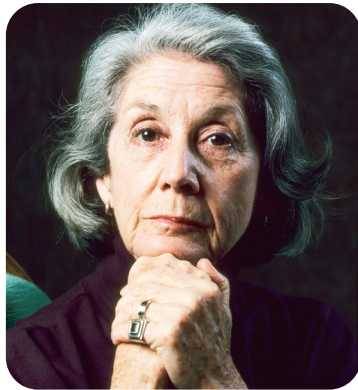


# Nadine Gordimer • *The Pickup*

## THE AUTHOR

### NADINE GORDIMER

Nadine Gordimer (20 November 1923 – 13 July 2014) was a South African writer and winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize in Literature; she was also a political activist and her strong opposition to apartheid – the South African policy of racial segregation that was officially dissolved in the early 1990's – led to some of her novels being banned. Gordimer's fiction **casts** a clear light on the contradictions of a multicultural society; she analyses the relationships between the different groups of people living in South Africa, highlighting their stereotypes and prejudices. Gordimer's works deal with the political and social transformation of South Africa as well as with the changes in her life.



**to cast:** *gettare*  
**to flip over:** *capovolgere*  
**to rent:** *affittare*

## THE WORK

### THE PICKUP

*The Pickup* (2001) is a novel that tells the story of Julie Summers, a rich white woman who rejects her upper-class roots and moves to a black part of town where she **rents** an apartment. Her life revolves around EL-AY Café, a local bar in which she hangs out with her friends until she meets Abdu, an illegal Muslim immigrant in South Africa. The two soon fall in love, get married and decide to move to Abdu's unnamed homeland after Abdu's visa is refused. In Abdu's homeland, Julie becomes the "outsider" because she is totally outside of the new culture that she lives in. Her experiences and growth as an alien in another culture changes her personality so much that she decides to remain in the Arab country when Abdu gets a Visa for America.

*The Pickup* considers the issues of displacement, alienation, religious faith, and the ability of people to see and love across their diversities. The central theme of the novel is identity and the search for acceptance and adaptation to new cultures: while in South Africa, Abdu is the other, but things **flip over** when Julie moves to the Muslim country.

*The Pickup* deals with problems of race and class, but it lifts these problems from a local to a global level.

**THE TEXT**


This extract from chapter two tells of the first time Julie and Abdu meet at the garage where Abdu works. Julie's car has broken down and she is looking for someone who can repair it.

- There's the garage, as they said. As she walked in she saw its ordinariness, a **landing** on normality: vehicles as helpless, harmless victims upon hydraulic lifts, tools on benches, water dispenser, plastic cups and take-away food boxes, radio chattering, a man lying on his back half under the belly of a car. There were two others preoccupied at some noisy machinery and they
- 5 **signalled** her **over** to him. The legs and lower body **wriggled down** at the sound of her apologetic voice and the man emerged. He was young, in his greasy work-clothes, long hands oil-slicked at the **dangle** from long arms; he wasn't one of them – the white man speaking Afrikaans to the black man at the machine – but **glossy** dark-haired with black eyes blueish-shadowed. He listened to her without any reassuring attention or remark. She waited a moment in his silence.
- 10 “So could you send someone to have a look... the car's round the corner.”  
He **stared** at his hands. Just a minute while I clean-up.  
He carried a **bulky** handless bag with a new battery and tools and it was **awkward** to walk beside him through the streets with people **dodging** around them, but she did not like to walk ahead of the garage man as if he were some sort of servant.
- 15 In silence, he got the car going and drove back to the workshop with her as his passenger.  
“There's still some – I don't know – in the ignition. Your car will stall again, I think.”  
“Then I'd better leave it with you. I suppose it needs a general service, anyway.”  
“When was the last time?”  
She was culpable, smiling. “I don't remember.”
- 20 “How long?”  
“I suppose I just drive until something goes wrong.”  
He **nodded** slowly, did not speak: of course, that's your way.  
“I'll give you a call to find out when it's ready – you're Mr...?” “Ask for Abdu.”


**awkward:** *impacciato*  
**bulky:** *ingombrante*  
**to dangle:** *penzolare*  
**to dodge:** *scansare*  
**glossy:** *lucido*  
**landing:** *atterraggio*

**to nod:** *accennare con la testa*  
**to signal over:** *fare notare*  
**to stare:** *fissare*  
**steady:** *saldo*  
**to wriggle down:** *dimenarsi*

COMPREHENSION

1  Look for terms referring to the mechanical and automobile field. Make a list and translate them into Italian.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....
7. ....
8. ....
9. ....
10. ....

2  Based on the information you can get from the text, can you guess what happened to Julie's car? Explain your idea.

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ANALYSIS

3  Read the dialogue between Julie and Abdu again. Why do you think they use short, simple sentences?

4  Can you find a sentence that expresses the protagonist's antiracist attitude in the text? Write it down and explain why you think it is a reference to the social context.

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DISCUSSION

5  **GROUP WORK** Surf the Internet looking for articles and/or videos about apartheid. Show them to your class and start a debate considering the given aspects.

- Period and duration of apartheid
- The social consequences of apartheid
- The people who fought against apartheid
- The present situation in South Africa