuratively. He, as a black South African, finds himself on the lowest social level in South Africa during the apartheid regime, inferior also to the groups of Coloureds and Indians. The boy knows that he has to stay outside the park as he has been thrown out of the park once before, thus, he knows that he is not allowed in because the notice at board by the entrance says so. After the initial description, the reader is taken back in a flashback to the day when the boy entered the park “[w]ithout hesitation” (Matthews 317). Then he was not aware that he is not allowed on the premises, he did not think that his playing there would cause any troubles. His thoughts are rather innocent and very child-like, moreover, he obviously has never been confronted with the segregationist laws of the apartheid regime before that incident, otherwise, he would have been aware of these circumstances. The author creates a contrast between the two white children one has been introduced to so far: In the beginning, there was the boy who sees him sitting on the ground and asking him, “What are you looking at [...]?” (Matthews 317). For the first time, the reader is shown how white children treated blacks, namely the same way as their parents presumably did. This is what they learned from the adults, they were raised on the basis of a racist ideology stating that whites are superior to blacks and he acts according to these assumptions.

Moreover, the white boy keeps insulting him and openly calls him a “brown ape” (Matthews 317), which suggests that he does not only feel superior, but he also has to act upon this feeling of superiority and humiliate the black boy on purpose to show his supremacy. Besides this boy, there is another white boy who plays with him on the see-saw without making any judgments about him or about the color of his skin. When the black boy is told to that he “must get off” (Matthews 317) he does not understand the attendant’s reasoning. He knows that he has not done anything wrong and so the expressed order to leave the park appears unreasonable to him. This shows the reader again that the black protagonist has not been introduced to the segregationist world he is forced to live in. When the black attendant tells the protagonist that he is not allowed to be there, the narrator introduces the distinction between “us” and “them” as he says, “‘The council say,’ he continued, ‘that *us* blacks don’t use the same swings as the whites. You must use the swings where you stay’” [emphasis added] (Matthews 318). Thus, the theme of ethnic separation and segregation is repeatedly intensified and accentuated.

The situation the black attendant finds himself in is quite difficult for him to handle, because on the one hand he wants to leave the boy alone and let him play, but on the other hand he is aware of the circumstance that if he does so, he will lose his job if anybody reports him, or if the police drives past the scene. He tries to apologize to the boy, but he has to abide to the law, and thus he has to throw the boy out of the playground. When the attendant shows the protagonist that the rules he has to obey were not instated by him, he tries to vindicate himself, the boy reads the board: “He struggled with the red letters on the white background. ‘Blankes Alleen. Whites Only’” (Matthews 318). The boy has problems reading these four words and this simple sentence can be assumed to be Matthews’ implied condemnation of the Bantu education laws. The laws which greatly deteriorated the schools for black South Africans, resulting in a generation of poorly educated children and teenagers. Moreover, the sign itself is discriminating the black South Africans, as the languages used are Afrikaans and English. This meant that, in order to understand the message on the notice board, they had to abide to, they had to speak the languages of their oppressors. Every South African had to know both of these two languages and consequently, the government tried to repress or even eradicate languages of the other ethnic groups, as for example Zulu, Sotho or Xhosa. The boy walks past the park every week, when he delivers the washings his mother does to the white woman who employs her, and every time he asks himself the same questions: “What harm would I be

doing if I were to use the swings? Would it stop the swings from swinging? Would the chute collapse?” (Matthews 318). These questions occupy his thoughts and these are reasonable questions, as the answers to all of them is simply, no. The protagonist is not aware of the restrictions the government has put on him and every non-white person, it has not been explained to him properly that they live in a segregating society and thus, in his opinion, there are no objective or rational reasons to deny him the pleasure of playing in the park. Furthermore, these questions can be transferred to any other situation where the non-white ethnic groups were oppressed and denied something. These questions are presumably the most essential parts of this short story. How does a black, Coloured or Indian harm anybody else by enjoying the same life style as the whites, why are they considered less of a person – simply because of their skin color? The boy asks the right questions, nonetheless, he does not have an answer to them.

After the incident with the other white children, the boy goes on and delivers the washings to the madam’s house, where he is greeted by another black housemaid. The white woman does not greet him properly, she solely asks him skeptically, as she does every week, “Are you sure you’ve brought everything?” (Matthews 319). Nothing was ever missing, but apparently the woman still does not trust him or his mother and therefore, she always checks the washings when he returns them. Nonetheless, she gives the boy something to eat and additionally to the money for his mother, a five cent piece for himself. On his way back to his parents’ house, he thinks about the candy he is going to buy with the money he earned and he walks into the first candy store after leaving the white woman’s house. In there “[t]rays were filled with expensive chocolates and sweets of a type never seen in the jars on the shelves of the Indian shop on the corner where he stayed” (Matthews 320). After quickly realizing that this store is too expensive for him, he leaves and makes his way home. This passage is very significant, as the difference between white and black is emphasized again here by such a simple thing as candy. On his way back he has to pass the park again where children are still playing. His anger culminates and he shouts, “Shit on them! Their park, the grass, the swings, the see-saw, everything! Shit it! Shit it!” (Matthews 321). In order to relieve his rage, he throws a “bag filled with fruit peelings [which] was on top of the rubbish stacked in a waste basket fitted to a pole” (Matthews 321) over the fence and sprints away. These actions are childish, but then again, the reader remembers that the protagonist is in fact still a child. He wants to upset and hurt the children the same way they hurt him by excluding and making fun of him. He also wants

to debase the playground, but while catching his breath after he chased away from the park, he admits to himself that this did not help. His anger has not vanished, it solely increased his urge to join the other children in the park: “Out of breath three streets further, he slowed down pain stabbing beneath his heart. The act had brought no relief, only intensified the longing” (Matthews 321). He returns back to his neighborhood, on the way he passes his friends who play with old tires, but he is not in the mood of joining their games and thus, he simply walks to his house. Matthews gives the reader a short description of the hut:

[It is a] two-storeyed [sic] house with a façade that must once have been painted but had not turned a nondescript gray with the red brick underneath showing. Beyond the threshold the room was dim. He walked past the scattered furniture with a familiarity that did not need guidance. (Matthews 321)

His house greatly distinguishes itself from the madam’s house, especially the kitchen “with its glossy, tiled floor and steel cupboard ducoed a clinical white to match the food-stacked refrigerator” (Matthews 320). Simply, the two descriptions of the house and the kitchen depict the class difference of the two representatives of these ethnic groups. At home, he encounters his mother doing the washing for somebody else, he gives her the money and informs her that the madam will be gone for a month and therefore, will not need her services. These news are devastating for the mother, as they are clearly depending on the money she earns every week:

‘What I do now?’ her voice took on a whine and her eyes strayed to the teapot containing the money. The whine hardened to reproach as she continued. ‘Why don’t she let me know she going away then I look for another merrum?’ She paused. ‘I slave away and the pain never leave my back but it too much for her to let me know she go away. The money I get form her keeps us nice and steady. [...]’. (see Matthews 322)

The boy is astonished that his mother claims that the madam’s money keeps them steady, as in his opinion, they never have enough to eat and the only time when his family gets new clothes is for Christmas. Nonetheless, the mother is of different opinion, but clearly, she cannot afford to feed her family and simultaneously repair the “lino (sic) [in the front room that is] full of holes” (see Matthews 322). The protagonist is not willing to listen to his mother’s complaints and so he hurries outside, but again the reader is presented with a situation where the young protagonist of the story has to handle adult problems. He is aware of their poverty and he is worried about it, which again distinguishes him from the white children in the park. Neither them, nor their parents have to deal with such

problems, as they do not have to worry about not having enough food to eat or having to repair holes in their house walls.

On the outside, he finds the children still playing with old tires and this again represents the difference between black and white: the white children play in a park and they have a ball, thus one had to spend money to buy it. The black children of the township play in the streets and here only an old tire is available as their toy nobody has any use for anymore. The boy does not pay attention to the game, as his thoughts are still at the playground and for the second time in the story, he becomes angry:

Rage boiled up inside him. Rage against the houses with their streaked walls and smashed panes filled by too many people; against the overflowing garbage pails outside doors; the alleys and streets; and against a law he could not understand – a law that shut him out of the park. (Matthews 322)

It can be assumed that in this passage, Matthews wanted to mirror the entirety of the non-white society's rage. The boy is angry about the circumstances he is forced to live in by the government and the poor conditions the houses are in. On the one hand, he is angry at the law that prohibits him from entering the park, but on the other hand, he does not realize that because of numerous laws he is forced to live in the conditions he is angry about. The reader realizes again that the boy has not understood that it is the government that enforces these acts on him and moreover, that he lives in a discriminating and separated society. Furthermore, the boy also admits that he does not understand the law that prevents him from entering the park. Thus, he becomes painfully aware of his position as an outsider. In order to comfort himself, the boy goes to the shop to buy some sweets and here, the reader is given the description of the Indian shop, which is very different from the sweet store he was in before:

The shop's sole iron-barred window was crowded. Oranges were mixed with writing paper and dried figs were strewn on school slates. Clothing and crockery gathered dust. Across the window a cockroach made its leisurely way, antennae on the alert. Side the shop was as crowded as the window. Bags covered the floor leaving a narrow path to the counter. (Matthews 323)

While eating dinner with his parents and his sister the boy suddenly realizes that there is a solution to his craving: "Why not go to the park after dark?" (Matthews 232). He cannot think of any plausible reasons that argue against his plan, besides the one fact that he has never been to this part of the city during the night. This thought is quite ironic, as nowadays it is whites who are afraid of crossing the "black parts" of a city in South Africa

during the night and not vice versa. Nonetheless, after he is excused by his mother he leaves the house and runs to the park and the first thing that catches his eyes, besides the gate and iron railings that are supposed to keep him out, is the notice board. Despite this, he enters and plays on the swings, the chute and the merry-go-around, he reluctantly walked past the see-saw that, on the one hand, reminds him of the embarrassment when he was thrown out and, on the other hand, requires a partner to play with. Instead, he goes on and plays with the merry-go-around, but even this is not as much fun as he hoped it would be, because in order “[t]o keep it moving, he had to push more than he rode. Not spoiling his pleasure, he jumped off and raced for the swings” (Matthews 325) where he is finally fully satisfied until “[a] light switched on in the hut at the far side of the park” (Matthews 325). Even though he knows he is going to be in trouble and he will not be allowed to stay on the playground he keeps on swinging until the black attendant starts swearing at him. Although he actually wants to leave the boy alone and let him remain in the park, but the black attendant is aware of the fact that if anyone saw the black boy in a white park he will lose his job, as it is his responsibility to keep this from happening. The attendant is extremely outraged by the boy’s coming back, as it, once again, reminds him of the fact that “[the] [b]lerry whites [...] get everything” (Matthews 325) and even though he is shouting at the boy, “his anger is directed at the system that drove him against his own” (Matthews 325-326). One could argue that the black attendant is not only outraged at the injustice of the laws, but that he is, also angry at himself for not fighting these laws and not reacting against these legislations because he is too terrified of being caught and, consequently, of losing his job. He threatens the boy with calling the police who will take him away, but the boy keeps on swinging. It is not perfectly clear if the police does indeed come and take the boy away, but it can be assumed that this will happen, as the last paragraph of the short story seems to suggest:

‘Mama. Mama’. His lips trembled, wishing himself safe in his mother’s kitchen, sitting next to the still-burning stove with a comic spread across his knees. ‘Mama. Mama’ His voice mounted, wrenched from this throat, keeping pace with the soaring swing as it climbed the sky. Voice and swing. Swing and voice. Higher. Higher. Higher. Until they were one.
At the entrance of the park the notice board stood tall, its shadows elongated, pointing towards him. (Matthews 326)

Supposedly, the police takes the boy away, thus, he is screaming for his mother and wishing himself back at his home, to safety. Moreover, the last sentence emphasizes that the apartheid regime influenced and controlled its citizens and especially its black citizens

to such an extent that they will, in fact, turn against their own people and call the police on them. This evidently shows how afraid the black attendant is of losing his job in the city, as this would mean that he will hardly have a chance of getting a new occupation in this town, which would result in the withdrawal of his legal papers would be confiscated and he would be forced to move to the countryside. As it has been established in the first chapter of this diploma thesis, not living and working in a city during apartheid resulted in a life in misery and poverty, and a constant struggle against starvation.

To summarize the findings of this analysis: The reader is introduced to a third-person narration with a black boy, whose name is never stated, as its protagonist. The boy is a young black South African who lives in a segregated world without fully realizing or understanding this. The first time he encounters the difference between him and the white children is when he wants to join white children, who are playing in a park restricted to whites only. The boy is thrown out of the park by the black South African attendant of the park. These actions are hurtful, on the one hand, to the attendant, who realizes the injustice of his actions he has to enforce on the boy due to the apartheid laws, and the boy, on the other hand, who does not understand why the pleasure of joining the other children's games is denied to him. The boy lives in a society where he cannot be a child without having to worry about something, he has to help his mother earn money by taking the washings she has done to the white people's houses, which is hard work for him and moreover, he has to deal with his mother's complaints about their poverty. He cannot enjoy his childhood to the same extent as the other white children in the park because of the apartheid laws which deprive him of the possibility of doing so many things, and because of his family's poverty. The reader is presented with a child growing up in a township, gradually realizing that the governmental rules also affected the youngest and most vulnerable members of this society.

Matthews' short story is a representation of the injustice imposed by white people on every non-white ethnicity. It depicts the reality of living in South Africa during the second half of the 20th century, and it gives the reader an impression of what it meant living under those conditions as a black person. Every aspect of life was controlled by the government and its forces and even the simplest things were denied to the black community. One is introduced to the somehow "brainwashed" generation of the country's society produced by this system of administration, represented by the child who openly insults the

protagonist as “brown ape”. This person is the result of being born in and raised by a community that, from the beginning, instilled in him the notion of his superiority to anybody who is “different” from him. Moreover, it introduces the reader to the difficulty of black people being forced to turn on members of their community, as the black attendant did. The apartheid regime was incredibly smart in doing this, as they knew the people depend on their jobs, thus they introduced laws that forced the non-whites to direct themselves against their own.

This short story by James Matthews clearly demonstrates how efficacious the established apartheid laws and, moreover, how influential the government itself was. The ones responsible produced a generation of children born and raised being convinced that they are superior to any other ethnic group, believing in the master-race-theory and, therefore, also acting on this belief system. It is demonstrated that black children clearly did not have the same lives as white children did, as even the most innocent members of the society were controlled and oppressed due to their inferiority. The protagonist is born into a society that does not make sense to him, he is aware of a difference between black and white but he is not mature enough to understand the consequences of these racial discriminations. The story’s main character will need to grow up and mature and then he will be able to understand his mother’s discontent because of their poverty and misery and the black attendant’s rage against the system. The protagonist will grow up believing that he is inferior to the one ethnic group that is responsible for racial discrimination he experienced first when he was denied the entrance to the park where his only wish was to join the white children.

Unfortunately, South Africa’s society is still divided in terms of equality, which is a painful aftermath of the European minority regime. Nonetheless, the conclusion Bake draws in the paper has to be condemned as she states:

South of Africa was and is partial [sic.] a place of racial division and inequality. Even today black men and women, by law free, are not considered to be human beings in the eyes of whites. Black men were regularly sentenced to death for crimes against white people but they were left to provide their own justice within the black community. [emphasis added] (Bake 7)

Claiming this is an outrageous act, as any person who has been to South Africa knows this is completely untrue. Surely, there are still racists and white supremacists living in this country, but claiming that nowadays, in the 21st century, the black population is not

considered to be human is frankly incorrect. This statement is revolting as it could not be more untrue. Of course, South Africa still has to overcome the prevailing inequality and racial division, nonetheless, claiming something like the above stated is completely biased and despicable.

5. Es'kia Mphahlele – “Mrs Plum”

Es'kia Mphahlele's short story “Mrs Plum”, which, due to its length, is often considered a novella, was first published in the short story collection *In Corner B* in 1976. He wrote this literary masterpiece while living in exile in Paris after the Sharpeville massacre and after his time at the *Drum* magazine. There is no doubt that this text is Mphahlele's major work of “fictional protest writing” (see Obee 121) and it is, according to himself, “the best thing [...] [he] ever pulled off” (Mphahlele quoted in: Barnett 110).

5.1. Author's Biography

Ezekiel Mphahlele was born in Marabastad, Pretoria on December 17th, 1919. At the age of five he was taken to live with his paternal grandmother to Maupaneng which is situated in the Northern Transvaal near Pietersburg. He came back to Marabastad in 1934 to attend school there and he received a High School education at St. Peter's Secondary School in Johannesburg. In 1939 he qualified as a teacher at the Adams College in Durban. While studying he worked three jobs, as a clerk, a shorthand typist and an instructor at the Enzenzeleni Blind Institute. He started working at the Orland High School in Johannesburg as a teacher of Afrikaans and English in 1945, the same year he married Rebecca Nana Mochadibane, whom he had five children with. Mphahlele became interested in the Transvaal African Teachers Association (TATA) but, after they had radically changed the education system, he opposed these changes. Consequently, Mphahlele was dismissed from his occupation at the school and he and many others were ultimately banned from teaching because of their lobbying against the Bantu Education Act. He went into exile in Basutoland, which is now Lesotho, where he worked at the Basutoland High School in Maseru. In 1955 he received his Honors degree in English literature and in the same year he joined a magazine called *Drum*, where he worked as a fiction editor, sub-editor and political reporter from 1955-1957. A series of his short stories were published in this magazine. With numerous other “unemployable” South African teachers he went to Nigeria to work there and there his writing developed and blossomed. In 1959, his autobiography *Down Second Avenue* was published, the book was translated into numerous languages and received international attention.

His first short story collection, *Man Must Live*, was published in 1946, it was succeeded by another one in 1961, *The Living and the Dead*, and one in 1967, *In Corner B and Other*

Stories. In 1961, he was a visiting lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US and he continued to work professionally in Europe and America from 1962-1963 and in 1965, he was employed by the University college in Nairobi as a lecturer in English. A year later, he received a scholarship from the University of Denver and in 1968, he received his Ph.D. for the novel *The Wanderers*, which was awarded first prize by the *African Arts/Arts Afrique* a year later, when he was also nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature. He lived in the US from 1970 until 1977, where he worked as a professor of English at the University of Denver and the University of Pennsylvania. He returned to South Africa in 1977. He was a founding member of the African Writers' Association in Johannesburg and the Council for Black Education and Research likewise in Johannesburg. He continued to publish numerous novels and short stories, such as *The Unbroken Song: Selected Writings of Es'kia Mphahlele*, *Let's Write a Novel: A Guide*, *Afrika My Music*, *Father Comes Home* and many more. In 1985 he received an Honorary Doctorate of Literature from the Rhodes University and received the *Ordre des Palmes* medal from the French government. He was also awarded a Fulbright Professorship in African Literature at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg as well as an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the University of Colorado in 1994. Throughout his life, he published numerous novels, short stories, essays and poems, which brought him national and international eminence. Es'kia Mphahlele passed away on October 27th, 2008 in Lebowakgomo, South Africa (see Obee xiii-xv & Raditlhalo, Liyong 286-302 & *South African History Online*. "Dr. Es'kia Mphahlele").

5.2. Plot Summary

"Mrs Plum" is the story told by a black South African housemaid named Karabo who is employed by the seemingly liberal white South African lady Mrs. Plum. After having left two other white families before, her friend Chimane found her a job with Mrs. Plum. When Karabo tells the story, she has been working for Mrs. Plum, her daughter Kate and her two dogs Monty and Malan for three years. Mrs. Plum is different from any other employer Mrs. Plum has worked for, she refuses to use Karabo's English name Jane when referring to her, she invests time and money in educating her worker, she treats her like an equal human being who shares the same meals as they do with them. Mrs. Plum has two dogs, Monty and Malan, which are being looked after by the gardener and housekeeper Dick. Mrs. Plum is extremely protective of them and she does not entirely

trust Dick with them, even though he would never harm the animals as this would result in him being dismissed but he cannot afford to lose his employment. Mrs. Plum participates in public demonstrations, she is an active member of “The Black Sash”⁸ and she writes articles and books calling for the end of the apartheid regime, denouncing its injustice. Karabo learns more about the position of black South Africans and their place in this society. Moreover, she gets the possibility to further educate herself at the Black Crow Club, where they are taught various handicrafts, but there she is also lectured by Lilian Ngoyi, an ANC member and anti-apartheid activist.

During the third year of her employment at Mrs. Plum’s house, numerous incidents happen and a lot changes in the house. Kate and Karabo both fall in love with the same man, a black doctor who attends Mrs. Plum’s regular meetings of white liberals and educated blacks. He and Kate decide to marry and leave the country, but Mrs. Plum is outraged when she hears this, as she claims that a marriage between a white and a black is not right. Consequently, Kate does not marry him and she finds another, white, man, and also Karabo falls in love with another man, still, never forgetting her first real love, the black doctor. Chimane, Karabo’s best friend, discovers that she is pregnant and she is forced to have an abortion. Moreover, a rumor spreads that the black workers are trying to kill their white employer’s dogs and therefore, Mrs. Plum dismisses Dick, as she is frightened of him killing Monty and Malan. Soon thereafter, Karabo’s uncle dies and she asks to be allowed to visit his grave in order to pay her last respects to him. Mrs. Plum refuses her this courtesy, as she claims that Karabo already has more free time and more

⁸ The Black Sash, or often referred to solely as “Sash”, was a resistance movement founded in 1955 and was formally known as the “Women’s Defence of the Constitution League”. The name derived from the black sash the women wore around their shoulders when attending demonstrations and marches. This non-violent movement was founded by the six white women Ruth Foley, Jean Sinclair, Jean Bosazza, Helen Newton Thompson, Tercia Pybus and Elizabeth Maclaren. At the beginning, this movement was only to be attended by female voters who were South African citizens, which meant only white women, but this was changed in 1963, when all South African women were able to become a member of the Black Sash, nonetheless, this movement maintained to be a largely “white” resistance movement.

Initially they focused on constitutional issues, but later on they also concerned themselves with moral, legal and socioeconomic issues. They actively protested against the Bantu-Self Government Bill, the incidents in the Sharpeville Township and generally the brutal regime of the apartheid government. The Black Sash was an important movement in fighting the apartheid regime beginning in the 1950s (cf. Spink 28-29, 49, 68-69 & Burton 13-18, 39, 84-85 & *Black Sash*. “Our History”).

days off compared to other maids, as her employer spends most of the Winter further South, where the weather is nicer.

As a consequence, this leaves Karabo with no other option than to resign and to leave Mrs. Plum's house, consequently, Karabo has to return to her family in Phokent, as she does not have another place of occupation in the city. After a couple of days, Mrs. Plum pays Karabo a visit and she asks her to come back to resume her work for her. Karabo agrees, although Mrs. Plum has to meet certain conditions such as to pay a better salary and to grant her more vacation.

5.3. Setting and Background

This short story by Es'kia Mphahlele is the only one included in this diploma thesis, in which the place the action is set in, is explicitly stated. Karabo was born in Phokeng; in order to find work she moved to Johannesburg and this is where most of the action takes place. Furthermore, the reader finds out the exact location of Mrs. Plum's house, namely the district called "Greenside", which is still today, a part of Johannesburg where mostly wealthy people reside. Numerous other real places are mentioned, such as Belgravia, Durban, Rustenberg, Zeerust, Shuping, Kosten, Nokaneng, the Alexandra Township and the Orlando Township. The historical background is not explicitly stated, but the story was first published in 1967, thus one can assume that the action is set around that time. Moreover, the ANC activist Lilian Ngoyi is mentioned in the short story, thus, it has to be set in a time when she was still alive. She died in March 1980, therefore, the story has to be set before the 1980s.

5.4. Characters and Characterization

Es'kia Mphahlele created three round characters in this story: The two obvious ones are Karabo and, as the reader can reason from the title, Mrs. Plum and the third one is Kate, Mrs. Plum's daughter. Even though Karabo is the narrator and protagonist of the short story and her character undergoes a development, she is not as complex as Mrs. Plum. Mrs. Plum's character is extremely sophisticated and it is not easy to provide an analysis on her, as she pretends to be somebody different than she actually is. If the reader is not careful, she might achieve this, deceiving him/her. Kate, Mrs. Plum's daughter is the third round character Mphahlele created in this story. Even though she does not play as a significant role as the other two round characters, she is quite complex. Besides those

three round characters, the reader encounters numerous flat characters: Notably Dick, Mrs. Plum's gardener, Chimane, Karabo's best friend who is employed as a housemaid by Mrs. Plum's neighbors, Chimane's aunt, who lives in the Alexandra township and who carries out her abortion, and Reverend Moruti K. K. Mphahlele includes a real historical figure in the short story. This is ANC activist Lilian Ngoyi, who speaks and answers questions every Thursday at the Black Crow Club, moreover, she teaches the ladies different handicrafts. Mrs. Plum owns two dogs, Malan and Monty. One does not learn much about them, nonetheless, they are very important to the story as their treatment by the whites represents the mindset of white South Africans during the apartheid era.

5.4.1. *Karabo*

Karabo is the first-person narrator and protagonist of the story. She is a black South African, 22-year-old woman who works for Mrs. Plum as a housemaid or "servant" (see Mphahlele 340) as she calls her occupation herself. She moved from Phokeng near Rustenberg to Johannesburg to find work in the city and to earn more money than she could in the countryside. Her parents remained there and every year at Easter she goes to visit them. Karabo's relationship to her parents is of a very loving kind, they respect each other and they want happiness for each other. Karabo supports her parents with the money she earns at Mrs. Plum's house and they regularly send each other letters reporting what is happening in their lives. What is striking here is that every time Karabo talks about these letters, one is confronted with negative experiences, such as despair, death and disease. Especially the illnesses and the resulting death of many friends and family members are noticeable, one never learns which disease is killing all these people, but, it can be assumed that it is either the HIV virus or tuberculosis. Karabo's relationship is harmonic and loving, very different from the relationship between Mrs. Plum and Kate or that between Chimane's employers and their mother-in-law's, for instance, when she visits her relatives but is made to cook for herself (see Mphahlele 355).

Karabo was given an English name, Jane, but Mrs. Plum prefers to address her by her African name. Before coming to work for Mrs. Plum, she was employed by two other white families, who greatly disrespected her in various ways. The first couple were alcoholics, and did not pay her regularly. The second family abused her by calling her derogatory names and referring to her as "You Black Girl" (Mphahlele 339). Moreover, she was used as a sexual object by one of the parents' relatives. After these experiences

and while growing up in a country with a government that mistreats, discriminates and considers any non-white ethnic group to be inferior, she distrusts any white person in general. Therefore, she is very uncomfortable when she first comes to her new work place, as she is not used to being treated equally by white people. Initially, she is scared of Mrs. Plum because “[s]he looks [her] [...] straight in the eyes when she talks to [her] [...]” (Mphahlele 341). Moreover, she is asked to eat at the table with Mrs. Plum and Kate when they have a meal, which is very embarrassing for her, as she is not used to eating with cutlery. Moreover, she does not know of any other black housemaid who is treated like this.

Karabo went to school and she passed her Standard Six, thus she at least got a minimal degree of education. Therefore, she can read and write to a certain extent. Nonetheless, she has problems with reading recipe books and newspaper articles when she first arrived at Mrs. Plum’s house, but after being helped by her and given newspapers to read, her English skills improve greatly. Karabo is a very naïve character which becomes obvious in many situations. This is not entirely a result of the bad education she received, but also because she is not a very intelligent person. Her limited intellectual capacity is referred to on many occasions in the short story.

Kate also told me she said, my mother and other women who think like her put on black belts over their shoulders when they are sad and they want to show the white government they do not like the things being done by whites to blacks. My mother and the others go and stand where the people in government are going to enter or go out of a building.

I ask her I say, Does the government and the white people listen and stop their sins? She says No. But my mother is in another group of white people.

I ask. Do the people of the government give the women tea and cakes? Kate says, Karabo! How stupid; oh!

I say to her I say, Among my people if someone comes and stands in front of my house I tell him to come in and I give him food. You white people are wonderful. But they keep standing there and the government people do not give them anything.

She replies, You mean strange. How many times have I taught you not to say *wonderful* when you mean *strange*! [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 342)

This paragraph illustrates persuasively that Karabo is not very knowledgeable. She is not aware of the fact that Mrs. Plum and other people are fighting for the rights of non-white people. Moreover, she obviously misuses words repeatedly even though Kate continuously points out the correct use of them. But, here one has to consider Karabo’s native language, which is, as the occasional words and phrases she uses let us assume,

Sotho. In this language the expression for being strange and for being wonderful is exactly the same word, namely *makatša* (Rafapa 138).

Karabo realizes that white people treat blacks disrespectfully, but she is certainly not a person who would initiate change as she is not even fully aware of the unjust world she lives in. She is very narrow-minded, she does not realize that there are white and black people who are trying to fight for non-white people and she cannot believe that there are more people who have the same mindset as Mrs. Plum. Besides being educated by Mrs. Plum, Karabo also attends weekly meetings at the so called Black Crow Club where they learn practical things, where she meets the ANC activist Lilian Ngoyi who talks to the women about politics and answers their questions. Karabo does not grasp the importance of what Mrs. Plum and the other people that come to her house are doing, or what Mrs. Plum is trying to achieve when going to the governmental buildings, or what she tries to accomplish when she turns the water hose on the police officers and consequently, is imprisoned for two weeks rather than accepting the fine of five pounds.

Karabo goes through a bit of a development throughout the story, as she is clearly transformed by the experiences at Mrs. Plum's house, by Mrs. Plum and Kate and also by the people at the Black Crow Club, especially by Lilian Ngoyi. She is fortunate enough to be employed by a white madam who is interested in her education and, therefore, her knowledge concerning the apartheid world she is born into is increased. However, even though it seems that she has grown and developed into a responsible and strong-minded character, this is not really the case. Her personality develops and she changes during the time at Mrs. Plum's house, but she has always been a vigorous person. This becomes obvious at the beginning of the short story, when she explains that she has worked for two families before and she left them due to lack of respect, the irregular payment and due to the physical and psychological mistreatment as well as sexual abuse of some family members. Thus, one can conclude that Karabo becomes a better educated person considering her reading and writing skills. Nonetheless, she remains quite a naïve woman who does not fully understand the circumstances she lives in, nor does she grasp the clash between the black and white society, nor the roles of the members in these societies.

5.4.2. *Mrs. Plum*

Even though the short story is named after Mrs. Plum, she is not the actual protagonist in the story. However, Karabo's life is determined by her and the narrative evolves around her. Karabo describes her madam as the following:

My madam's name was Mrs. Plum. She loved dogs and Africans and said that everyone must follow the law even if it hurt. These were the three big things in Madam's [sic] life. [...] Madam is a tall woman. Not slender, not fat. She moves slowly, and speaks slowly. Her face looks very wise. Her forehead seems to tell me she has a strong liver: she is not afraid of anything (Mphahlele 339-340).

Karabo's character description is accurate, and in line with what the person encounters when starting to read this short story. However, in the course of the narrative, Mrs. Plum's character undergoes a change and the reader is confronted with different aspects of her character. In these opening lines also lies a lot of symbolic meaning, if one considers the order of things, as stated by Karabo that Mrs. Plum loves. Dogs come before the Africans and exactly this is elaborated in greater detail as the story continues. Moreover, Karabo discloses the most important character trait of Mrs. Plum in the second sentence of the story, namely that she is extremely narrow minded, as she does not realize that the laws one has to follow even if it is painful, as she states herself, are "morally bankrupt" (Obee 123). This means that "anyone who breaks the law has no right to the benefits – security, respect, recognition in an ordered world - that the law confers, since breaking the law threatens everybody else's right to those benefits" (Ruth 78). This naturally implies that every single person coexisting in a society has to have the right to exactly this, nevertheless, this was (and unfortunately partially still is) not the case in South Africa. "Mrs Plum" is set at a time when apartheid was at its climax, thus, there were great differences in what rights black, white, Coloured or Indians had. (Ruth 78). Mrs. Plum is a white South African liberal, her husband killed himself and she has one daughter called Kate. Mrs. Plum prides herself with the circumstance that she treats her black housemaid equally to a white person. Moreover, she is actively and openly fighting for the rights of black people and she does this in various ways. First of all, Mrs. Plum is a member of the so called Black Sash movement and the author of several books dealing with racial issues and throughout the short story the reader learns that she is writing articles for newspapers and magazines condemning the apartheid regime. She strongly opposes the apartheid government and she tries to fight against it in various ways:

Madam writes many letters to the papers. She is always sore about the way the white police beat up black people; [...] about many ugly things that happen when some white people meet black man [sic] on the pavement or street. So madam writes to the papers to let others know, to ask the government to be kind to us. (Mphahlele 343)

Mrs. Plum embodies the inevitable political conviction that the minority rule in South Africa and furthermore, the oppression of the non-whites by the whites has to stop. Initially, the reader encounters Mrs. Plum as very open-minded person and different from the majority of white people in apartheid South Africa. She respects her housemaid's African name and refuses to use her given English name Jane, she treats her equally to any other person who dines with her, as Karabo is asked to sit with her and her daughter Kate at the same table and she is given the same food as they are eating. She wants Karabo to receive a better education, therefore, she generously gives her newspapers and magazines to read and she even buys her the ones she prefers. Mrs. Plum asks Karabo questions about the articles in order to make sure that she has understood them. She invests time and money in her to ensure that Karabo can read and write properly, that she learns a handicraft and also that she enjoys herself, and even pays for her dancing lessons. Therefore, the reader initially gets the impression that Mrs. Plum is clearly anti-apartheid and intent on improving Karabo's education and actively engaged in broadening her horizon.

Nonetheless, when reading Mphahlele's short story, one encounters different character traits in her as well. One learns that she is not as liberally minded and tolerant as she appears to be. For one, she insists that Karabo must not call the gardener "garden boy":

I was talking about Dick her garden man and I said 'garden boy'. And she says to me she says, Stop talking about a 'boy', Karabo. [...] You Africans must learn to speak properly about each other. And she says, White people won't talk kindly about you if you look down upon each other. (Mphahlele 343)

But later in the story, Mrs. Plum contradicts her own directives when talking to Karabo: "Mrs. Plum had put Monty and Malan in the sitting-room, next to her. She looked very much worried. She called me. She asked me she said, Karabo, you think Dick is a *boy* we can trust?" [emphasis added] (Mphahlele 361). She herself degrades her gardener and refers to him as boy, in a situation when she worries more about her dogs than keeping up the façade of a white liberal openly accepting blacks. Furthermore, Mrs. Plum is evidently hypocritical when it comes to her own daughter acting and acquiring and living the mindset she herself pretends to have and follow: Kate falls in love with one of the

black visitors and they decide to get married and Mrs. Plum addresses Karabo on this issue:

One day Madam [sic] comes to me and says, You Know Kate loves an African, you know the doctor who comes to supper here often. She says he loves her too and they will leave the country and marry outside. Tell me, Karabo, what do your people think of this kind of thing between a white woman and a black man? It *cannot* be right, is it?

I reply and I say to her. We have never seen it happen before where I come from. That's right, Karabo, it is just madness. [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 351)

As one can see, she is sorely shocked and outraged when she finds out that her own daughter wants to spend the rest of her life with a non-white man. This is extremely hypocritical of her, as, on the one hand, she tries to achieve equality for blacks and she fights for their rights and she wants them to be members of parliament, but, on the other hand, she absolutely cannot understand why her daughter would want to marry one of them. Thus, one can argue that she wants to improve every non-white person's life, nonetheless, she is not open-minded and accepting enough that she would welcome them into her private life and let her daughter marry them.

Mrs. Plum loves and treats the two dogs, Monty and Malan, like her own children, just as the other whites in the story as well. She humanizes them and puts their needs over those of her black employees. This humanization of the animals reaches its peak when Karabo finds her having intercourse with one of them, Malan, in her bedroom. Before this incident, Dick has made a cryptical comment to Karabo concerning this, but she does not understand what he has tried to say until she sees for herself. Karabo wants to wake up Mrs. Plum, as she has been told to do, when she was standing in front of the closed bedroom door she hears noises and thus, peeks through the key hole:

What is this? I kept asking myself. Mrs [sic] Plum! Malan! What is she doing this one? Her arm was round Malan's belly and pressing its back against her stomach at the navel, Mrs [sic] Plum's body in a nightdress moving in jerks like someone in fits ... her leg rising and falling ... Malan silent like a thing to be owned without any choice it can make to belong to another.

The gods save me! I heard myself saying, the words sounded like wind rushing out of my mouth. So this is what Dick said I would find out myself! (Mphahlele 360)

To conclude this character description, Mrs. Plum is the most complex character in this short story. She pretends to be an open-minded, liberally minded, tolerant person whose fight against the apartheid regime is entirely motivated by her respect for blacks and her

hope that one day South Africa will be a country known for its equality between whites and non-whites. Indeed, she is actively fighting for the rights of the blacks, she is a member of the Black Sash movement and she writes articles for newspapers and magazines, as well as books in which she protests and complains about the mistreatment of the black, Coloured and Indian population. However, she is not really as liberal and open-minded as she pretends to be in her writings, because when her daughter decides to marry a non-white, she openly opposes this and claims that a white marrying a black is simply not right. Thus, it can be stated that she is a hypocrite who wants equality for blacks and whites, nonetheless, she does not accept them as “equal” in her own family. Moreover, she humanizes her two dogs to an extreme extent, she puts them on a higher social level than her black housemaid and gardener and she would do anything for them. She treats them better than most whites treat the blacks and this humanization culminates when she has intercourse with them.

5.4.3. *Kate*

Kate is Mrs. Plum’s twenty-two-year-old daughter who studies at a University. The reader does not find out much about her, as her character is only of peripheral importance. Nonetheless, one can compare Kate to Karabo in some situations. Kate’s relationship with Karabo is more on an equal level compared to Karabo’s and Mrs. Plum’s relationship, nonetheless, both girls are aware that they are, and never will be fully equal. The juxtaposition of these two girls clearly illustrates the difference regarding the white South African education system and the black South African education system, the quality of the latter was actively reduced to prevent the blacks from gaining knowledge. Karabo is an obvious victim of the low level of education due to the Bantu Education laws and Kate is able to increase her knowledge after graduating from High School and she is able to attend University. Kate is not solely more knowledgeable and she does not simply have more opportunities to further educate herself, there is a clear difference between them concerning the quality of education they received. In their conversations Kate takes up the role of the educator, she explains the usage of words, the political circumstances, her mother’s political actions and moreover, she also teaches Karabo how to cook. This, again brings up the issue of “[w]hite superiority [and] black inferiority” (Hodge39):

Since I came to work for Mrs [sic] Plum Kate has been teaching me plenty of cooking. I first learned form her and Madam [sic] the word recipes. [...] As I say, Kate tells me plenty of things about Madam [sic]. She says to me she says, My

mother goes to meetings many times. I ask her I say, What for? She says to me she says, For your people. [...] How can I tell you Karabo? I don't say your people – your family only. I mean all the black people in this country. I say Oh! What do the black people want to say? [...] [T]hat a few of your people should one day be among those who rule this country, get more money for what they do for the white man, and [...] that Madam [sic] and those who think like her also wanted my people who have been to school to choose those who must speak for them [...]. [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 341-342)

Kate grew up in a liberal household under the supervision of her mother, nonetheless, it cannot be stated that, in the beginning, she is entirely without prejudice when it comes to non-whites. It is very complex to analyze her character in depth, as the reader does not learn much about her, it appears as if she is torn between opposing the derogatory attitude of the whites and fully accepting the blacks in her life. In the beginning of the fourth part of the short story, Karabo overhears Kate speaking to her mother: “One day I heard Kate speak to her mother. She says I don't know why you ask so many Africans in the house. A few will do at a time” (Mphahlele 350). This shows that she is opposing her mother's gatherings as there are too many black Africans in the house. However, later on in the story she falls in love with a black doctor and she wants to marry him, which again, causes an uproar by her mother and Karabo:

Mother says you do not like a marriage between a white girl and a black man, Karabo. [...]
She says, But I want to help him, Karabo.
I ask her, I say, You want to help him to do what?
To go higher and higher, to the top. [...] You still agree with my mother?
All I could say was I said to your mother I had never seen a black man and a white woman marrying, you hear me? What I think about it is my business. (Mphahlele 352)

Thus, it is clear that Kate underwent a transition from the beginning of the short story, where she is not pleased and a bit appalled by the number of Africans in her house, to the end when she falls in love with a black person and actually wants to marry him. Even though she raised her daughter as an accepting non-racially discriminating person, she, as well as Karabo, is shocked when she finds out that Kate wants to marry one of them. Nonetheless, in the end Kate and the doctor part ways and she finds another, white man to fall in love with. Taking all three round characters of this short story into consideration, Kate is the only one of the three women who actually evolves and makes progress considering the equal treatment of whites and blacks.

5.4.4. *Monty and Malan*

Monty and Malan are Mrs. Plum's two dogs, one does not find out of which race they are, but Karabo's description of them shows the reader that they are lapdogs rather than anything bigger than that and it is the gardener Dick's job to take care of the dogs:

It was Dick's work to look after Monty and Malan, to feed them, and to do everything for them. He did this together with garden work and cleaning of the house. [...] madam gave him the job as she had chased away two before him, she told me. In both those cases, she said that they could not look after Monty and Malan.

[...]

Monty is a tiny animal with long hair and small black eyes and a face nearly like that of an old woman. The other, Malan, is a bit bigger, with brown and white colours [sic]. It has small hair and looks naked by the side of the friends. (Mphahlele 348)

Mrs. Plum treats these dogs like her own children, she humanizes them as she is talking to them, asking them questions, and she even wants to buy a burial place for them in a pet cemetery. This is another indication that dogs, animals, had a better life than most black South Africans, the whites invested a lot of money in them and their well-being, whereas blacks could have used this money to buy plain, elementary things like stockings: "Chimane sighed and she says *Hela batho*, why do they not give me some of that money they will spend on the ground and on the gravestones to buy stockings" [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 360).

Karabo feels a profound aversion to these pets and the white people's dogs in general, but it is not just Karabo who has this dismissive attitude towards the white people's dogs, it is the blacks in general, in the short story. Although she never states clearly why this is the case, one can assume that it is due to the treatment of the whites of these animals. Those dogs have much better lives than most of Karabo's family members or friends in her home town Phokeng, where the people are starving to death because they cannot afford to buy food and because the land is extremely scarce which results in the continuance of bad harvests. Each of the dogs has its own basket, it is to be brushed and washed, they sleep on linen, they are being fed regularly etc. Naturally, this frustrates a person whose loved ones are not able to feed a family:

They sleep in two separate baskets which stay in Madam's bedroom. They are to be washed often and brushed and sprayed and they sleep on pink linen. Monty has a pink ribbon that stays on his neck most of the time. They both carry a cover on their backs. (Mphahlele 348)

The dogs have indeed better lives than most of the black South Africans during the apartheid era, this realization is preposterous, as an animal was considered superior to and its life more valuable than that of a human being. At some point Karabo realizes this, for instance, when a neighbor comes to Mrs. Plum's house to tell on Dick, who did something wrong concerning the dogs:

One white man came into the house one afternoon to tell Madam [sic] that Dick had been very careless when taking the dogs out for a walk. His own dog sitting on Madam's [sic] stoep [sic]. He repeated that he had been driving down our street; and Dick had let loose Monty and Malan to cross the street. The white man made plenty of noise about this and I think wanted to let Madam [sic] know how useful he had been. He kept on saying, Just one inch, just one inch. It was lucky I put on my brakes quick enough ... But your boy kept on smiling – Why? Strange. My boy would only do I twice and only twice and then ... ! His pass. The man moved his hand like one writing, to mean he would sign his servant's pass for him to go and never come back. When he left, the white man said, Come on Rusty, the boy is waiting to clean you. *Dogs with names, men without, I thought.* [emphasis added] (Mphahlele 349)

This white man is, to the same extent as Mrs. Plum, humanizing the animal and putting it on a higher social level than the black workers he employs. He wants to make Dick's life harder and thus, he tells on him, which seems absurd as it is not his business, or should not be. Nonetheless, he thinks it is because dogs are simply more valuable than blacks and whenever they do something wrong one has to report this to their authority, who is Mrs. Plum in Dick's case. The white visitor is intent on stultifying Dick and pointing out that Dick as well as his worker, or any other black worker is inferior to his dog Rusty. This is made clear when he refers to his pet as Rusty and to the human being working in his house simply as "boy". Then Karabo also states that this world is absurd where dogs have names, but humans do not. Nonetheless, one has to differentiate this man from Mrs. Plum, as he has a very different attitude towards blacks compared to her.

5.4.5. Dick

Karabo is not the only person who works for Mrs. Plum, as she also employs Dick, who is her gardener. He does not work for her for a long time, as he comes to her house after Karabo has already started her employment and he is being dismissed soon after this. Dick accompanies Karabo when she visits Chimane at the Alexandra Township where she is having the abortion. On their way to the township the reader finds out some facts about Dick, his family and his character. Even before, one could sense that he is a very caring and positive person, he enjoys spending time with Karabo and Chimane and with

the money he earns he is supporting his family and especially the education of his sister: “On the bus Dick told me much about his younger sister whom he was helping with money to stay at school until she finished; so that she could become a nurse and a midwife” (Mphahlale 358). He wants to enable his sister to break out of the cycle of poverty and he wants a better, richer life for her compared to the one he has. Moreover, Dick is incredibly afraid of white people and even though Mrs. Plum is nicer to her African helpers than most other white South Africans, he is extremely scared of her and of white people in general:

[...] [W]hen the white policeman spoke to him, Dick trembled and lost his tongue, and the things he thought. He just shook his head. A few moments after they had gone through his pockets he still held his arms stretched out, like the man of straw who frightens away birds in a field. Only when I hissed and gave him a sign did he drip his arms. (Mphahlele 361)

5.4.6. *Chimane*

Chimane is also a black South African who works as a housemaid in the house next to Karabo and she is her best friend in Johannesburg. It was her who managed to find a new employer for Karabo after she had left the second family. Chimane lives the life of a simple housemaid during the apartheid era, like any other maid, she is underpaid and she has to work hard. She falls in love with an African man who impregnates her, but she decides to abort the child as she cannot afford to stop working and to go back to the countryside. It is her aunt who conducts the abortion, but after her boyfriend finds out about it, he leaves her which is devastating for her.

5.4.7. *Lilian Ngoyi*

Lilian Ngoyi is the only non-fictional character in this short story, she is a historical figure who was actively fighting against the apartheid regime. Lilian Masediba Ngoyi was born in 1911 to a father who was a mineworker and a mother who did washings for white people, which her daughter had to deliver to them, just like the boy in Matthews’ short story. She found work as a machinist at a garment factory in Johannesburg and joined the Garment Workers Union (GWU) and shortly thereafter the ANC and the ANC Women’s League. She was first arrested when she delivered a telegram to Prime Minister Malan at a whites-only post office: “Dr Malan, will you please withdraw your bills? South Africa has been a peaceful country. If not, remember what happened to Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy” (Segal, Holden 114). She worked her way up the ranks of the ANC

devoting her life to politics and to the improvement of black lives and ending apartheid, she led the march to the Union Building in Pretoria in 1955, she was victim of the five-year banning order beginning in the 1960s, which was continuously renewed until her death in 1980. She passed away at the age of 68 due to health problems and heart complications (Segal, Holden 112-118).

In the story, like in real life, she takes up the role of an educator and teacher who devotes herself to educate the women at the Black Crow Club and to broaden their horizon. On the one hand, she teaches these women handicrafts such as sewing or knitting, but she is not only interested in the domestic workers' practical education, as, on the other hand, she talks to them about the social injustice they face every day. One can argue that Ngoyi "serves as a mouthpiece for Mphahlele [as] her social and political goals may be taken as his" (Hodge 35). He wants to enlighten the black women and tries to encourage them to work towards a new tomorrow for the black society, a better life without separation and without them merely being servants and the whites always being the master.

5.5. Critical Assessment

Mphahlele's short story is divided into four parts which all deal with different aspects of Karabo's life, the first three parts are much shorter compared to the fourth one. This part is the longest and most detailed one, as it focuses on the present time and it is the part including the build-up towards Karabo's contention and dispute with Mrs. Plum. The title of Mphahlele's short story suggests that Mrs. Plum is the protagonist of the story, nonetheless, this assumption is subverted when the reader reads the first sentence of the first part. Here, one is confronted with a first-person-narration and after reading the first sentence one realizes that the protagonist of the story is in fact the black female South African housemaid working for a white female, as she says, "My madam's name was Mrs. Plum" (Mphahlele 339). The yet unnamed protagonist begins the narration of her story with a representation of her madam's character description and what is significant here is the fact that the protagonist herself states that "[Mrs. Plum] loved [...] Africans" (Mphahlele 339). This is the first indication that in this story, the white authority is, contrary to the other two short stories previously analyzed, a non-discriminatory liberal. The protagonist continues and gives the reader an insight into her past and the reasons for becoming Mrs. Plum's housemaid. She has been working for two other white families before, but those treated her as an inferior human being, as they would not pay her on

time due to their alcoholism or they would call her derogatory names or merely refer to her as “You Black Girl” (Mphahlele 339) or family members would sexually assault her. This description of the other white families she previously worked for again demonstrates the thinking of white people, which meant that they were of the opinion that they can treat blacks in what ever way they wanted to, they thought they could do anything to and with them, as they are low class humans and certainly of a lower class than themselves. As Karabo is determined enough to decide herself that being treated like this is not acceptable, she refuses to work for these people any longer and resigns. Her best friend, Chimane, managed to find her a job at Mrs. Plum’s house and this is where she has been working ever since. When Karabo tells the story, it is her third year and she states herself that the house she found work at “is not as bad as that of many others [...] [as she is] paid six pounds a month with free food and [a] free servant’s room” (Mphahlele 340). Moreover, one can assume that she is satisfied with her place of employment as she has been there for a period of three years whereas she has worked for the two families before for only nine months. Nonetheless, Karabo states that she and the other black workers are never fully satisfied, and they cannot be, and thus, they always find a way to complain about something when they meet in the city on Thursdays. She and the others do not have to work then, therefore, they go to town to meet the other black South Africans. Naturally, the women dress up for this occasion and they “dress the way of many white madams and girls” (Mphahlele 340). This is interesting, as they apparently want to adjust to a society and look like the members of a society that is oppressing them since they have arrived and taken over their country. They are willing to give up and abandon their culture to adopt the culture and style of their suppressors, of the West and clearly their goal is to imitate the white South African women and their style.

In the second part of the short story, Karabo continues her narration by giving the reader an insight into her “white world” (Ruth 76). She states what her duties are, what she is asked to do for Mrs. Plum and her daughter Kate and also how they treat her and what is expected from her by them. Besides being told by Karabo that Mrs. Plum has a positive attitude towards black Africans, one is assured that this statement is in fact true, as Mrs. Plum is intent on calling Karabo by her African name and not her English name, Jane. Moreover, Karabo is surprised that “[s]he looks [...] [her] straight in the eyes when she talks to [...] [her]” (Mphahlele 341). She admits that in the beginning, this made her fear her madam, but she becomes accustomed to this and this, which is another indication that

Mrs. Plum is the first white person who treats Karabo as an equal human being. Moreover, Kate is similar to her mother as she also talks to Karabo and explains many issues to her, Karabo appreciates this and she states: “Kate, I like her very much, and she likes me too. She tells me many things a white woman does not tell a black servant” (Mphahlele 341). This statement is essential in that it provides an insight into Karabo’s mindset, as she suggests herself that a white person is a human being, whereas a black person can solely be a servant in this society. This sentence is significant for understanding how living in South Africa for a black person felt like during the time of apartheid, they were aware that they are inferior and that the only status they had was that of a servant to the superior whites. Moreover, with this statement Karabo degrades herself to solely being a servant for the white woman.

Mrs. Plum and Kate invest a lot of time in teaching and further educating their housemaid, as for example reading cook books, cooking meals and furthermore, also explaining to her what Mrs. Plum is doing at the meetings she attends and what she is writing about when she is “writing on the machine, all the time everyday [sic]” (Mphahlele 342). For the first time, the reader is confronted by the fact that Mrs. Plum is probably a member of the ANC or some other resistance group that strives against the apartheid regime, however, one does not know which one exactly. Karabo is not aware of the circumstance that there are people trying to fight for her rights and are intent on changing the society fabricated by the whites who believe in the master-race-theory. Kate explains her mother’s support of the blacks as the following:

I ask her, Do you say that there are people in the world who think the same things?
She nods her head.

I ask, What things?

So that a few of your people should one day be among those who rule this country, get more money for what they do for the white man, and – what did Kate say again? Yes, that Madam [sic] and those who think like her also wanted my people who have been to school to choose those who must speak for them in the – I think she said it looks like a *Kgotla* at home who rule the villages.

[...]

And she told me how Madam [sic] wrote books and other things for newspapers and she wrote for the newspapers and magazines to say things for the black people who should be treated well, be paid more money, for the black people who can read and write many things to choose those who want to speak for them.

Kate also told me she said, My mother and other women who think like her put on black belts over their shoulders when they are sad and they want to show the white government they do not like the things being done by whites to blacks. My

mother and the others go and stand where the people in government are going to enter or go out of a building. [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 342)

Even though Karabo is aware that the society she has been born into is unjust, she does not realize that one can act against it. Kate elucidates what her mother is actively advocating for and this is all very new to Karabo, as she is not aware of the fact that white people are indeed fighting for their rights, however, she does not realize that the ruling of the country is in fact unjust and discriminatory and has to be changed. She asks Kate: “What do the black people want to say?” (Mphahlele 342) which again shows that she is not well educated and ignorant of the circumstance that she is in fact a victim of discrimination. Karabo would never rise up and fight against the government as she does not realize that the people have power and that something has to be done to overthrow the apartheid regime. This demonstrates that, before coming to work at Mrs. Plum’s house, she did not have access to newspapers or magazines that report on these issues. However, Mrs. Plum is intent on further educating her and thus,

[a]lways when Madam [sic] finished to read her newspapers she gave them to [...] [her] to read to help [...] [her] speak and write better English. When [...] [she] had read she asked [...] [her] to tell her some of the things in it. In this way, [...] [she] did better and better and [...] [her] mind was opening and opening and [...] [she] was learning and learning many things about the black people inside and outside the towns which [...] [she] did not know in the least. (Mphahlele 343)

Mrs. Plum spends time to explain things to her and she is determined to further educate her housemaid and thus, to change society. In this part of the short story, the reader learns which movement Mrs. Plum is a member of: The Black Sash was a female resistance movement founded in the 1950s. Karabo is amazed by how Mrs. Plum proceeds against the injustice she reads about in the newspapers and the reader is confronted with Mrs. Plum’s feelings, as “[s]he is always sore about the way the white police beat up black people; [...] about many ugly things that happen when some white people meet black people on the pavement or street” (Mphahlele 343). Nonetheless, Karabo never talks about her own feelings and thoughts about these issues, it seems as if she is not affected by the white brutality against the black race. Besides being helped with practicing reading and writing, Karabo is also asked to sit at the table with the whites and eat the same food as they do. They teach her how to eat in a “civilized” and Western way, with cutlery instead of eating with her fingers and she is given the same food as they consume. On the one hand, Karabo should appreciate this, considering the fact that she is treated as an equal, on the other hand, Karabo is again suppressed by the whites, as she is prevented

from eating what she likes. Moreover, one has to consider the fact that Karabo is educated by the Plums, but their teaching her manners acquires a negative connotation, as they do this with a “patronising [sic], homogenising [sic] attitude [...] [which] negatively changes the quality of the activity” (Rafapa 139).

In the first year Mrs Plum wanted me to eat at table [sic] with her. It was very hard, one because I was not used to eating at table [sic] with a fork and knife, two because I heard of no other kitchen worker who was handled like this. [...] Number three, I could not eat some of the things I loved very much: mealie-meal porridge⁹ with sour milk or *morogo*¹⁰, stamped mealies¹¹ mixed with butter beans; sour porridge for breakfast and other things. [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 343)

Moreover, Mrs. Plum also invests effort in teaching her the use of correct English. At one occasion, Karabo refers to the gardener Mrs. Plum employs as “garden boy”, but Mrs. Plums points out that she must not call him a “garden boy” but a “garden man” and claims “You Africans must learn to speak properly about each other. [...] White people won’t talk kindly about you if you look down upon each other” (Mphahlele 343).

In the third part of the short story, the reader receives an insight into Karabo’s “black world” (Ruth 76), when she talks about the Black Crow Club in Bree Street, how the people there influence her, what she is being taught there and especially about meeting Lilian Ngoyi, who was an ANC activist is very influential for her life. She continues by going into detail about Chimane and their encounters with men, and the minister Moruti K.K. Once a week, the black housemaids are allowed to take off their Thursday afternoons and they meet at the Black Crow Club, where they learn different handicrafts and where they may talk to the resistance group leader Lilian Ngoyi, who answers their questions. Mrs. Plum “was happy that [...] [Karabo] was spending [...] [her] afternoon on Thursdays in such a club” (Mphahlele 344) and she also encourages her to take dancing lessons, which she pays for. Karabo states this very bluntly, and does not realize that her employer is very generous towards her. Mrs. Plum notices some changes in Karabo and when she asks her about what she learns at the Black Crow, she does not want to go into detail about this. Karabo asks her for newspapers “that spoke about [...] [her] people” (Mphahlele 346) and when Mrs. Plum provides these, she is positively astonished, but not grateful. Karabo starts evolving into a different person and this is mostly due to what

⁹ Meali-meal porridge is a side dish; it is a kind of flour made from maize, similar to polenta and colloquially referred to as “pap”.

¹⁰ Morogo is the term for a kind of wild spinach.

¹¹ Mealies are corncoobs.

she learns and talks about at the Black Crow Club. Lilian Ngoyi discusses issues concerning blacks and whites with them and she elaborates on the injustice they have to live with and she answers their questions concerning black lives and how they have to change the circumstances they live in:

She told us that the time has passed for black girls and women in the suburbs to be satisfied with working, sending money to our people and going to see them once a year. [...] [T]he world would never be safe for black people until they were in the government with the power to make laws. The power should be given by [sic] the Africans who were more than the whites. (Mphahlele 345)

In the fourth part of the story, Karabo goes into detail about her actual life in Mrs. Plum's house, it is her third year there and the reader learns what her duties are, what concerns her, what she and her friends do in their free time, one is confronted with their every-day and love-life problems and one realizes that Karabo's character undergoes a drastic change. "There was trouble with Kate; Chimane had big trouble; my heart was twisted by two loves; and Monty and Malan became real dogs for a few days" (Mphahlele 350). Moreover, this is the last and the main part of the short story, thus, it is the longest one.

Mrs. Plum regularly invites blacks and whites for meetings where they discuss how to proceed against the government, but Karabo is not used to having to serve blacks, when it is not in her own house in Phokeng. "I simply felt that I could not be the servant of white people and of black at the same time. At my home or in my room I could serve them without a feeling of shame" (Mphahlele 350). She is clearly not used to blacks being treated equal to whites and them being sophisticated, she thinks that they are, just as the whites do, looking down on her, despite their same skin color. Even Kate does not appreciate her mother's guests, she tells her mother that "[a] few will do at a time" (Mphahlele 350), which could be interpreted that she is scared of them or simply not as comfortable with them around as her mother wants her to be. Even though Kate feels a slight aversion towards them, she falls in love with a black doctor and they decide to get married. These are devastating news for Karabo and Mrs. Plum: Karabo is in love with the same man: "He spoke kind words and I felt my heart grow big inside me. It caused me to tremble. [...] I knew that I loved him, I could never know what he really thought of me, I mean as a woman and he as a man. But I loved him [...]" (Mphahlele 350). Karabo's negative reaction and attitude towards the marriage is two-minded, on the one hand, she opposes this for moral reasons, as she has never heard of an interracial marriage.

On the other hand, her immaturity lets her assume that she is in love with a person who only occasionally has talked to her. Karabo as well as Mrs. Plum are equally appalled:

Mrs. Plum has not expected her daughter to take her ideas literally, and Karabo feels betrayed, not so much because she herself is in love with the doctor – she knows that he is beyond her reach even if he has been kind to her – but because Kate now appears to her as a thief. (Barnett 105)

From this day onwards, until she found another man who she falls in love with, Karabo refuses to talk to Kate, as to her “[s]he appeared [...] as a thief, as a fox that falls upon a flock of sheep at night” (Mphahlele 351). Mrs. Plum is against the marriage of a white girl and a black man, which is extremely hypocritical of her as she claims to be a liberal, accepting blacks as equal human beings, but she does not allow her own daughter to marry a black man. If she actually believed in what she claims and what she is fighting for as a member of the Black Sash, this should make her proud as her own daughter grew up with the notion that there is no difference between black and white, but that every human being is equal. Obviously, this is not the case as she dismisses the marriage of a black man and a white woman as “madness” and that “[i]t *cannot* be right [...]” [original emphasis] (Mphahlele 351).

Mrs. Plum’s character is extremely complex, as just after she tries to prevent her daughter from marrying a black man, she refuses two police officers the entrance to her gardener’s room. Throughout the city, the police tries to find loafers and and blacks without passes, and one day they also come to her house in order to search the premises and especially her black workers’ rooms. She does not give them permission to search her property, nonetheless they are able to make their way to the backyard, because they are representatives of state and thus, have authority over Mrs. Plum. But they are driven away by her:

Mrs [sic] Plum took the hose that was running in the front garden and quickly went round to the back. [...] They were talking to Dick, using dirty words. Mrs. Plum did not wait, she just pointed the hose at the two policemen. This seemed to surprise tem. They turned round and she pointed it into their faces. [...] They shouted and tried to wave the water away, but she kept the hose pointing at them, now moving it up and down. They turned and ran through the back gate, swearing the while. That fixes them, Mrs [sic] Plum said. (Mphahlele 354)

This incident is reported in the newspaper and Mrs. Plum is taken to the police station and in court she is given the opportunity to either go to prison or pay a fine of five pounds. Even though this amount is not much for her, as Kate points out, she decides against

paying and she is sentenced to spend two weeks in prison. At this point, for the first time in the short story, Karabo realizes that her madam venerates blacks, she is impressed by Mrs. Plum's courage and commitment for blacks which is something she has never seen before. She is impressed by the fact that a white person selflessly goes to prison for helping a black person:

What did Mrs [sic] Plum really believe about me, Chimane, Dick and all the other black people? [...] [F]rom all those things she was writing for the papers and all those meetings she was going to where white people talked about black people and the way they are treated by the government, from what those white women with black bands over their shoulders were doing standing where a white government man was going to pass, I said to myself I said, This woman [...] I do not know she seems to think very much of us black people. (Mphahlele 354-355)

This is hard for her to understand, as she has not encountered a white person fighting for her rights before, and even though she has been told what Mrs. Plum does when she goes to the parliament or what the articles in the newspapers and magazines are about, this is the moment when she understands what this all means.

Shortly after this incident, Chimane reveals to Karabo the devastating news about her pregnancy. She is at loss and does not know how to handle this situation. Thus, Karabo suggests that she should return to her parents, give birth to the baby there and come back to town after three months. However, Chimane knows better and she simply replies, "What shall we be eating all the time I am at home?" (Mphahlele 357). This demonstrates again that the people in the countryside are living an even more miserable life, in greater poverty than the blacks in the city. Therefore, Chimane decides to have the child aborted and to do this, she goes to the Alexandra Township. Karabo and Dick go after her and they find her in a bed in her aunt's hut who, when they arrive, is in the process of aborting the fetus. Naturally, this was not a medically well executed abortion, "Her way was to hold a sharp needle, cover the point with the finger, and guide it into the womb. She then fumbled in the womb until she found the egg and pierced it. She gave you something to ease the bleeding" (Mphahlele 359). Chimane survives this procedure and she returns to Johannesburg shortly after this, never telling her employers where she has been, let alone that she has had an abortion. Their lives do not get easier, as rumors are spread saying that the black workers are trying to poison the white employers' dogs. This also concerns Mrs. Plum and thus, one day she asks Karabo, "[...] Karabo, you think Dick is a *boy* we can trust?" [emphasis added] (Mphahlele 361). Throughout the short story, Mrs. Plum

has been incredibly suspicious of her housekeeper, she never fully trusts him with the dogs and this question emphasizes this mistrust. Firstly, the question itself shows that she is convinced that he is capable of poisoning her pets, even though he would never consider doing this, because he is simply much too frightened of white people and of losing his occupation. Secondly, with this simple question she falsifies everything she has taught Karabo so far, as she has told her she needs to start speaking proper English and thus, must not call Dick a boy. In this situation, however, she does the exact opposite of what she has been telling her. This again exposes her hypocrisy as she tells the blacks what to do, how to behave and to speak, but when she is threatened by them, she does not adhere to her own principles. Moreover, Dick himself states, when talking to Karabo, “It is wrong this thing they want to do to kill poor dogs. What have these things of God done to be killed for? Is it the dogs that make us carry passes? Is it dogs that make the laws that give us pain? People are just mad, they do not know what they want, stupid!” (Mphahlele 361). He is very reasonable and he obviously would never commit a crime like this, as he does not blame the dogs for how he is being treated and thus, he cannot make sense of why somebody would kill a dog. Nonetheless, despite his good character, Dick is dismissed.

Karabo is disappointed in her employer and she keeps losing trust in her, this intensifies when she receives a letter from her parents saying that her uncle died and Karabo asks Mrs. Plum if she could take off some time to return to Phokeng for a few days and pay her respects to him:

I went to Mrs [sic] Plum to ask her if I could go home. She asks she says, When did he die? I answer I say, It is three days, Madam [sic]. She says, So that they have buried him? I reply, Yes Madam [sic]. Why do you want to go home then? Because my uncle loved me very much, Madam [sic]. But what are you going to do there? To take my tears and words of grief to his grave and to my old aunt, Madam [sic]. No, you cannot go, Karabo. You are working for me you know? Yes, Madam [sic]. I, and not your people pay you. I must go, Madam [sic], that is how we do it among my people, Madam [sic]. She paused. She walked into the kitchen and came out again. I you want to go, Karabo, you must lose the money for the days you will be away. Lose my pay, Madam [sic]? Yes, Karabo. (Mphahlele 362)

Even though it seems as if Mrs. Plum is not understanding or sympathetic with Karabo and her uncle's death, she tries to find a solution to the problem and offers her an arrangement, which, however, Karabo does not want to accept. As Mrs. Plum will not give her some days off without not paying her, Karabo decides to resign from the job with Mrs. Plum and to go back to Phokeng. She does not have a plan what to do or how to find

a new job, nonetheless, she returns to her parents' home, where she helps and supports them with their work on the farm. It seems as if she has made this decision instantaneously and impetuously as she does not think about how good her life is at Mrs. Plum's house compared to her parents' lives in Phokeng or other black workers' lives in the city. Mrs. Plum is hurt by Karabo's rash decision, and for this reason, she does not try to convince her to stay. Even when Kate talks to her she refuses to discuss this matter with her and she lets Karabo go. She is disappointed in her, also for not showing any gratitude. It is because of Mrs. Plum that Karabo started thinking for herself more and more, she has helped her to become more educated and she has invested time and money in her, but Karabo does not thank her for this. Karabo goes back to Phokeng, but only a week later when Mrs. Plum comes to see her and asks her to return to Johannesburg, as she wants Karabo to commence working for herself. Karabo is not sure whether or not to agree to this offer, therefore, she has to ask her parents who approve of it. Nonetheless, Karabo states her conditions she needs Mrs. Plum to meet:

I tell Mrs [sic] Plum I say, If you want me to think about it I must know if you will want to put my wages up from £6 because it is too little. She asks me, How much will you want?

Up by £4.

[...]

And then I want two weeks at Easter and not just the weekend. I thought if she really wanted me she would want to pay for it. This would also show how sorry she was to lose me.

Mrs [sic] Plum says, I can give you one week. (Mphahlele 365)

Mrs. Plum and Karabo both agree to these terms and Karabo returns to Johannesburg with her madam the next day. This makes Karabo "the victor [in the end, as] she to some extent calls the shots" (Rafapa 141). The short story ends with Mrs. Plum telling Karabo of what has happened since she left:

Mrs. Plum says to me, You will not find Monty and Malan.

Oh?

Yes, they were stolen the day after you left. The police have not found them yet. I think they are dead myself.

I thought of Dick ... Could he? And she ... did this woman come to ask me to return because she had lost two animals she loved?

You know, I like your people, Karabo, the Africans.

And Dick and me? I wondered (Mphahlele 366).

Karabo does not believe Mrs. Plum when she claims that she genuinely likes blacks as she is not convinced that she even likes the black South Africans who are working for her

and whom she sees every day. Karabo mistrusts her and will probably never fully trust her employer, even though she is deeply committed to improve the blacks' situation. Moreover, Mrs. Plum's choice of words is somehow unfortunate. By saying "your people" she does exactly what every other white person in the apartheid society does, namely, to distinguish between "us" and "them". Through this, she continuously qualifies the black population. Mrs. Plum thinks in terms of "my people" and "your people" which, again, distinguishes between whites and non-whites and this opposes her liberalism (Rafapa 144). Furthermore, the story ends exactly the same way it started, namely, with Mrs. Plum reassuring the reader, in the beginning indirectly, at the end directly, that she loves dogs and Africans, in this exact order (cf. MacKenzie 247).

To conclude this analysis, Mphahlele created a concise version of a *bildungsroman*¹², as it is a text that describes the mental and psychological development of its protagonist from adolescence to maturity. Even though, the main character does not have "a total awareness of [her]self" at the end (Ruth 86), Ruth agrees with Hodge's analysis that the story can be placed in the tradition of a *bildungsroman*: "As [i]t is specifically a story of how a black South African maid develops to a point where she sees through a white liberal madam and comes to a particular understanding of her socio-economic position in the society she enters" (Ruth 65). However, Ruth's argument is not entirely persuasive, as Karabo never fully "sees through" Mrs. Plum, which is especially demonstrated by the last sentence, where, after being reassured by Mrs. Plum that she likes the black people, Karabo asks herself "And Dick and me? I wondered" (Mphahlele 366). Nevertheless, Karabo undoubtedly undergoes a transformation of character and Mrs. Plum herself is mostly responsible for this as she helped Karabo to become a better educated black South African. Only because of the knowledge Mrs. Plum has made available to Karabo, the latter realizes that the acted liberalism of her employer is partially only a farce. As Hodge (36) states, "Karabo is a dynamic figure who evolves from a basic ignorance of white urban realities to a relatively complete and comprehensive understanding of both the social situation and her position in this society". Karabo gradually, but never completely,

¹² The *bildungsroman* is a distinct narrative genre which originated in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. It describes the "inward psychological development" opposed to the solely the "outward adventures and progress" (Lowe 405) of the protagonist of the fictional piece. The protagonist, usually a young, immature person, "matures through socialization" (Bell 6).

unravels the true face of Mrs. Plum and as MacKenzie (244) states in his analysis of the short story:

[Mphahlele's short story] is an acute and subtle interrogation of white liberalism in South Africa by a black narrator whose steady growth in knowledge and understanding allows her to prise apart the liberal ideology of her employer and to expose the hypocrisy and injustice that it contains.

In the story, the reader is confronted with three different versions of South African life and each character that appears is a representative of either one of these versions: "Chimane, her aunt, Dick, and later [...] Karabo's parents [function as a representation of the African past]", Mrs. Plum as a spokesman for "the ideological present" and Karabo herself as "the yet unrealized promise of the future" (Obee 122-123). The promise for a better future, where blacks are better educated and treated with greater respect, where they are allowed to live next to the whites and do not have to subordinate themselves to the whites in any kind. It can be argued that this is Mphahlele's vision or wish for a South Africa in the future.

Considering all three short stories analyzed in this thesis, it is obvious that Mrs. Plum and Kate are indeed the most liberal, open-minded and accepting white characters of all. Nonetheless, this story unambiguously demonstrates that black South Africans of that time still had a long way to go and a hard fight ahead of them to reach complete equality for themselves, as they were merely used for inferior work and work whites did not want to do. However, South Africa still has not overcome this problem, twenty-one years after the first democratic elections took place and its first black president was elected by the people. Much work has to be done in this country to overcome the inequality and the rift between different territories and social groups, as, unfortunately up to this day, the social and financial gap between black and white has in no sense been closed. A plausible reason for this might be that the last generations of blacks did not have the right to receive proper education. The Bantu education laws actively tried to diminish the number of educated blacks and those who were lucky enough to go to school, their education greatly varied from the whites' one. This could be an explanation why the aftermath of Apartheid is still so present in South Africa. The first generation of blacks who is allowed to attend school and go to University is still in education at the moment and it can be assumed that within the next couple of years this gap is slowly going to close. Blacks have the same rights

now, they can receive education and thus, it is only logical that soon there will be no rift between whites and non-whites.

With “Mrs Plum” Mphahlele created a masterpiece of South African fiction that depicts the difference between white and non-white, the façade so many whites tried to build for themselves during the apartheid time and the struggle of blacks in an unjust world.

6. Teaching South African Literature in the Austrian English Classroom

6.1. Teaching Literature

In this chapter, numerous lesson plans are presented which suggest how the three previously analyzed South African short stories could be used in the Austrian English classroom. The format of these lesson plans follows the predefined model developed by the Centre for English Language Teaching of the English Department at the University of Vienna. These lesson plans have been developed for the AHS Oberstufe, but can certainly also be used in any other BHS school. Moreover, the short stories can also be read with younger students from the AHS Unterstufe or the NMS, however, the exercises would have to be modified, as the worksheets and lesson plans created are specifically designed for students who have reached B1 or B2 level. Thus, also the ESP 15+ descriptors included in the lesson plans are always taken from the lists of these two levels. As these lessons have been developed for students who have reached B1 or B2 level, these texts can also be part of the oral Matura exam, therefore, the so-called pools of topics¹³ for the new Austrian Matura are included. These pools of topics have been defined by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBF).

Teaching topics like this one is an incredible opportunity for students to learn more about the world and about other countries' history. Dealing with this particular theme is going to strengthen and improve the students' second language acquisition as the topic concerns itself with a country in which English is amongst one of the official languages. As it is explained in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*¹⁴ (CEFR),

factual knowledge concerning the country or countries in which the language is spoken, such as its major geographical, environmental, demographic, economic and political features [is [o]f considerable importance to the learner of a particular language]. (Council of Europe 102)

¹³ The pools of topics have solely been defined in German, thus the author of this thesis has translated them into English.

¹⁴ "The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which a language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis" (Council of Europe 1).

Moreover, teaching reading is an essential part of a language teacher's job, as it further develops the students' ability to use the foreign language, their awareness of the language structure, thus the grammatical components, increases and lastly, their understanding of different countries of the world increases (Hedge 221). The exercises presented here are only an example of how the texts and this topic could be used. They should solely serve as an illustration, as the themes of the texts are very extensive one might find different exercises more important. Nonetheless, as presented here, the tasks serve as a preparation for and focus on the requirements for the New Matura. Furthermore, the lessons presented also adhere to the requirements stated in the curriculum for foreign languages. Especially, the point of action-oriented foreign language competence is being centralized as well as the general notion of different countries and cultures:

Durch interkulturelle Themenstellungen ist die Sensibilisierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler für die Sprachenvielfalt Europas und der Welt zu verstärken, Aufgeschlossenheit gegenüber Nachbarsprachen – bzw. Gegenüber Sprachen von autochthonen Minderheiten und Arbeitsmigrantinnen und –migranten des eigenen Landes – zu fördern und insgesamt das Verständnis für andere Kulturen und Lebensweisen zu vertiefen. Die vorurteilsfreie Beleuchtung kultureller Stereotypen und Klischees, die bewusste Wahrnehmung von Gemeinsamkeiten und Verschiedenheiten sowie die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit eigenen Erfahrungen bzw. Mit österreichischen Gegebenheiten sind dabei anzustreben. (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache 1)

Durch die Auswahl geeigneter fremdsprachlicher Themenstellungen ist die Weltoffenheit der Schülerinnen und Schüler sowie ihr Verständnis für gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge zu fördern. (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache 1)

As an introductory unit, a lesson which solely deals with the history of apartheid and the concepts of apartheid has been created. This serves as a preparation for the reading of the short stories as it provides knowledge that some students will not have, as this topic is a part of the world's history which is hardly ever covered in the history lessons in Austrian schools. Naturally, one lesson is not enough to completely transfer the full extent of the apartheid regime, what happened historically, how it developed, which resistance groups formed and opposed this oppressive government, how it ended etc. Nonetheless, it should solely serve as a quick overview in order for the students to better understand the full meaning of the short stories and the context they are set in. After the history lesson, two lessons, each consisting of fifty minutes, are made use of to concentrate on each one of the short stories. As fifty-minute-periods are quite short the two lessons have been combined in one lesson that lasts one hundred minutes. Thus, three individual lesson plans have been conceived all together. The order in which the primary text should be

used is the teachers' decision as it does not influence the following lessons. As a conclusive and summarizing period another lesson plan with the topic "white authorities" has been developed. It will include a number of the authoritative persons from the short stories and its focus is on the juxtaposition of these characters. The main goal of this final lesson is to encourage the students to use the knowledge they have gained over the course of weeks. They have to apply what they have learned about the history and also about what the short stories are about. The main goal is to support the students' independence in preparing and conducting their mini-presentations.

The lesson plans and the exercises have been designed with regard to the requirements of the new Austrian Matura and thus, the curriculum of the AHS Oberstufe has been borne in mind while coming up with the tasks. The following points have especially been emphasized in the exercises:

1. Kommunikative Sprachkompetenz als übergeordnetes Lernziel
2. Gleiche Gewichtung der Fertigkeitsbereiche
3. Berücksichtigung der Lernaltersprache
4. Vielfalt von Lehrmethoden, Arbeitsformen und Lernstrategien
5. Erwerb linguistischer Kompetenzen
6. Länder und Kulturen (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache 2-4)

Moreover, the following lesson plans will show that some exercises have been specifically created in regard of the monologic part of the oral Matura examination. Especially in the first lesson, when the students are shown the pictures aims for the students to express their thoughts on this topic and this is similar to what they have to do during the monologic part of the oral exam, thus, it serves as appropriate practice for them.

Teaching the younger generations about topics like this one is essential, as to show them how people who were and still are considered to be different were and, to some extent, are still treated. These five lesson plans aim to introduce the pupils to the topic of xenophobia and racism against certain ethnic groups, which aims to make them aware of the fact that people are discriminated and feared only because they are different to what one is used to. Consequently, the students should start to think about this topic and they should connect this to what is happening in our world today. In a world, where Muslims

are openly discriminated, where refugees are not being helped and given shelter, but actively kept out of prosperous, first world countries, only due to the fact that they are different, that they have a different culture or religion. The students should be made aware of the fact that racism is not an issue of the past, but that it is still happening today. Thus, after these five lessons have been conducted, it is advisable to have a follow up period, where this topic is discussed. Where the students can talk about daily racism, where they can discuss their experiences or their thoughts on this issue.

6.2. Lesson Plan: An Introduction to Apartheid and Its History

Brief Rationale: The students will be introduced to the topic of the history and the development of the apartheid regime in South Africa. They should understand what it meant to live under this oppressive, white-minority-regime as a person from every non-white/non-European ethnic group. They will be shown pictures which serve as visual references and which should trigger some emotions, which later on, the students should verbalize in a plenum discussion. As a reading exercise they are given a gap-fill-exercise with the history of apartheid as its topic, they are going to learn about the development and the end of the regime. This exercise might be challenging for some of the students, but with enough time and support from the teacher and his/her classmates they should all be able to manage it.

Precise Definition of Aims and Objectives (ESP 15+ Checklist):

Pg. 40/2: Ich kann Gefühle wie Überraschung, Freude, Trauer, Interesse oder Gleichgültigkeit ausdrücken und auf Gefühlsäußerungen meiner Gesprächspartner/innen reagieren.

Pg. 41/2: Ich kann in Diskussionen über mir vertraute Themen meinen Standpunkt klar darlegen und ihn verteidigen, verschiedene Vorschläge beurteilen und auf Gegenargument im Einzelnen eingehen.

Pg. 41/6: Ich kann sprachliche Situationen bewältigen, in denen es darum geht, eine Lösung in einer Auseinandersetzung auszuhandeln (z.B. bei einem Streit, in einem Beschwerdefall).

Pg. 41/9: Ich kann in Gesprächen über mir geläufige Themen die Rolle des Sprachmittlers/der Sprachmittlerin übernehmen und zwischen zwei

Gesprächspartnerinnen oder Gesprächspartner Informationen vermitteln, zusammenfassen und erläutern.

Pg. 46/1: Ich kann zu mir vertrauten Themenbereichen berichten was ich gehört, gesehen, gelesen oder erlebt habe und dabei auch meine Gefühle und Reaktionen beschreiben.

Pg. 46/5: Ich kann Bilder beschreiben und mit Hilfe von Stichwörtern oder Illustrationen Geschichten erzählen.

Pg. 47/4: Ich kann meine Absichten, Pläne und Ziele präzise formulieren bzw. Meinen Standpunkt zu einer aktuellen Fragestellung genau darlegen und begründen.

Relevant EPOSTL Descriptors (page + number):

Pg. 17/2: I can appreciate and make use of the value added to the classroom environment by learners with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Pg. 21/1: I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.

Pg. 21/2: I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.

Pg. 21/3: I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc.

Pg. 22/9: I can help learners to use communication strategies (asking for clarification, comprehension checks etc.) and compensation strategies (paraphrasing, simplification etc.) when engaging in spoken interaction.

Pg. 26/1: I can select texts appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.

Pools of Topics:

21. Politics and public institutions
22. The globalized world / Globalization
23. Society (minorities, marginal groups ...)
24. Rules, regulations, laws (juvenile crimes, personal freedom ...)

Rough Time Frame	Procedure	Interaction Format	Skills/Language System	Materials / Notes
5 mins	Introduction & brainstorming	T → S	Listening skills Speaking skills	Inform Ss that topic for the next lessons will be Apartheid. T writes the word “Apartheid” on the board and asks Ss if they know what it is and what comes to their mind when hearing the word. Write down what they say.
10 mins	Visualization of what living during apartheid meant.		Writing skills	Apartheid Pictures (Appendix: 9.1. Pictures Apartheid) Ss should not comment on the pictures yet, only look at them. T slowly shows the pictures twice, so they can fully absorb what they are seeing and make up their minds what to think about these, also Ss should take notes about what they think of the pictures, as they will need it for the discussion of the pictures.
10 mins	Discussion of the pictures	T, S	Speaking skills Analytical skills	Ss, one after another, explains what they saw on the pictures, they can say whatever comes to their mind. T functions as moderator, asks additional questions in order to get the Ss to

				really explain what they mean, to exploit their full potential.
20 mins	Fill-in exercise	S	Reading skills Writing skills	The Ss receive a worksheet (Appendix: 9.2. History of Apartheid) with a fill-in-gap-exercise. The worksheet shortly summarizes the most important information about the history and the development of apartheid. The words they need to use are presented to them in a box at the bottom of the sheet. The students have enough time to go through the text thoroughly more than once, so they can really think about what word/phrase belongs in each gap.
5 mins	Comparison of the worksheet	S→T T→S	Speaking skills Reading skills Listening skills	Together the whole class compares the worksheet. One person after another has to read one sentence. The Ss have to listen carefully and correct their worksheets if they happen to have made a mistake.
As homework, the students have to read through the text again, but this time paying attention to what is actually said in the text. They have to start to understand the apartheid regime and grasp how long it was in power and which negative influence it had on the lives of blacks, Coloureds and Indians.				

6.3. Lesson Plan: Nadine Gordimer's Short Story "Six Feet of the Country"

Brief Rationale: As the students had to read the text as a home work exercise, they now simply have to familiarize themselves with the story line again and the class summarizes the plot together. They go into detail with each character and with this exercise they improve their speaking and presentation skills. In order to go into further detail, they engage in the worksheet, the questions on it try to get the students to look at the story from a different angle. The plenum discussion at the end should show the students that this story does not necessarily have to be set in South Africa and it should again emphasize on how it felt for every non-European, and especially for blacks, to live under such an oppressive regime.

Precise Definition of Aims and Objectives (ESP 15+ Checklist):

Pg. 46/1: Ich kann zu mir vertrauten Themenbereichen berichten, was ich gehört, gesehen, gelesen oder erlebt habe und dabei auch meine Gefühle und Reaktionen beschreiben.

Pg. 46/6: Ich kann den Inhalt eines Buches oder Films wiedergeben und meine Meinung dazu äußern.

Pg. 47/1: Ich kann spontan, weitgehend fließend und detailliert erzählen, was ich erlebt, erfahren oder mir ausgedacht habe.

Pg. 47/6: Ich kann den Inhalt und die Thematik von Texten, Spielfilmen, Interviews, Reportagen so zusammenfassen, dass meinen Zuhörerinnen und Zuhörern das Wesentliche klar wird.

Relevant EPOSTL Descriptors (page + number):

Pg. 21/1: I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.

Pg. 21/2: I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.

Pg. 21/3, I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc. j

Pg. 21/7: I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in ongoing spoken exchanges (conversations, transactions etc.) and to initiate or respond to utterances appropriately.

Pg. 25/3: I can encourage learners to use their knowledge of a topic and their expectations about a text when listening.

Pg. 29/1: I can evaluate and select a variety of texts, source materials and activities which awaken learners' interest in and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and other language culture (cultural facts, events, attitudes and identity etc.).

Pg. 31/3: I can locate and select listening and reading materials appropriate for the needs of my learners from a variety of sources, such as literature, mass media and the Internet.

Pg. 31/5: I can design learning materials and activities appropriate for my learners.

Pg. 35/3: I can plan activities to emphasize the interdependence of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Pools of Topics:

19. Intercultural aspects

21. Politics and public institutions

22. The globalized world / Globalization

23. Society (minorities, marginal groups ...)

24. Rules, regulations, laws (juvenile crimes, personal freedom ...)

Rough Time Frame	Procedure	Interaction Format	Skills/Language System	Materials / Notes
As homework the students had to read Nadine Gordimer's short story "Six Feet of the Country" thus, everybody is familiar with the story and knows what it is about, what the main story line is and who the main characters are. The students were told that the story will be the topic for the next two lessons and that they have to know the text very well, they were told that reading the story once is probably not enough and they were given the possibility to take notes which they can hand in or use in the classroom for help.				
10 mins	Summarizing the short story	$S \rightarrow T$ $T \rightarrow S$ $S \rightarrow S$	Speaking skills	The T tells the Ss that before they start to discuss the short story in detail they have to summarize what happens in it so that everybody can remember the story line. In order to do this, everybody has to write down some keywords or phrases in the order in which they occurred. Afterwards, the whole class summarizes the short story together and the T writes down the most important events on the board, (using a time line) in the correct chronology and when the Ss are finished, the T sums up their findings and thus, again summarizes the story to make sure that all the Ss have understood the context and the story line of the text.

15 min	Discussion of the characters of the story with individual mini-presentations	S → S	Speaking skills Listening skills Presentation skills	Flash Cards with the names of the characters (the narrator/protagonist; Lerice; the white officials represented by 1. the police sergeant and 2. by Lerice and her husband; Petrus; Petrus' dead brother) The Ss form groups of five – in order to mix the class and not have the same groups as always the flash cards have different colors, they have to form a group where five different colors are present. The T gives them the following instructions: Every S has to talk for two minutes presenting the most important character traits of the person on their flashcard, but they have to speak in first-person, thus, they take up the role of the character. To prepare, the students get 5 minutes where they can write down keywords of what they need to include in their mini-presentation. The T walks around in the classroom and functions as coordinator, he/she gives advice when needed and assists the Ss if they have problems. The T
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				listens to the presentations as well as possible and spends an equal amount of time with every group. The T times them and tells them when they have to change speaker.
30 mins	Answering of the questions on the worksheet	S	Writing skills Speaking skills	After everybody settled down in his/her own place again, the Ss are given a worksheet that deals with the short story (Appendix: 9.4. Worksheet: Nadine Gordimer “Six Feet of the Country”). The T does not have to give them any instructions as they can find them on the top of the worksheet. Everybody has to work on his/her own and answers the questions to the best of his/her ability ¹⁵ .
15	Plenum discussion of the worksheet	S → T T → S S → S	Speaking skills	After the Ss are finished with their discussions the whole class goes through every question one by one to see what everybody came up with. The Ss should add to their answers if they have not covered one quite as much as the others.

¹⁵ The task in which the students have to determine the climaxes of the short story has been taken, but modified, from the work sheet “Wetback and Stories of Migration in the English Classroom”, by Denise Croker and Elizabeth Allen.

20	Plenum discussion of how the Ss know this is an apartheid text. Could this story be set anywhere else in the world at any other time or is it distinctly written to only represent the situation in South Africa? How does the apartheid regime influence the lives of the whites and the blacks? How are the blacks treated by their “superiors” and what are the whites’ attitudes towards the blacks?	$S \rightarrow T$ $T \rightarrow S$ $S \rightarrow S$	Speaking skills	This discussion should focus on the fact that this story can not only be set in South Africa, that not all whites are the same (cf. sergeant vs. narrator vs. Lerice), how hard life as a black person was, what they had to endure. The T functions as a moderator, he/she asks questions and steers the conversation in the “right” direction. The T takes notes of the most important points mentioned in the discussion on the board which the Ss have to write down as well.
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6.4. Lesson Plan: James Matthews' Short Story "The Park"

Brief Rationale: In these two lessons the students are given the opportunity to improve their writing skills, moreover, they proofread their classmates' texts which is a great way to improve their own writing skills. The plenum discussion should give them an insight into how the others in the class perceived the story and they might acquire new perspectives concerning the topics of the story. Moreover, in the discussion they can again work on their speaking skills.

Precise Definition of Aims and Objectives (ESP 15+ Checklist):

Pg. 40/5: Ich kann ohne Vorbereitung zu vertrauten Themen Fragen stellen und beantworten.

Pg. 40/6: Ich kann in Gesprächen, Diskussionen und Besprechungen zu vertrauten Themen meine Meinung einbringen und begründen. Weiters kann ich zustimmen oder höflich widersprechen und andere Vorschläge machen.

Pg. 41/2: Ich kann in Diskussionen über mir vertraute Themen meinen Standpunkt klar darlegen und ihn verteidigen, verschiedene Vorschläge beurteilen und auf Gegenargumente im Einzelnen eingehen.

Pg. 41/4: Ich kann in einem Gespräch (z.B. Interview) die Initiative ergreifen, Gedanken entwickeln und ausführen.

Pg. 52/2: Ich kann einfache Geschichten, Aufsätze und kreative Texte verfassen.

Pg. 52/3: Ich kann über persönliche Eindrücke von Erzählungen und Büchern, Filmen und Theaterstücken schreiben.

Pg. 52/10: Ich kann die wichtigsten Inhalte eines Textes zusammenfassen, wenn es sich um Informationen zu einem Thema handelt, das mir vertraut ist, und wenn der Ausgangstext klar strukturiert und nicht zu komplex ist. Dabei kann der Ausgangstext in meiner Muttersprache oder in der Zielsprache verfasst sein.

Pg. 53/2: Ich kann gegliedert und anschaulich über Ereignisse, Erfahrungen und eigene Ideen schreiben.

Pg. 53/8: Ich kann Texte, die sich auf ein aktuelles Thema oder ein Thema aus meinem Interessensbereich beziehen, in klar strukturierter Form zusammenfassen. Dabei können die Ausgangstexte in meiner Muttersprache oder in der Zielsprache verfasst sein.

Relevant EPOSTL Descriptors (page + number):

Pg. 21/1: I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.

Pg. 21/2: I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.

Pg. 21/3: I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc.

Pg. 21/7: I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in ongoing spoken exchanges (conversations, transactions etc.) and to initiate or respond to utterances appropriately.

Pg. 23/8: I can help learners to monitor, reflect on, edit and improve their own writing.

Pg. 25/3: I can encourage learners to use their knowledge of a topic and their expectations about a text when listening.

Pg. 24/9: I can use peer-assessment and feedback to assist the writing process.

Pg. 29/1: I can evaluate and select a variety of texts, source materials and activities which awaken learners' interest in and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and other language culture (cultural facts, events, attitudes and identity etc.).

Pg. 31/3: I can locate and select listening and reading materials appropriate for the needs of my learners from a variety of sources, such as literature, mass media and the Internet.

Pg. 31/5: I can design learning materials and activities appropriate for my learners.

Pg. 35/3: I can plan activities to emphasize the interdependence of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Pg. 54/2: I can help learners to engage in peer assessment.

Pools of Topics:

19. Intercultural Aspects

20. Growing up and finding one's identity (incl. role models, national identities ...)

23. Society (minorities, marginal groups ...)

24. Rules, regulations, laws (juvenile crimes, personal freedom ...)

Rough Time Frame	Procedure	Interaction Format	Skills/Language System	Materials / Notes
The Ss were told that the next two lessons they will discuss this short story, thus they have already read the short story as homework, so they are familiar with the plot and its characters.				
30 mins	The Ss are asked to write a summary of 250 words of the short story.	S	Writing skills	The Ss are given the quick instructions that they have to write a summary of the short story they were supposed to read as a homework. They have to write it on a piece of paper and not on their laptops, as their summaries will be given to other Ss in the class.
20 mins	Correction of the summaries	S	Reading skills	After the Ss are done with their summaries and after they have read through them thoroughly, the T collects them and then hands them out again, so that every S has the written text of a different S. The Ss are asked to read through their classmates texts and correct them with a pencil.
20 mins	Discussion of the revised texts and the Ss correct their summaries	S → S T only when the Ss have problems	Speaking skills	After the Ss read through and corrected the others' summaries they are supposed to find the person whose text they read and they should tell them what they think is incorrect.

				They should be able to explain what the mistakes are. If there are unresolvable discrepancies between the Ss the T has to step in and advise them on what is correct/incorrect. The Ss have time to change their summaries and afterwards they have to hand it in so the T can correct them as their homework.
20 mins	Plenum discussion of the themes and topics of the short story and the characters' feelings.	S → T T → S S → S	Speaking skills	All together, the Ss have to figure out what, in their opinion, the topics and themes of the short story are. The T functions as a moderator, he/she asks questions to guide them and lead them towards the themes of discrimination, poverty, injustice, apartheid/segregation. All the themes they think of, the T writes down on the black board and after finalizing their findings, the Ss write them down as well as they need it for their homework. Moreover, the T has to link this discussion with finding out about the feelings of the various characters (the boy, the attendant, the white

				children who insult the boy, the white boy on the see-saw, the boy's mother).
As a homework the students have to write two short essays including both topics, the themes of the short story and the characters' feelings. In the first essay (230 words), they have to argue why they think it is a short story on discrimination/poverty/injustice/apartheid/segregation, they have to have good arguments and elaborate on them. In the second essay (230 words) they also have to discuss the characters' feelings. They are told to clearly state their line of argumentation and they are asked to use quotes from the short story to underline what they claim.				

6.5. Lesson Plan: Es'kia Mphahlele's Short Story "Mrs Plum"

Brief Rationale: In these two lessons the focus is on the students' speaking skills, the students have many possibilities to communicate with either the other students or the teacher. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher asks the students questions about the short story. This exercise functions as revision of the text and to assure that every student has understood the text. During this exercise, they can properly express their thoughts and they can argue for what they are saying. The second part of this lesson is more creative, as the students are asked to create posters for the characters. This task evokes their creativity, but it simultaneously emphasizes the main characters of the short story.

Precise Definition of Aims and Objectives (ESP 15+ Checklist):

Pg. 40/2: Ich kann Gefühle wie Überraschung, Freude, Trauer, Interesse oder Gleichgültigkeit ausdrücken und auf Gefühlsäußerungen meiner Gesprächspartner/innen reagieren.

Pg. 40/5: Ich kann ohne Vorbereitung zu vertrauten Themen Fragen stellen und beantworten.

Pg. 40/6: Ich kann in Gesprächen, Diskussionen und Besprechungen zu vertrauten Themen meine Meinung einbringen und begründen. Weiters kann ich zustimmen oder höflich widersprechen und andere Vorschläge machen.

Pg. 41/2: Ich kann in Diskussionen über mir vertraute Themen meinen Standpunkt klar darlegen und ihn verteidigen, verschieden Vorschläge beurteilen und auf Gegenargumente im Einzelnen eingehen.

Pg. 46/3: Ich kann gut vorbereitete, unkomplizierte Kurzpräsentationen durchführen und durch meine Darstellung das Zuhören leicht und interessant machen.

Pg. 46/6: Ich kann den Inhalt eines Buches oder Films wiedergeben und meine Meinung dazu äußern.

Pg. 47/3: Ich kann vorbereitete Präsentationen zu meinen Interessensgebieten gut strukturiert und sprachlich klar gestalten, so dass für meine Zuhörerinnen und Zuhörer die Hauptpunkte und wichtige unterstützende Details eindeutig erkennbar sind. Ich kann dabei auch spontan auf Nachfragen reagieren.

Relevant EPOSTL Descriptors (page + number):

Pg. 21/1: I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.

Pg. 21/2: I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.

Pg. 21/3, I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc.

Pg. 21/7: I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in ongoing spoken exchanges (conversations, transactions etc.) and to initiate or respond to utterances appropriately.

Pg. 29/1: I can evaluate and select a variety of texts, source materials and activities which awaken learners' interest in and help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of their own and other language culture (cultural facts, events, attitudes and identity etc.).

Pools of Topics:

10. Tradition and Transition

19. Intercultural aspects

20. Growing up and finding one's identity (incl. role models, national identities ...)

22. The globalized world / Globalization

23. Society (minorities, marginal groups ...)

24. Rules, regulations, laws (juvenile crimes, personal freedom ...)

Rough Time Frame	Procedure	Interaction Format	Skills/Language System	Materials / Notes
The Ss have already read the short story as they were assigned to do so as homework. As this one is quite long they had a week to do this, so they had the possibility to re-read it if they did not understand it properly.				
25 mins	Revision of the short story	T → S S → T	Speaking skills	In order to recapture the short story, the T asks the Ss questions about the text. One person has to answer one question; the others can help if the asked S has problems answering. Every S has to answer at least one question. Those questions can be as the following: • Who is the main character and why? • What is Mrs. Plum's occupation? • What is the Black Crow Club? • Where is the short story set? • What are some of Karabo's characteristics/character traits? • Who are Chimane and Nick? • Does Kate agree with her mother a lot? • Who are Monty and Malan? • Why does Karbo dislike them? • How is Karabo treated vs. How is Dick treated by the whites (Mrs. Plum, Kate, the white man with the dog Rusty)? • What did Chimane do in the township and why?

				• What happened in the end and how do you interpret it? • Did Karabo's character change throughout the text? - etc.
30-40 mins	Ss create posters for one of the two characters of the story, Karabo and Mrs. Plum	S → S	Speaking skills Writing skills	The class forms four groups on their own. Two groups concern themselves with Karabo and Mrs. Plum, so four posters are being created (the T provides the blank posters, markers, scissors, glue, the texts). The writing of the posters should visualize the development of Karabo on the one hand, and the revelation of Mrs. Plum's true character on the other hand. The students should use parts of the short story to underline their argumentation. The T brought copies of the story they can use to cut out the important parts.
25 mins	Presentation of the posters	S	Speaking skills Presentation skills	The Ss have to agree on one/two people who present their posters. They have to demonstrate their chain of thought, the text parts they used etc. They are told to keep their presentations short, the ideal time is five minutes each, but

				they are allowed to extend the presentation to six minutes.
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6.6. Lesson Plan: Authorities Represented in the Three Short Stories

Brief Rationale: In these two lessons, the students have the chance to apply all the knowledge they have gained over the past eight lessons and make use of it in a final session. The main goal is to get them to think on their own about the topic of authorities/white authorities, which is central to the short stories. As of this point in teaching about apartheid, this theme has not been dealt with in great detail in the course of the previous weeks. They are left on their own as the teacher is merely a coordinator and helps out if necessary. They prepare their own mini-presentations, posters and they have to take notes on their own which they need for their homework assignment.

Relevant EPOSTL Descriptors (page + number):

Pg. 21/1: I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.

Pg. 21/4: I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful speaking and interactional activities to develop fluency (discussion, role play, problem solving etc.).

Pg. 31/5: I can design learning materials and activities appropriate for my learners.

Pg. 31/7: I can guide learners to produce materials for themselves and for other learners.

Precise Definition of Aims and Objectives (ESP 15+ Checklist):

Pg. 28/2: Ich kann Interviews, Berichten und Vorträgen in den wesentlichen Punkten folgen.

Pg. 29/1: Ich verstehe die Hauptaussagen von sprachlich und inhaltlich komplexeren Redebeiträgen (z.B. Berichten oder Präsentationen) gut, wenn Standardsprache gesprochen wird und wenn es sich um ein Thema handelt, für das ich mich interessiere.

Pg. 46/1: Ich kann zu mir vertrauten Themenbereichen berichten, was ich gehört, gelesen oder erlebt habe und dabei auch meine Gefühle und Reaktionen beschreiben.

Pg. 46/3: Ich kann gut vorbereitet, unkomplizierte Kurzpräsentationen durchführen und durch meine Darstellung das Zuhören leicht und interessant machen.

Pg. 47/3: Ich kann vorbereitete Präsentationen zu meinen Interessensgebieten gut strukturiert und sprachlich klar gestalten, so dass für meine Zuhörerinnen und Zuhörer die Hauptpunkte und wichtige unterstützende Details eindeutig erkennbar sind. Ich kann dabei auch spontan auf Nachfragen reagieren.

Pg. 47/6: Ich kann den Inhalt und die Thematik von Texten, Spielfilmen, Interviews, Reportagen so zusammenfassen, dass meinen Zuhörerinnen und Zuhörern das Wesentliche klar wird.

Pools of Topics:

- 1. Relations and social networks
- 19. Intercultural aspects
- 21. Politics and public institutions
- 23. Society (minorities, marginal groups ...)
- 24. Rules, regulations, laws (juvenile crimes, personal freedom ...)

Rough Time Frame	Procedure	Interaction Format	Skills/Language System	Materials / Notes
15 mins	Plenum discussion	$S \rightarrow T$ $T \rightarrow S$ $S \rightarrow S$	Speaking skills	In a plenum discussion the class establishes who the authorities in the short stories are (narrator/protagonist, Lerice, police sergeant, insulting white boys, the attendant, white madam, Mrs. Plum, Kate, Monty and Malan [discuss if they, in fact, can be considered a figure of authority], white man who owns the dog Rusty).
30 mins	Preparation and in-group-discussion of the characters	$S \rightarrow S$	Speaking skills Reading skills	The T hands out pieces of paper with the following juxtapositions on them: 1. Mrs. Plum & Lerice 2. Protagonist/narrator & the white madam 3. Insulting white boys & attendant 4. Police sergeant & Mrs. Plum They have to find the Ss with the same characters. They can use their hard copies of the texts to re-read passages, the main goal is for the whole group to characterize the two persons and

				prepare a mini-presentation. For their 2-minutes-mini-presentations, they should create posters as a visual reference to the similarities and differences of the characters.
25-30 mins	Mini-presentation and note-taking	S → S	Speaking skills	They have to hold these mini-presentations in small groups (1+2 3+4, 1+4 2+3, 2+4 1+3). The T does not tell the Ss how to go about these presentations, thus, every S is allowed to speak or they can assign a certain S. The ones listening should take notes for the feedback each group will receive afterwards. After the first group is done, it is the other group's turn to present/to take notes. When both groups are finished, the Ss rotate and start again with the same procedure. This will be done until every group has listened to each mini-presentation.
As this lesson is extremely challenging for the Ss, and they do not have too much over-time to complete each task, they are asked to write down their findings in an essay as their homework exercise. As they have all taken notes during each mini-presentation, they are aware of				

the other classmates' findings and thus, they do not only write about their juxtaposition but also about the other Ss'. They have to write around 400 – 500 words and include all the characters from each mini-presentation.

It would be ideal if the T invested another lesson as a revision session. There the Ss have time to talk about their mini-presentations again and they can summarize their findings of the last couple of lessons.

After teaching these five units and after the students have successfully completed all the tasks outlined above the students will, hopefully, have achieved the following learning goals. These have been defined by Tricia Hedge (2005), and if the students have conscientiously dealt with the tasks they will surely be able to claim they have achieved the following goals:

- to be able to read a range of texts in English
- to adapt reading style according to a range of purposes and apply different strategies (e.g. skimming, scanning) as appropriate
- to build a knowledge of language (e.g. vocabulary, structure) which will facilitate development of greater reading ability
- to build schematic knowledge in order to interpret texts meaningfully
- to develop awareness of the structure of written texts in English and to be able to make use of, e.g., rhetorical structure, discourse features, and cohesive devices in comprehending texts
- to take a critical stance to the content of texts

7. Conclusion

The primary aim of this diploma thesis has been to provide an analysis of three selected contemporary South African short stories from the Apartheid era, each written by a different author and each located in a different social and regional background. The objective of this thesis has been to show what it meant for black South Africans to live under the oppressive minority regime, implemented by the Europeans. All three short stories are set in the Apartheid era and thus, clearly depict the restrictions imposed on the African population by the white authorities. The introductory chapter about the development and the history of Apartheid serves as reference frame and provides the reader with knowledge about the historical period and will help the reader to contextualize the short stories. Without the information presented in this chapter the subsequent analysis of the literary pieces would be much harder to understand, and one would hardly be able to grasp the entire meaning of the texts and the given analyses. Moreover, the analyses of the different characters provide an insight into the minds of the black people and they show as to whether or not the whites are aware of the discriminatory environment their ethnic group has created and forced the blacks, Coloureds and Indians into.

The second major part of this diploma thesis tries to show how this important part of South African history can be used and applied in the Austrian English classroom. In the last chapter, five lesson plans are presented which try to incorporate the topic of Apartheid into the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The previously analyzed literary pieces serve as tools for this purpose. An introductory lesson is offered to introduce the students to this topic, as one may assume that this issue is hardly ever covered in the history lessons in Austrian schools. Naturally, this one lesson is not enough to fully transfer all the information on this topic and to make the students aware of the full meaning of Apartheid for the non-European population. Nonetheless, it is supposed to serve as a basis for illustrating the importance of the themes dealt with in the stories, as well as for understanding, the setting and the context of the short stories. An important goal here is that the students understand that with the Apartheid regime, Verwoerd denied the non-European South Africans their fundamental human rights. They have to understand that the government the non-whites were oppressed by was a minority of whites, who suppressed the entirety of South Africa's indigenous population. Three lesson plans follow, which focus on the literary texts previously discussed in this thesis, and numerous exercises have been developed in order to help the students understand the significance of the

texts and to make them aware of what living under the Apartheid regime meant for blacks. As a conclusive unit, the topic of the stories' white authorities and of authorities in general is addressed.

These lesson plans aim to show the students that xenophobia and racism against certain ethnic groups is not an issue of the past, but something one is confronted with, unfortunately, on a regular basis. Moreover, they have to realize that despite the fact that Apartheid officially ended in 1991, South Africa, up to this day, is still not a country in which racial prejudice has been overcome and equality between the various ethnic groups has been achieved. Even though the different ethnicities officially have equal rights, the circumstances under which the black population finds itself clearly shows that complete equality has not yet been reached and South Africa is one of the most gravely divided first-world countries in this world. For example, the townships which were created to remove the non-white citizens from the major cities still exist and even nowadays, they are solely populated by blacks. Black South Africans are, on a larger scale, still poorer than the whites, even though they have the same possibilities. This is the consequence of the Bantu education laws, as the first generation of blacks who is officially allowed to attend the same schools and Universities as whites is still receiving an education. Thus, it is only logical that the number of whites who get better positions in companies is higher compared to the blacks. Unfortunately, this is still the case. But, the times are changing. As every ethnicity has equal rights and possibilities, the non-white ethnic groups are on the rise. With the first democratic elections their lives changed for the better and even though South Africa still has a long way to go to come close to the so eagerly longed for and awaited equality, the prospects are promising.

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Appendix

1. Selected Pictures from the Apartheid Era



<http://photos.denverpost.com/2013/12/05/photos-apartheid-in-south-africa/#4>

When was the picture taken: 1949

Where was the picture taken: Johannesburg



<http://photos.denverpost.com/2013/12/05/photos-apartheid-in-south-africa/#16>

When was the picture taken: 1960

Where was the picture taken: Johannesburg



<http://photos1.blogger.com/x/blogger/5799/2237/400/390567/Apartheid%20II.jpg>

When: unknown

Where: unknown



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DurbanSign1989.jpg>

When was the picture taken: 1989

Where was the picture taken: Durban



<http://photos.denverpost.com/2013/12/05/photos-apartheid-in-south-africa/#43>

When was the picture taken: February 11th, 1990

Where was the picture taken: Soweto



<https://dstarlip.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/anti-apartheid.jpg>

When was the picture taken: 2014

Where was the picture taken: Israel



<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheid/ig/Apartheid-Signs-Image-Gallery/Road-Sign.htm#step-heading>

When was the picture taken: 1956

Where was the picture taken: Johannesburg



<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheid/ig/Apartheid-Signs-Image-Gallery/White-Area.htm#step-heading>

When was the picture taken: 1976

Where was the picture taken: Cape Town area



<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/cf/2a/bb/cf2abb9b41a40a0fb4cd5632df97f625.jpg>

When: unknown

Where: unknown



https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/3311469795/in/album-72157614394196933/

When was the picture taken: 1973

Where was the picture taken: Johannesburg



<https://espressostalinist.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/baha-apartheid-signage.jpg>

When: unknown

Where: unknown

2. Sample of a Worksheet

2.1. Worksheet: History of Apartheid

The History of Apartheid

Racism has always been an issue in the world. One of the most horrible examples of racism was apartheid. Apartheid literally means “aparthood” or “separateness”. Segregation had begun in _____ ever since the Dutch first colonized it in the _____. However, apartheid did not come into full legislation until 1948 when the all-white National Party of South Africa gained power, they really began enforcing racial discrimination against the _____. They passed 317 laws that formally established institutional discrimination throughout South Africa. By 1950 any type of interracial sexual relations were strictly _____. The Population Act of 1950 categorized South Africans between Whites, Blacks, Coloureds or Indians. This policy often split families. Prime Minister Dr Hendrik Verwoerd promoted a policy known as separate development, which created 10 homelands for blacks, legalized the deportations of blacks to one of these homelands, essentially disenfranchising them. Between 1961 and 1994, more than 3.5 million black South Africans were _____ to one of these homelands, lived in poverty and hopelessness.

None of these policies came without resistance. The ANC or _____, including Nelson Mandela, strictly opposed apartheid laws. They tried peaceful resistance, but non-violence did not last for long. On March 21st 1960, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) organized a protest against the “pass laws”¹, where they planned to _____ to the local police stations, where they wanted to give back their passes and furthermore, they were prepared to be arrested. A big, peaceful crowd gathered at the police station in Sharpeville where the police opened fire on the crowd. 69 blacks were killed and another 187 were _____. The ANC faced another defeat when four years later, Mandela and other leaders were sentenced to life in prison on the charges of sabotage. With Mandela gone, more

¹ The “pass laws” required non-whites to carry a pass with the people’s personal information. It was another governmental tool to segregate the population.

apartheid laws were passed. The 1970 Bantu Homeland Citizenship Act, which stripped 8 million blacks of their citizenship. In 1976 another violent outbreak occurred in Soweto. Police again attack _____ with tear gas and bullets. The official government death toll was 176, however, many believe the actual number of casualties to have been somewhere around 700. This additional violent outbreak drew more international attention to South Africa, and shattered the illusion that apartheid might provide peace and prosperity to the nation. The _____ put pressure on South African government to end apartheid. In 1980, the UN Security Council officially condemned police violence in South Africa, calling the government to end apartheid, grant _____ to all citizens, and release all political prisoners including _____. In 1983, yet another anti- apartheid organization was formed the United Democratic Front (UNF) with archbishop Tutu as one of its most influential members. He won the Nobel piece prize the year after for his efforts to stop apartheid. However, the South African government wouldn't go down without a fight. In 1985, they declared a state of emergency in order to be able to suppress the growing momentum of anti-apartheid movements by force. Troops were deployed to the black homelands, thousands of protesters were arrested and most political organizations were banned. In response the US and the UK imposed economic restrictions on South Africa. For the first time, South Africa began relieving enforcement of some apartheid laws. All of this led to the election of F.W. DeKlerk in 1989, he repealed the Population Registration Act and eliminated most of the legal basis of apartheid. In addition, he lifted the _____ on the ANC and freed political prisoners. In 1990, Mandela was finally freed after 27 years in _____. In 1991, apartheid laws were finally repealed and negotiations occurred pushing South Africa to a _____. In 1992, DeKlerk and Mandela finalized the record of understanding for a _____ to create a constitution. Mandela was elected President in 1994, thus, officially ending apartheid. One of the most horrible examples of racism in human history.

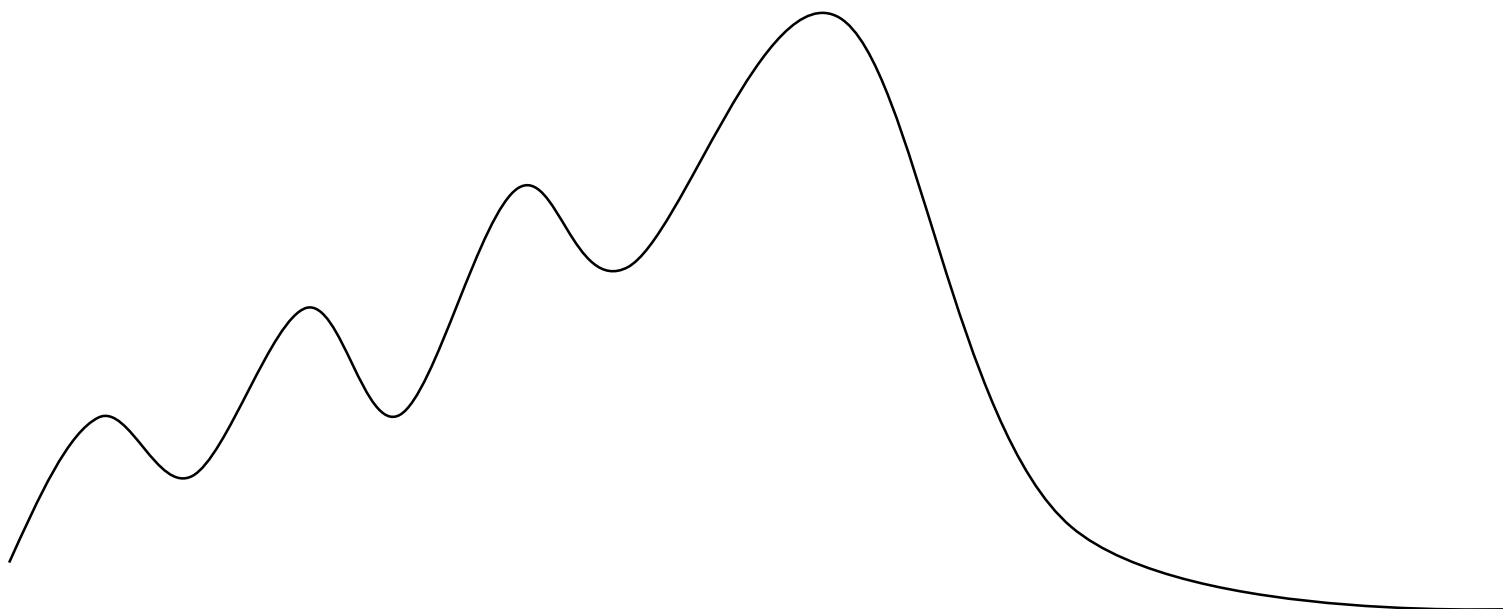
17th century	African National Congress	non-violent protesters	Mandela
United Nations	South Africa	deported	democratically elected government
ban	equal rights	march	prison
	multi-cultural government		forbidden

2.2. Worksheet: Nadine Gordimer “Six Feet of the Country”

Nadine Gordimer “Six Feet of the Country”

Answer the following questions on your own. Read the questions and tasks carefully and think about your answers, you do not have to write down full sentences, rather take structured notes. When you are finished turn to your neighbor and ask him/her questions, he/she has to answer. Then it is his/her turn to ask you a question and for you to answer. Your answers do not have to be the same, so you can discuss different views and consider the reasons for your disagreements.

- Considering the title “Six Feet of the Country”, what is the main message of this short story?
- Fill in your answers in the graph below. What are the three minor climaxes of the story, and what do you think is the main climax¹ and why?



- Consider what we talked about concerning the topic of Apartheid. How do you characterize the protagonist of the story and his wife Lerice? What are your thoughts on their marriage?
- Think about the following sentence and relate it to the short story: “**Discriminated even in death.**” What does this mean in the context of the story?
- What do you think about the ending of the story?

“The old man from Rhodesia was about Lerice’s father’s size, so she gave him one of her father’s old suits, and he went back home rather better off, for the winter, than he had come.”

¹ Climax – the moment of the story where intensity and suspense are greatest.

3. Zusammenfassung der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit

Diese Diplomarbeit befasst sich mit dem Thema südafrikanischer Kurzgeschichten und wie man diese im österreichischen Englischunterricht einsetzen kann. Es wurden hierfür drei literarische Werke von verschiedenen südafrikanischen AutorInnen verwendet. Als einleitendes Kapitel in diese Materie wurde die Geschichte Südafrikas sehr kurz zusammengefasst, um die Grundrisse und die Entwicklung des Konzepts „Apartheid“ dem/der LeserIn verständlich zu machen. Der Fokus dieses Kapitels liegt darauf, wie die Europäer nach Südafrika kamen, das Land kolonialisierten und dann als eigentliche Minderheit die Menschen dort zu unterdrücken wussten. Des Weiteren werden die afrikanischen Widerstandsbewegungen näher erläutert. Die nächsten drei Kapitel beschäftigen sich mit den Kurzgeschichten. Es wurden Nadine Gordimers Text „Six Feet of the Country“, James Matthews „The Park“ und Es'kia Mphahleles „Mrs Plum“ verwendet. Diese literarischen Werke wurden alle von der Autorin dieser Diplomarbeit selbstständig interpretiert und dies wurde teilweise, zu einem gewissen Grad, anhand von Sekundärliteratur unterlegt. Es wurden die Zeit und der Ort in dem die Geschichte stattfindet und die Charaktere näher erläutert und abschließend wurde eine kritische Diskussion des gesamten Textes durchgeführt. Als letztes Kapitel werden die fachdidaktischen Möglichkeiten, die man mit diesen Texten hat erörtert. Beginnend wird hier auf das Unterrichten von Literatur näher eingegangen und anschließend wurden die fünf entworfenen Stundenbilder inkludiert: Jedes Stundenbild umfasst zwei Schulstunden, sprich 100 Minuten. Die erste Einheit beschäftigt sich mit Apartheid an sich, um den SchülerInnen näher zu bringen was dieses Konzept umfasste, wie es zu Stande kam, welche Einflüsse es auf die nicht-weiße Bevölkerung hatte etc. Die nächsten drei Einheiten haben die drei Kurzgeschichten als Grundlage, wobei jeweils ein Text pro Stundenbild herangezogen wird. Hier wurden verschiedene Übungen erstellt, um den Inhalt und die Bedeutung den SchülerInnen besser verständlich zu machen und um die diversen Kompetenzen zu stärken. Als abschließende Einheit wird das Thema der Autoritäten und besonders der weißen Autoritäten fokussiert.

*To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains,
but to live in a way that reflects and enhances
the freedom of others.*

- Nelson Mandela