

“From the Inside”:

**Accounts of Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa and the Transition towards
Democracy in Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother* and
Nadine Gordimer’s *The House Gun***



By Roos Burmanje

3685373

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Utrecht University

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Franssen

Second Supervisor: Dr. Roselinde Supheert

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Introduction

From the moment the Dutch East India Company colonised the Cape in 1652 until the first democratic elections in 1994, a large part of South Africa was in the hands of the white, non-native population. However, over the decades, the white population that was once regarded as a group of intruders slowly but gradually mingled in and became part of the South African residents, in a country that was still largely divided. Until the fall of apartheid in 1994, when the African National Congress (ANC) won the elections from the National Party (NP), the oppression of black South Africans by the white population had been a point of discussion and rebellion (Davenport and Saunders 21-568). Between 1973 and 1994 in particular, protests and rebellion of black South Africans were common in everyday South African life. The so-called Soweto Uprising on 16 June 1976, sparked off by a protest march by schoolchildren in Soweto that ended up in a bloodbath, was “South Africa’s most massive insurrectionary movement to that date” (Lodge 416). However, the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the repeal of the remaining apartheid laws by State President F.W. De Klerk in 1991 and, most importantly, the victory of the ANC in 1994 have all contributed to a more united and more peaceful new South Africa. The most recent change, the ANC-victory, is the greatest change in contemporary South African history. It is the first official step towards democracy and it marks the change of South Africa into the Republic of South Africa. In April 1994, the ANC won the first non-racial elections and Nelson Mandela, who had spent 25 years of his life in prison, became the first (black) president of the Republic of South Africa. These changes were considered predominantly positive for the majority of the inhabitants. However, the years before the elections, also known as the the transitional period, but also the years after the elections are marked by acts of violence, crime and racism (Lodge 481-486).

As a result, to express themselves but also to provide their readers with an impression of life in transitional and in post-apartheid South Africa, a number of important South African authors wrote novels that aim to express the impact of both apartheid and the change towards becoming a democracy. In her book *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*, Rita Barnard discusses the work of a number of significant South African authors. Among the authors that Barnard mentions are Zakes Mda (1948) and Sindiwe Magona (1943), two South African writers of black African descent who have written several stories in which they describe the impact and the outcome of apartheid and the transitional period (*Apartheid and Beyond* 3). Both authors have published stories that emphasise the violence, the crime and the inequality that many black South Africans have been and still are confronted with. Nevertheless, along with showing South Africa's dark side and pointing out hardships, they express the need and the hope for a better future. Mda's novel *Ways of Dying*, which he wrote in 1995, is set in the transitional years before the 1994 elections. Mda's novel describes the life of Toloki, who spends his days mourning at funerals as a so-called Professional Mourner. According to Toloki, people are in need of such a person, as he can carry some of their grief and help them mourn their lost ones better. Through Toloki, Mda describes the upsetting times in which tribal groups clash and are responsible for many acts of vandalism and brutal killings. Nonetheless, Toloki is able to find happiness; he earns a small amount of money for his mourning services and he spends his days with a woman he used to look up to when he was younger. Similar to Mda's *Ways of Dying*, Sindiwe Magona's 1998 novel *Mother to Mother* is set in the transitional years. Unlike Mda's novel, Magona's book is based on a true story, namely the murder of white American student and anti-apartheid activist Amy Biehl in 1993, who was attacked and killed by a mob of angry black youngsters in the black residential area of Guguletu, Cape Town. Magona expresses her dismay and discontent as she writes from the perspective of the mother of one of the killers. This mother

not only sympathises with Amy's mother; she also questions Amy's judgement. At the same time, the killer's mother provides the reader with an explanation of her son's deed by portraying their life and with this the life of the majority of poor, black South Africans who live in the shantytowns of Cape Town.

While both Mda and Magona are praised for their literary achievements, they have only won literary prizes in their home country and have hardly gained any popularity outside of South Africa. This is different for white South African writer Nadine Gordimer (1924), whose work is well-known and has gained worldwide recognition. During her long-standing career as an author, she has written many novels and in 1974, she was awarded the Booker Prize for her novel *The Conservationist*. What is more, in 1991 Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In her novel *The House Gun* (1998), Gordimer discusses similar issues Mda and Magona touch upon, namely the violence, the crime and the on-going racism in post-apartheid South Africa. The novel tells the story of a wealthy white South African couple that tries to get to grips with the fact that their son has murdered one of his male housemates, who also turns out to be his ex-lover. In their desperate quest for their son's motive, Claudia and Harald only find facts that lead them further into the dark. Also, they come to realise that they have to rely on their black countrymen for help and support. At one point, they believe that South Africa's violent history may play an important role in their son's criminal act.

In their books, Mda, Magona and Gordimer demonstrate the effects of South Africa's problematic and complex history, particularly the impact of the period of apartheid and the switch towards a democratic South Africa. These three authors, who are currently all over 60 years, have witnessed these critical episodes in South African history, albeit from a different perspective. This is probably part of the reason why, as Hazel Rochman states, Mda's *Ways of Dying*, Magona's *Mother to Mother* and Gordimer's *The House Gun* are all stories that are

told “from the inside” (1923). Together, these novels attempt to give insight into the post-apartheid struggles of both black and white but also of male and female South Africans in the new South Africa. While comparing and contrasting Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother* and Nadine Gordimer’s *The House Gun*, it becomes clear that although post-apartheid and the first step towards democracy have made room for hope and freedom, the transition towards the new South Africa is overshadowed by traces of violence, crime and inequality that the past has left behind.

Chapter 1:

Zakes Mda's Ways of Dying

South African-born critic Hazel Rochman fittingly describes Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* in her 2002 book review: "Writing from the heart of the new South Africa, Mda tells his country's stories through beautifully realized characters whose search for love and connection takes you up close to the black experience, past and present" (1923). Rochman's review predominantly praises Zakes Mda's novel and while she mainly highlights the positive aspects, she omits the darker side of Mda's story. *Ways of Dying* is set during the transitional years in South Africa and describes the present and past of self-proclaimed Professional Mourner Toloki, who lives a secluded life until he meets Noria, a woman who used to be part of his past. Although both have experienced a troubled childhood and see that the current situation is ruled by crime and violence, Noria can show Toloki how to move on and together they try to build a brighter future. *Ways of Dying* is one of Mda's first and most popular novels. While Mda was born in 1948 in the Eastern Cape, he grew up in Soweto, Johannesburg. However, he was schooled in Lesotho where he and the rest of the family joined his father in exile. Before Mda decided to start writing novels, he had already written and published poetry and collections of plays. Due to the success of his plays, Mda was admitted to Ohio University in 1980 for a Master's degree in theatre, which was the onset of his academic career. In the early nineties, Mda spent much of his time abroad; he was writer-in-residence at the University of Durham, a research fellow at Yale University and he is now a Professor at Ohio University (Interview 63-65). It was partly because of political reasons that Mda started writing novels. For black South Africans, writing a novel was considerably more difficult during apartheid, as black artists "did not have the luxury to sit down for months on end working on one piece of work, such as a novel" (Mda, Interview 69). Instead, poetry and plays were needed to communicate directly to the audience about the injustice that was done

under the reign of the National Party. The end of apartheid made it possible for black South Africans to consider writing novels, as they were no longer to be oppressed or ignored (Interview 69). Although Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* is not considered to be a typical anti-apartheid novel, it confronts the reader with South Africa's past and its on-going violence while showing the possibility of building a better future.

Most of Zakes Mda's stories are told from the inside, which is why *Ways of Dying* comes across as a personal story. As most of Mda's work, *Ways of Dying* is inspired by and partly based on experiences from the time he has spent in the different areas across South Africa. As mentioned before, Zakes Mda was born in a rural area in the Eastern Cape but spent a large part of his childhood in Soweto, a township for black South Africans near the city of Johannesburg. Mda moved back to the Eastern Cape as a teenager, joined his father in exile in Lesotho, but moved back to South Africa in 1994, after the first democratic elections (Interview 64-65). In general, Mda's familiarity with the life in different suburbs, cities and rural villages across South Africa during the apartheid days allows him to write a novel such as *Ways of Dying*. The detailed description of main character Toloki's experiences in both the rural village and in the city reveals the author's authenticity. Mda was used to writing poems and plays, but the idea of writing a novel first came to him while he was in Yale. He had bought his first computer and decided that he might as well use it for writing a longer piece. The idea of writing about a professional mourner was already in his mind, and when he heard about the political violence in his home country, he decided that this was a good moment for the professional mourner to come to life in the form of a novel (Interview 72-73). According to Mda, "the story developed from just who this professional mourner is and what his job is, and the violence in South Africa came in as well, since the novel was about that" (Interview 73).

Although Mda has spent a large part of his adult life outside of South Africa, his cultural background has a strong influence on his literary style and on his work in general. Both the situation in South Africa during apartheid and Mda's ambition to become an academic required him to travel abroad. Even so, in his work Mda chooses to stay close to his South African roots and the South African tradition. According to Grant Farred, as Mda himself is of black South African descent, he demonstrates in his work that he feels the responsibility to stand up for the poor, black and voiceless South Africans (185). Mda's literary style, but also his use of language is influenced by his mother tongue, which is the Xhosa language. Xhosa is an indigenous African language that is currently spoken by approximately eighteen per cent of the inhabitants of South Africa. It is now recognised as one of South Africa's eleven official languages next to Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swazi, Tswana, Tsonga, Venda and Zulu (Davenport and Saunders 574). Although Mda has spent many years in Lesotho, the United Kingdom and in the United States, the English in which he has written his book is mostly influenced by Xhosa, as he writes from the perspective of a Xhosa. There are references to Xhosa to be found throughout his novel. For example, Mda has given his characters Xhosa names such as Toloki, Nefolovhodwe and Xesibe. While Toloki talks about his past in the village, some of the characters' speech is first rendered in Xhosa and afterwards explained or translated into English. For instance, in chapter five, Toloki reminisces how children without a decent upbringing would shout "Thutha mabhakaethe!" at the Archbishop. After this, Mda explains that "what they were saying was that the Archbishop was a carrier of buckets" (*Ways of Dying* 104).

Mda's *Ways of Dying* is one of the first novels published after the transitional period and written by a black author that does not contribute to the struggle against apartheid. During the apartheid era, the African National Congress (ANC) recommended using culture as a

weapon against the enemy. The ANC encouraged black South Africans to write and publish their work as they “called for literature to represent the victimization of the oppressed in realist form” (Attridge and Jolly 2). However, this call for all forms of art to be a demonstration of oppression and inequality did not leave much room for art that did not show any form of resistance against the apartheid regime. It is because of this that people like Njabulo Ndebele and Albie Sachs stood up and wrote about the negative side of using culture as a weapon in the struggle. Ndebele, who wrote his essay *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* in 1984, argued that the constant focus on the violence of the apartheid regime made it look as if it was a spectacle. In 1989, Sachs wrote a paper in which he criticised the idea that culture should be used as a weapon, as art is and should remain a creative expression (Attridge and Jolly 2). When the apartheid era was over and the ANC became the leading party, Mda had no intentions of writing political novels. However, in an interview Mda states that according to him, there is no work that is not political, “even when it goes out of its way not to be political, that in itself is a political statement” (Interview 67). By focusing on the tribal disputes more than on apartheid in his novel, it appears as if Mda intends to demonstrate that for black South Africans, apartheid is no longer the main reason for concern.

While Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* is set in South Africa during the transitional years, Mda chose to move away from the issue of apartheid and to use humour to convey his message. In her essay, Yogita Goyal argues that *Ways of Dying* is a perfect answer to the requests of both Njabulo Ndebele and Albie Sachs. According to Goyal, “when Sachs asks for writers to reveal joy, wonder, wit, grace, invention, and humor, it almost seems like Mda’s fiction is a direct response to the call” (148). In 1995, Mda published his first two novels: *Ways of Dying* and *She Plays with Darkness*. While the latter only attracted little attention, Mda won a prize for *Ways of Dying* and it turned out to become one of his most famous works. The book was praised for its irony, humour and creativity. While the novel addresses a

serious topic, Mda shows that he is able to put the tragic situation in a brighter and a more personal perspective. In her article on *Ways of Dying*, Rita Barnard mentions that it is “an optimistic work,” even more so when compared to the preceding books written by black authors, which mainly considered apartheid, the oppression and the violence that surrounded the regime (“On Laughter” 279). In *Ways of Dying*, Mda shows that even in difficult times, there will always be room for jokes and laughter. For instance, when Toloki and Noria have finished rebuilding Noria’s shack and the sun rises on her shack, Toloki comments: “It would certainly be at home in a museum of modern art” (67). With its light-heartedness and wit, Mda’s novel expresses a feeling of hope, while it also seems to open the door for a new way of writing about both the present and the future of South Africa. As Barnard puts it, “While broadly didactic, the novel does not offer a ratification of received codes of conduct, so much as a commitment to learning and inventing new ones” (“On Laughter” 279).

In addition, Mda’s use of magic realism in *Ways of Dying* also contributes to the originality of his post-apartheid book. In an interview, Elly Williams asks Mda about the use of magic realism in his work, as many South African but also international critics have mentioned that they have come across elements of this in his work. Mda does not disagree with the term magic realism and he agrees that his work includes passages that cannot possibly happen in reality. He explains that this is part of the African oral tradition, and in this tradition, “the world of the supernatural and that of objective reality exist side by side in the same context” (Interview 71). Another reason why Mda has chosen to let his imagination run free is because after apartheid, he felt that he was finally able to dream again. According to Mda, “the end of apartheid also freed the imaginations of black writers” (Interview 69). After the long period of suppression, Mda managed to write *Ways of Dying*, a novel that describes the life of a poor, homeless man who is surrounded by violence and painful memories but who nonetheless succeeds in finding happiness. Both he and his childhood female friend have

known bitter times, but together they are able to dream of a brighter future. From time to time, these dreams seem to become reality, which is part of the reason why critics claim that Mda uses magic realism. One example of this is when Toloki decorates Noria's hut with pictures from the magazine *Home and Garden*. When he has finished, Noria and Toloki act as if they live in one of the pretty, luxurious houses they see on the pictures. The garden in particular is extensively described: "The whole garden is a potpourri of colour, designed by expert landscape architects" (113). This kind of dream suggests that no matter how desperate the situation is and how poor one is, a (materialist) dream is the perfect way to escape from reality. The dream shows how Toloki and Noria are capable of moving on, while it expresses their capability of hoping for a better future. Barnard states that she prefers to refer to this kind of magic realism as "capitalist realism of advertising," and believes that Noria and Toloki create a new space for themselves as if they are acting on a stage (*Apartheid and Beyond* 149). The stage might symbolise their new life, while the dream stands for the positive developments in their future together.

As Mda's *Ways of Dying* did not adjust to and meet the characteristics of the post-apartheid novel, it was not generally accepted. There are a number of, mostly international, critics who condemn Mda's choice to leave out apartheid and other serious South African issues that had until then been main themes in books from or about South Africa and gained worldwide attention. For example, in a 2003-review in *The New York Review of Books*, Norman Rush claims that certain important facts are missing in Mda's book. For instance, he remarks that no one in the book dies from sickness, aiming at the HIV/AIDS-epidemic in South Africa, and that Mda refuses to make a statement about the politics and the violence that surrounds main character Toloki. Furthermore, he adds that the reader leaves *Ways of Dying* "feeling tricked" (Rush 1). Farred takes it even one step further by stating that *Ways of Dying* is a "flawed work," mainly because Mda makes it seem as if in the transitional years,

nothing had changed compared to the apartheid days (183-184). Nevertheless, Farred also states that Mda's work is "in part because of its shortcomings, symptomatic of the condition of postapartheid South Africa" (183). Goyal contradicts Rush's fierce criticism, arguing that Rush must have misread the novel. According to Goyal, Rush's critique "is produced by common expectations placed on postcolonial fiction, especially on the postapartheid South African novel" (148). Goyal further points out that not every post-apartheid novel must touch upon apartheid or other South African issues, even more because it is an era that has come to an end (148). As Mda also mentions in the interview, the end of apartheid created room for creativity and it was no longer necessary for black authors to make a statement or represent the black community (Interview 73).

Instead of concentrating on racism and apartheid, Mda chose to focus on his main character and the violence between two South African tribes. *Ways of Dying* is considered to be a post-apartheid novel, but Zakes Mda's main focus is on another political issue that had a large impact on black communities in South Africa. *Ways of Dying* was published in 1995, the year after the first democratic elections. It is written and set in the first couple of years after apartheid, which is why one would expect a black author to write an anti-apartheid novel. However, as Farred explains in his article, Mda's focus is on another kind of struggle, namely the violence that is used between two different tribes who are of the same skin colour. Mda refers to this fact on the first page of his book, when main character Toloki attends a funeral of a black child who was murdered by a group of black youngsters. Toloki hears the Nurse, the person who is allowed to speak about the deceased, say: "This our little brother was killed by those who are fighting to free us!" (7). Farred notes that "Mda aims his critiques less at the excesses of the apartheid regime [...] than at the phenomenon known as 'black-on-black' violence" (184-185). With this "black-on-black" violence, Farred indicates the many attacks and killings by the so-called hostel migrant workers which main character Toloki occasionally

describes. In the first chapter, Toloki provides the reader with a short explanation about who these migrant workers are, saying that “they came to the city to work for their children, but the tribal chief armed them, and sent them to harass the local residents” (23). Here, Mda refers to the clashes between the migrant Zulus and the urbanised Xhosas that took place in several areas in South Africa throughout the mid-1980s. Mda thus chose to focus on the voiceless, poor black community that is still struggling against violence and injustice, while apartheid slowly but gradually became part of the past (Farred 185). Although *Ways of Dying* is in itself a political statement, Mda does not only focus on apartheid, but on the general changes in South Africa and the on-going violence that terrorises the poor, black community in the rural areas.

Although throughout the novel, the community and the feeling of unity play an important part, the main character in Mda’s novel mainly focuses on himself and lives a secluded life. *Ways of Dying* is mainly written from a third-person perspective, but when Toloki attends a funeral or when he talks about his past, the narrator uses the plural “we” and “us”. For example, during the funeral of Noria’s son, Toloki says: “We listen in silence” (7). This is probably used to emphasise the communal feeling which not only the life in a community but also the gatherings at funerals evoke. Nonetheless, in early life Toloki has chosen to distance himself from the community and to focus on himself and his task instead. While the community is considered as a safe and pleasant environment for many, it does not offer the same shelter for Toloki. This indicates that communities also have a negative side; they exclude certain individuals and have rules which each member must follow. Toloki vividly remembers and from time to time recalls his life as a little boy, when he used to live in the settlement community with his parents. Nonetheless, these are not all happy memories, as he was bullied and despised, mainly because of his appearance. He recalls how the beautiful Noria, who people referred to as a “stuck-up bitch”, used to sing for his father while he was

creating figures of iron and brass (29). While Noria and the figures received all of his father's attention, Toloki was completely ignored. This, and the fact that his father used to beat him up, made Toloki decide to run away from their home in the settlement community. He travelled to the city to find a job, but after several disappointments he comes to understand that the only way to survive is to rely on and live only for yourself. He becomes a self-proclaimed Professional Mourner, sleeps in a waiting room near the quays and lives of the small amount of money the relatives of the deceased give to him. Nevertheless, his life as a lone wolf changes when he meets Noria at the funeral of her son. His interest in other people and community life grows as he meets Noria more frequently (12-15).

Furthermore, the fact that *Ways of Dying* includes a strong, black female character that carries the weight of the story can be interpreted as a resistance against inequality and oppression. In *Ways of Dying*, Mda does not openly criticise apartheid or inequality and has created a protagonist that remains predominantly neutral. Nevertheless, the fact that the other leading character is a strong, black woman can be interpreted as a form of resistance against oppression, not only of blacks but also of women in general. This character, Noria, Toloki's so-called "homegirl" from his former rural village, is a single mother who has lost her two sons. She has lost her first son because of the carelessness of her ex-husband and her second son due to the tribal dispute that is going on in her village. To make things worse, her shack is deliberately burned down by the Young Tigers, the group to which her five-year-old son belonged but which he had betrayed by accident. Even after all this misery, Noria succeeds in remaining positive and strong, fighting for justice for her people while trying to rebuild her own life and helping others. She explains that this is the reason why she is able to stay alive, because at the settlement, people survive by helping each other. She says to Toloki: "We are like two hands that wash each other" (69). Most female characters in *Ways of Dying* are represented as strong, independent women who make choices for themselves and who know

how to cope with misfortune. Noria's mother, nicknamed "That Mountain Woman," but also the Nurses and other women in Noria's village are all examples of powerful black women (56). Farred mentions that the involvement of the female characters underlines the non-involvement of Toloki himself. The female characters are directly faced with the political situation and act on it, while Toloki chooses to observe instead of act. Farred further claims that it is to some extent due to the character of Noria, who is historically and politically conscious, that the issue of gender turns out to be "the novel's most salient critique of the postapartheid state" (186).

Whereas Mda does not refer to a specific area in *Ways of Dying*, he does make a distinction between life in the city and life in the village. City life, according to Toloki, is where individuals go and try to seek their fortune, while life in the rural village means living in poverty, albeit living together as a community. Toloki has turned himself into an outsider, but Noria learns him how to live and become part of a community again. Toloki is brought up in a community, but a young age, he decides to run away and find his fortune in the city, but city life appears to be even harder on him. When he turns to a former family friend who has become a "big shot" in the city, he finds out that this man "has developed amnesia" as he does not recognise Toloki (133). Finally, because of the bad experiences Toloki decides to distance himself from all people and live more or less like a monk. However, his renewed friendship with Noria open doors and also allows him to become part of the settlement community again. One of the first steps Toloki has to take is to clean himself and Noria tells him to take a bath, saying "just because your profession involves death, it does not mean that you need to smell like a dead rat" (98). She also introduces Toloki to other people, asks him to help her with communal tasks and hereby shows him all the benefits that come with being part of a community. Nonetheless, through following the lives of Noria and Toloki, the audience also notices the downsides of community life. For example, when her second son is killed by the

Young Tigers, the community forces Noria to keep quiet about it, as it will only cause more trouble (178).

Ways of Dying mainly focuses on the life and the memories of the relatively content main character Toloki, but the underlying threat and presence of crime and violence is unavoidable. While the past as well as the present situation seem to be desperate, Toloki remains calm and neutral, focusing mostly on his own being. Even though he is a Professional Mourner, the funerals do not necessarily sadden him, as he regards them as tasks which he has to fulfil. For instance, after the first funeral he visits, he is more concerned about the way the people at the funeral treated him than why the young boy had died. Toloki's behaviour may also point to the fact that death has become part of everyday life and neither the age of the deceased nor the gruesome manner in which the person came to its end shocks people. However, although Toloki is not particularly touched by the many deaths, he is extremely dedicated to his work as Professional Mourner. "Death becomes me, it is a part of me", Toloki says to Noria (115). Yet, although Toloki is not too concerned about the background information on the deceased, this does not mask the underlying theme of on-going violence and terror. According to Goyal, "Mda highlights the haunting presence of the violent past of apartheid and slavery in the present" (149). For instance, protagonist Toloki not only frequently visits funerals of victims of the tribal dispute who have been brutally murdered; he also speaks of the ways in which people are killed. For example, Mda touches upon the horrific procedure that is called "necklacing". This term is used to refer to a form of extreme violence, mostly used by activists who wish to punish collaborators. This is also the way in which Noria's son has been killed. This "necklacing" involves a tyre, stuffed with paper and drenched in petrol, which is put around the victim's neck as if it were a necklace and then set alight (Attridge and Jolly 250).

With *Ways of Dying*, Mda touches upon the sadness that comes with loss and violence, but he combines it with the hope for a brighter future. The title as well as the opening sentence of *Ways of Dying* already suggests there is little room for happiness throughout the novel: “There are many ways of dying!” (7). Nonetheless, its content shows the reader that although there are many violent and unnecessary deaths, even those struck by poverty and injustice are able to rebuild their future. By switching from the past to the present and from life in the rural village to life in the city, Mda shows that the main characters, and with them the country of South Africa, have experienced ups and downs. In her book, Barnard praises Mda’s use of space, as she claims that the constant switch between country and city in *Ways of Dying* stands for “a fluid terrain of hope, yearning and memory” (*Apartheid and Beyond* 148). The terrain, the South African continent, has gone through a lot of trouble, but is slowly but gradually recovering while processing the events of the past. What is more, Goyal states that Toloki, in his role as a Professional Mourner, shows the reader that “in mourning the past, memory might lead in unexpected, uncomfortable directions, rather than restoring a whole identity or healing the scars of the past” (149). While reminiscing about the past, main characters Toloki and Noria share their sad memories and come to the same conclusion: “The stories of the past are painful. But when Toloki and Noria talk about them, they laugh. Laughter is known to heal even the deepest of wounds” (*Ways of Dying* 95). Attridge and Jolly state that “South Africa is in the process of attempting to come to terms with the past in order to build a new future for itself” (3). In *Ways of Dying*, Zakes Mda’s characters are trying to come to terms with their past while looking forward and building a new future together in the new South Africa.

To conclude, Zakes Mda’s novel *Ways of Dying* is influenced by the writer’s past albeit it is not a typical post-apartheid novel, and even though it shows the traces of a violent, troubled past and present, it looks towards a better future. Zakes Mda’s stories are told from

the inside and although Mda has spent many years outside of South Africa, his cultural background has a strong influence on his work. Mda's *Ways of Dying* is one of the first novels by a black author that does not contribute to the struggle against apartheid and conveys a serious story in a light-hearted manner. Mda's decision to move away from anti-apartheid statements, use magic realism and focus on other political issues in present-day South Africa has disappointed some critics but at the same time contributed to his popularity. While Mda does not refer to specific parts of South Africa, he does illustrate the large difference between city life, which is focused on the individual, and life in the rural areas, where people can depend on one another and live in settlements as a community. While *Ways of Dying* has a male main character, it also includes a statement against sexism as the novel includes a number of strong, black female characters. These women show that the community is of great importance to people, but at the same time the reader gets to realise how the community controls people's lives. For lone wolf Toloki, life seems to be relatively stress-free, but the continuous threat and the presence of crime and violence around him are impossible to deny. With *Ways of Dying*, Mda touches upon the grief that comes with violence, inequality and death in both South Africa's past and present, while he shows that a better future can be accomplished when people unite, have hope and remain positive.

Chapter 2:

Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*

“One settler! One bullet!” This anti-white slogan was called out by a group of young black South Africans while they attacked and later killed white student and anti-apartheid activist Amy Biehl. On the 25th of August 1993, Fulbright scholar and graduate Amy Biehl was brutally murdered in Guguletu Township, South Africa. The murder of 26-year-old Biehl, who was researching women’s rights and helping with preparations for South Africa’s first democratic elections, shocked the entire country. While the prosecutors pleaded for the death penalty, Biehl’s parents told the press that they did not want the convicted to be executed. In an interview with the press, the mother of the convicted Mongezi Manqina (22) declared: “I am very worried about Amy Biehl’s mother and the family because they lost their child” and “I am sorry about what my child did to her child” (“Three Convicted” 1994). As a reaction to the words of this mother and as a reaction to the dreadful event, but even more so to give the world insight into the background of the convicted, South African-born author Sindiwe Magona (1943) decided to write the novel *Mother to Mother*. Magona’s first books, *To My Children’s Children* (1990) and *Forced to Grow* (1992) are autobiographies which consider her own life under apartheid. The Amy Biehl-murder inspired Magona to start writing *Mother to Mother*, her very first novel (Interview 282-284). This novel, which was first published in 1998, is a fictionalised account of the Amy Biehl murder, written from the perspective of one of the killers’ mothers. This mother not only describes the upsetting times in which her son was brought up, but she also takes the reader back to her own troubled youth in the shantytowns of Cape Town. As Magona explains in her preface, “through his mother’s memories, we get a glimpse of human callousness of the kind that made the murder of Amy Biehl possible” (*Mother to Mother* v). At times, the grief-stricken mother of the killer directly addresses Amy’s mother, questioning Amy’s judgements while trying to find answers for

herself. By drawing a portrait of her son's world, she hopes to ease the pain for Amy's mother. What is more, like Mda in *Ways of Dying*, Magona aims to defend the poor, black and voiceless South Africans. With *Mother to Mother*, Sindiwe Magona paints a picture of the life of black South Africans during apartheid and puts emphasis on the fact that even in the transitional years after apartheid, violence, crime and racism persisted.

As Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* is based on a true event and tells a personal story, it is able to capture the reader from the very start. The murder of white student Amy Biehl in Guguletu, which took place only a few months before the first democratic elections, shocked the entire country. According to the *Stanford University News Service*, which published an article on the Biehl murder trial in October 1994, many people were afraid that racial violence would spread across the country after the murder of Amy Biehl. Yet, they were proven wrong, as "the first all-race election that brought Nelson Mandela to power was peaceful, and racial and political violence has subsided since" ("Three Convicted" 1994). Magona's *Mother to Mother* is a book that confronts the reader with the life of most poor, black South Africans during apartheid and during the transitional period. The book starts with a short introduction and clarification by the author. In this preface, Magona informs the reader about Amy Biehl's murder, but she also explains why she decided to write the book and what she wants to accomplish with it. She claims that in a murder-case, there is plenty of information about the victim, while only little is known about the background of the killers. Magona's main goal is to provide the reader with some background information on one of Amy's killers (*Mother to Mother* v-vi). In addition, she aims to show that "beneath the media story of Amy Biehl's murder that evoked international sympathy was a story of individual and personal empathy of motherhood, loss, cultural and political anger" (McHaney 174). *Mother to Mother* is a personal account which aims to convey the message that in the case of murder, the story is never one-sided.

What makes the book even more personal is that *Mother to Mother* has an autobiographical element. Sindiwe Magona grew up in Guguletu, Cape Town and worked most of her time as a domestic. Being a single mother of three, she managed to leave South Africa in 1980 to study in New York. Before *Mother to Mother*, Magona had already published two autobiographies, but the Amy Biehl story inspired her to write a novel (Koyana 4-6). In an interview, Magona explains where and how the idea of writing a novel first came to her. Approximately six months after the murder of Amy Biehl, when Sindiwe Magona chose to travel to South Africa for the elections, she discovered that the mother of one of Amy's killers was a childhood friend of hers. Both Sindiwe Magona and the killer's mother grew up in Guguletu, Cape Town, and the fact she and Magona used to be friends made her feel empathy for this mother. As a result, Magona decided to start writing her novel *Mother to Mother*, in which the killer's mother, named Mandisa, tells her story and the story of her son to the mother of the victim (Interview 283-284). From the moment Magona had heard about Mandisa's fate, she started wondering about how Mandisa was coping with the situation. Besides, Magona also felt sympathy for Amy's parents, along with the urge to explain Mandisa's life story to them. She wanted to tell them how Mandisa grew up and how she had suffered throughout her life, being a poor, black South African single mother. Another reason why Mandisa's life story was of great interest to Magona was that her own life resembles the life of Mandisa. Magona states: "I know what kind of life she must have had as a poor African woman [...] because that's a situation I have been in" (Interview 284). However, while Magona indicates that she has used her own experience along with the experiences of other women in the townships, she declares that all that takes place in *Mother to Mother* is fiction. Magona intends to show the hardships South African women in the townships during apartheid had to face and meanwhile she wants to explain to the Biehl-family that "sometimes

with the best intention in the world, there are situations where parents cannot be effective parents” (Interview 285).

Furthermore, as the novel is based on a true event, Mandisa’s life story in *Mother to Mother* gives the reader a good understanding of what South Africa under apartheid must have been like for poor, black South Africans. By providing the reader with an idea of what everyday life used to be like in the shantytowns of Cape Town, or any other poor area of a large South African city, Magona extensively describes Mandisa’s childhood. Although the story is fiction, Mandisa’s story is based on the stories of women Magona used to know, but also on Magona’s own experiences as a child growing up during apartheid in Guguletu. From chapter five onwards, Mandisa recalls her childhood memories. Mandisa starts her story about her childhood by indicating that Guguletu was a terrible place to live, asking herself and the reader: “Guguletu? Who would choose to come to this accursed, Godforsaken place?” (*Mother to Mother* 48). Thereafter, she explains that she and her family did not choose to live there, but were forced to move. The so-called Group Areas Act of 1950 allowed the government to set aside certain areas in Cape Town which they believed were needed for other purposes. Therefore, thousands of poor “coloured” South African families, who were living a happy and relatively peaceful life in the Cape Town-suburb called Blouvillei, were forced to relocate (Davenport and Saunders 655). Mandisa explains that from then on, everything changed; the land they were forced to live on could not be used for farming, the situation at school turned unpleasant and mothers had to start working for white families. “In Guguletu, the new houses changed us,” says Mandisa (*Mother to Mother* 66). For her, as for most of the families in the area, things went from bad to worse. Education was no longer available for everyone, people had to work hard and only earned little money. Riots and the violence surrounding the resistance movement became part of every-day life. Just like Toloki in Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, Mandisa mentions the “necklacing,” the brutal manner that

the youth movement of the ANC used to punish their victims. Mandisa calls the youth movement the “Young Lions”, while Mda speaks of the “Young Tigers” in his book (*Mother to Mother* 73-78; *Ways of Dying* 172-173).

By providing the reader with information about the childhood of the killer, the reader is able to sympathise both with this character as well as with the mother that raised him. The first lines of chapter seven in *Mother to Mother* read: “From the beginning, this child has been nothing but trouble” (Magona 88). As Mandisa begins with telling the story of Amy Biehl’s killer, her son Mxolisi, it soon becomes clear that he was a burden even before he was born. Mxolisi comes into her life without a warning: her pregnancy is unexpected. Whereas her mother keeps a close eye on her, Mandisa and her boyfriend China manage to meet in secret from time to time. While Mandisa does as her mother told her and never “sleeps with a boy as a wife does with her husband,” she miraculously becomes pregnant (96-112). The pregnancy not only brings shame to her family, it also turns Mandisa’s life upside down; she has to leave school, marry China and live with his family. Life with China and his family is hard; they are all disappointed but above all, angry at Mandisa. When the baby is hardly two years old, China suddenly disappears and does not return. After a while, Mandisa decides to leave China’s family and move into a small house for herself. Another man takes over the role of father, but Mandisa indicates that the loss of his biological father does have a noticeable effect on her son. Additionally, Mandisa speaks of another event that greatly influences Mxolisi’s youth, namely the day that two of his friends were shot by the police in front of little Mxolisi’s eyes. More importantly, they were shot because Mxolisi, young and innocent as he was, informed the police about his friends’ hideout. After this traumatic incident, Mxolisi does not speak for nearly two years. The day he regains his speech, his first question is: “Where is my own father?” (*Mother to Mother* 159). Furthermore, not long after Mxolisi is allowed to go to school, he drops out and gets himself involved in politics, joining the anti-

apartheid movement (*Mother to Mother* 159-163). By showing Mxolisi's troubled youth, the reader may obtain a better understanding of his actions and see the murder of Amy Biehl from a different perspective.

Magona's decision to switch between the past and the present puts emphasis on the changes but also on the similarities in the lives of black South Africans. Similar like in Mda's *Ways of Dying*, the protagonist in *Mother to Mother* recalls memories from the past to clarify but also to compare it to the situation in the present. The order in which the events in Magona's *Mother to Mother* are described adds to the understanding of the situation and the similarity of the lives of black, poor South Africans in the shantytowns of Cape Town. The book starts with Magona's explanation about why she has written her novel, followed by Mandisa's lament, a letter in which she, briefly, tries to explain her son's deed and in which she asks for forgiveness. After this, the novel starts with describing the fictional start of Amy Biehl's day on the 25th of August, 1993. From then on, main character and protagonist Mandisa switches between the past, her own past as a child and her son's past as a child, and the present; the day on which Amy Biehl was killed by her own son. Pearl McHaney mentions that Magona applies a certain "manipulation of time" (172). Mandisa moves through time by starting in the present, and there are some chapters and sections of chapters titled with the date and sometimes the hour on which the events in the chapter take place. At times, the novel is working back towards and through the past, "searching for understanding relevant to the present moment" (McHaney 172). This way, it seems as if Mandisa is writing or reading from a diary and it allows her to explain why and how the events in the present are influenced by the past. Nonetheless, Janessa Hoyte claims that although Magona's book has a powerful beginning and a strong ending, it loses its strength in the middle. According to Hoyte, "the voice of Mandisa is lost amid the recounting of the history of apartheid and those living in Guguletu" (53). Hoyte rightfully argues that a more detailed focus on Mxolisi's personality

and the manner in which he interacted with his mother would have made the story more effective and it would provide the reader with a better understanding of his character and his motives (53).

In the course of the novel, main character and mother Mandisa directly addresses Amy Biehl's mother, which makes the book sound like a personal confession. According to McHaney, "Magona gives Mandisa a voice that is at once stream-of-consciousness as well as conversational, suggesting throughout the novel that Mandisa is one mother speaking relentlessly and intimately with another mother and seeking a gendered, personal reconciliation" (173). The first time that main character Mandisa turns towards Amy's mother is in the first chapter called "Mandisa's lament," which consists of a letter written to Amy's mother by the killer's mother, Mandisa. In this letter, Mandisa tries to explain her situation to Amy's mother while confessing that she is not surprised about her son's deed. At the end of the letter, she asks God, and indirectly Amy's mother, for forgiveness (*Mother to Mother* 1-4). The rest of the book consists of a description of Mandisa's own youth as well as the circumstances in which her son Mxolisi, Amy's killer, grew up. At times, throughout the book, Mandisa asks (rhetorical) questions to show Amy's mother her desperate situation. For example, when Mandisa's first husband has disappeared, she says: "I took a job. What else?" (*Mother to Mother* 145). Barnard argues that at times Magona makes it sound as if Amy Biehl herself was responsible for the way in which she came to her tragic end. In certain passages throughout the book, Mandisa addresses Amy's mother with a condescending tone, pointing out that Amy should have been aware of the fact that Guguletu was not a place for white people to visit (*Apartheid and Beyond* 143). For example, in chapter five, mother Mandisa speaks of the 1976 student revolts, the so-called Soweto Uprising, and about the fact that so many children had to miss out on education due to the revolts, strikes and boycotts. Subsequently, she confronts Amy's mother, saying: "and your daughter, did she not go to

school? Couldn't she see all the signs telling her this is a place where only black people live?" (*Mother to Mother* 72).

Furthermore, by making the protagonist point out that white people should not interfere with black people, Magona refers to the old apartheid rules. In all of her work, Magona demonstrates how she is "impassioned by the mystery of human relationships" and how she herself "sought to escape the deadening terrors of white supremacy that characterized segregation and apartheid" (McHaney 166). Whereas *Mother to Mother* is to a large extent set and written in the days after the apartheid regime, main character Mandisa repeatedly questions Amy Biehl's judgement and often indicates that the white Biehl should have known better than to come to "black" Guguletu. For instance, in her opening letter to Mrs. Biehl, she writes: "*but, let me ask you something: what was she doing, vagabonding all over Guguletu, of all places; taking her foot where she had no business?*" (*Mother to Mother* 2). According to Barnard, Magona relies on the apartheid rules "because it has come to suit the expectations and tastes of an international audience, familiar with the images of political victimization from Africa" (*Apartheid and Beyond* 143). This indicates that Barnard believes that Magona had a choice not to rely on these rules. However, it is more likely that Magona, who herself was a victim during the apartheid regime, uses her own knowledge and experiences and does not intend to "suit the expectations" of the international audience. What is more, *Mother to Mother* is set in transitional South Africa, which was a time in which apartheid was still vividly present and the racial tension was marked by several serious acts of racial violence. According to McHaney, Magona was old enough to have witnessed the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, the sentence of life imprisonment for African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela in 1964, the 1976 Soweto uprising and the police murder of black activist Steve Biko in 1977 (169). As Magona grew up during these turbulent times and as she herself has

experienced the inequality from up close, it is to be expected that she would emphasise the difference and the troubled relations between black and white people.

Although Magona succeeds in showing the reader the life of poor, black South Africans during apartheid, the protagonist's voice is not truly the voice of an uneducated South African. Sindiwe Magona was born in the Xhosa village of Gungululu in 1943 and grew up there. In 1950, similar to what happens to main character Mandisa and her family in *Mother to Mother*, Magona's family was forced to relocate to the township of Guguletu as a result of the Group Areas Act. Like Mandisa, Magona's education was interrupted, but while Mandisa was on forced maternity leave, Magona blames the 1953 Preservation of Separate Amenities law and the 1953 Bantu Education Act for the disruption of her education (Koyana 4-5). Later in life, Magona completed her schooling through correspondence courses, despite being a single mother of three and working as a domestic for a wealthy white family. In the early 1980s, Magona managed to leave South Africa to study at Columbia University and after graduating she was offered a job in New York. After twenty years, Magona retired from the United Nations in New York and relocated to her home country, South Africa. She is now not only an author but also a poet, playwright, essayist, storyteller, actor and inspirational speaker (Koyana 5). Sindiwe Magona has experienced a similar childhood as the main character in *Mother to Mother*. However, as Magona is now an academic and has spent many years outside of South Africa, her experiences and present knowledge have an indisputable influence on the way in which she now perceives the world around her. This is probably why Hoyte argues that the book does not come across as accurate, as "the voice and opinion of the South African author can easily be seen" (53). For example, the phrasing Magona uses often implies that Mandisa is an eloquent speaker: "Oh, what faith we had in the integrity of the court of public opinion" (*Mother to Mother* 76). In addition, throughout the novel, Mandisa demonstrates a thorough understanding of the situation in which she and other black South

Africans find themselves. For instance, she recalls and analyses previous incidents in which innocent white people were murdered by black people and compares it to the current circumstances (*Mother to Mother* 70-78). While the anger towards the government and the white community as well as the frustration about the current situation black South Africans are faced with sounds realistic, Hoyte claims that it is impossible for a poorly educated mother to express her anger and disbelief using the words Magona has given her (53).

Similar to Zakes Mda in *Ways of Dying*, Magona emphasises the feeling of unity among the black South Africans. In Mda's *Ways of Dying*, which has been discussed in the first chapter of this paper, much emphasis is placed on the community versus the individual. The main character, Toloki, is an individual who has deliberately chosen to move away from the community to find peace for himself. However, along the way, Toloki realises with help from Noria that the community is the way to achieve a brighter future. In Magona's *Mother to Mother*, many references to the importance of the community are made. For example, the second sentence in Mandisa's letter to Amy's mother in the first chapter reads: "People look at me as though I did it" (Magona 1). Here, Mandisa points out that within the community, everyone sees, hears and knows everything that is going on and that judgements and opinions are essential. Another example of the importance of being part of a group is demonstrated when Mandisa and her family have to move from Blouville to Guguletu. Mandisa indicates that leaving the community, their neighbours and friends, is the greatest loss of all. Not only throughout Mandisa's youth does the community play an important role, but also in Mandisa's life as an adult, the community is of great importance. For instance, when the police come to their house in the middle of the night, neighbours come to investigate what is going on. While their sudden interest is not welcomed by the family, it is a demonstration of the involvement of the community in daily life. Another fact that shows the feeling of unity can be seen in Mandisa's choice of words. Similar to Toloki in *Ways of Dying*, Mandisa often

uses the plural “we” instead of the singular “I” when she speaks and expresses herself. For instance, when Mandisa talks about her son Mxolisi, who was to a certain extent encouraged by the community to act the way he did, she says “We had been cheering him since the day he was born” (*Mother to Mother* 209).

As Magona stresses the strong feeling of unity among black South Africans, the murder of white Amy Biehl implies that whites are considered as outsiders. The murder of white student Amy Biehl by a group of black youngsters gained a considerable amount of attention. This shocked Magona, mostly because crime and the use of violence among black South Africans was often regarded as common, everyday news. Of course, it does make a difference that Amy was a young, American student who was actively involved in the preparations for the first non-racial elections and fighting for equal rights for women. This murder was a particularly sensitive case because the murder was committed out of a racist motive in a black residential area. Amy Biehl drove to Guguletu to drop some of her black friends off after they had gone for a farewell-drink in the city. Amy was about to leave South Africa after nine months of hard work, at University as well as for the South African community (*Mother to Mother v*). As Magona describes it in her novel, Mxolisi and his gang believe that because Amy is white, she must be a Boer, and because she is a Boer, she is part of the oppressors. Mxolisi feels a “burning hate for the oppressor,” which makes him kill Amy Biehl (*Mother to Mother* 210). As Magona puts it in her preface, “ironically, [...] those who killed her were precisely the people for whom, by all subsequent accounts, she held a huge compassion, understanding the deprivations they had suffered” (*Mother to Mother v*). The white Amy Biehl, who came to South Africa with all her good intentions, lost her life because she chose to go to black Guguletu. Because of her skin colour, she was considered an outsider in the black residential area. She came to the wrong place, at the wrong moment.

Whereas Magona's book is written from a female point of view and shows the strong character of black South African women, it also underlines the stereotypes of gender roles. Similarly to Mda's *Ways of Dying*, Magona's *Mother to Mother* conveys the message that women can overcome the worst of situations. In *Ways of Dying*, female main character Noria shows how she succeeds in remaining positive and how she is able to rebuild her life after having experienced many troubles in the past. As a young, single mother, she decides to leave her adulterous husband to live by herself and take care of their son. In the course of the novel, Noria has to overcome the loss of her mother and of both of her sons, but with Toloki's help and the help of the community she belongs to, Noria is able to build a new future. While Mda's novel shows how strong women can be, how they can break away from traditions but remain the heart of the community, the women in Magona's novel mostly conform to the female stereotype. *Mother to Mother* is a story that, as the title already suggests, revolves around the lives and experiences of female characters. The women, the mothers, are the caretakers, the ones who look after the children and take care of the household. The men, the fathers, are merely there to provide their families with money and food. Mandisa, but also her own mother and victim Amy Biehl are all independent women who stand strong and fight for their own rights. It is no surprise that Sindiwe Magona, who has worked in and raised women's issues and is herself an example of a strong black South African woman, portrays the women in her novel as strong characters (Koyana 2004). Nonetheless, Magona's *Mother to Mother* also shows how Mandisa and her mother are required to adjust to the traditional gender roles according to the rules of the community; once they have children, they have to leave school and take care of their families.

To conclude, although her observation is influenced by the time Sindiwe Magona has spent abroad, her novel *Mother to Mother* tells the story of the life of poor, black South Africans before the democratic elections and shows that these years were overshadowed by

criminal, violent acts and inequality. The fact that Sindiwe Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* is based on a true event and has an autobiographical element makes it more personal. The novel is not only written to entertain but also to educate the reader about the situation in South Africa both during and after apartheid. What makes the book come across as a personal confession and makes the story more realistic, is the fact that Magona used to be childhood friends with the mother of one of Amy Biehl's killers. The personal connection with the main character, but also the writer's own experiences from that time and that place makes the story create a complete picture of what life in South Africa under apartheid must have been like for poor, black South Africans. Also, by providing the audience with information from both protagonist Mandisa and her son Mxolisi, it is allowed to empathise with both characters. The alternation between the protagonists' past and present puts emphasis on the change but also on the similarities in the lives of the characters, but also the lives of the majority of black South Africans. By stressing that in South Africa, white people should not interfere with black people, Magona relies on the apartheid rules. There are some similarities to be found between Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* and Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*. Comparable to Mda, Magona underlines the feeling of unity and the importance of the group among the black South Africans in the shantytowns. Magona's book is written from a female point of view and shows the strong character of black South African women, which is something which Mda also shows in his *Ways of Dying*. All in all, with *Mother to Mother*, Magona has written a post-apartheid novel which shows the hard and segregated life during apartheid and mixes it with the equally troubled life in the transitional years. Magona chose to do this to demonstrate how apartheid has left its marks, and that its aftershock is able to touch black as well as white individuals.

Chapter 3:

Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*

In 1998, white South African author and political activist Nadine Gordimer published her 12th novel, entitled *The House Gun*. This novel is Gordimer's second post-apartheid novel after *None to Accompany Me*, which was published in 1994. Gordimer, born in 1923 in Springs, South Africa, is one of South Africa's most prominent writers and her work is well-known both in- and outside of South Africa. She has written many novels which often consider and comment on South African politics (Interview 572). As Diane Simon puts it, "for more than forty years, her work was structured by South African apartheid and the peculiar contortions and evasions necessitated by a government that countered criticism with censorship, violence and oppression" (25). In *The House Gun*, Gordimer describes how the life of an upper-middle-class white liberal family in contemporary South Africa is turned upside down when the only son Duncan is arrested for murder. It soon becomes clear that Duncan did indeed pull the trigger and killed one of his male housemates, who later also turns out to have been his ex-lover. The murder sends Claudia and Harald Lindgard, Duncan's parents, on a desperate quest for the reasons behind Duncan's unexpected act of violence. During this quest, they come to realise that they do not know their own son. Besides, as violence was never an option for Harald and Claudia Lindgard, they assume that Duncan's act is an outcome of South Africa's violent history along with the country's politics of race. Although Gordimer moves away from the political sphere into the more personal sphere, she touches upon issues similar to Mda in *Ways of Dying* and Magona in *Mother to Mother*, namely the violence, the crime and the on-going racism in post-apartheid South Africa.

The House Gun primarily comes across as a personal narrative, as the story revolves around Duncan's act and his relationships with the people that are involved. The opening sentence of the book, "something terrible happened," summarises the fact that keeps Claudia

and Harald Lindgard, parents of only son Duncan, occupied throughout the novel (*The House Gun* 3). Claudia, a doctor, and Harald, a well-placed business executive, live a quiet and relatively stress-free life in the suburbs of Johannesburg, until the news that their only son has killed his housemate reaches them. 27-year-old Duncan Lindgard, who is an architect and shares a house in the suburbs of Johannesburg, has shot one of his housemates with a gun that they were sharing “like a six-pack of beers” (*The House Gun* 114). It turns out that Duncan decided to pull the trigger after seeing this particular housemate having sex with Duncan’s girlfriend Natalie James on the couch of the common room in their house. What makes the situation even more complicated is that this male housemate, Carl Jespersen, is also Duncan’s ex-lover. The act of violence, but also Duncan’s homosexual affair, creates a gap between the son and his parents, who had the impression that they knew their son from the inside out. While Duncan awaits his trial in prison, Claudia and Harald go through Duncan’s youth and their part in it in order to find reasons for Duncan’s violent outburst. As Simon puts it, *The House Gun* is “a family drama whose edges extend briefly, anomalously, into the courtroom” (26). As communication with Duncan does not run very smoothly, Claudia and Harald obtain most of the information about their son through Senior Counsel Hamilton Motsamai and Duncan’s housemate and friend Nkululeko “Khulu” Dladla, who gradually become both their only hope and closest friends.

Whereas the focus of the novel is on the personal, *The House Gun* also contains a political side, especially when bearing in mind South African politics and the country’s violent history. Gordimer’s *The House Gun* was first published in 1998, four years after the first democratic elections and about eight years after the abolishment of the last apartheid laws. Gordimer herself does not think she is a political person, in fact, she explains that with her work, “she seeks to capture the mystery of life” (Interview 571). Nonetheless, the remnants of apartheid together with the large display of violence in the history of South

Africa cannot be denied when reading Gordimer's novel. There are several moments throughout the novel at which Claudia and Harald make observations on the continuous presence of violence in South Africa, be it among citizens or the violence used by the state. For instance, Gordimer mentions that none of Claudia's patients connect her to the murder which they might have heard about in the news, as there are so many reports of cases of violence in South Africa (*The House Gun* 49). Also, in order to paint a picture of the situation in contemporary South Africa, Gordimer mentions that "state violence under the old, past regime had habituated its victims to it. People had forgotten there was any other way" (*The House Gun* 50). Whereas Duncan's violent act turns out to be a private and personal matter, it goes without saying that it fits into daily life in South Africa, where violence still plays a large role in society. This mixture of the private and the public is typical for Gordimer's work. As David Medalie claims in his article, "the key to Nadine Gordimer's novels and short stories [...] may be found in the relationship between the personal and the political, the private and the public" (633).

Although *The House Gun* shows how white South Africans have to rely on their black compatriots in post-apartheid South Africa, racism is not the main theme. As mentioned before, *The House Gun* is Gordimer's second post-apartheid book and it is written in the time in which South Africa was still recovering from the wounds of its troublesome past. While apartheid belonged to the past in the year that the novel was published, and while black and white were now officially on an equal level, there was still inequality and racism (Davenport and Saunders 658-690). Although the event that the book revolves around, the murder of Carl Jespersen, has an emotional motive and it occasionally seems as if it could have happened anywhere in the world, both the narrator and the procedure in court make sure that "the South African context is invoked [...], so it cannot be ignored" (Medalie 638). At times, main characters Claudia and Harald also show that they are aware of the racial differences and the

complicated relation with their black compatriots. For instance, when they first hear the name of the solicitor their son has chosen to defend him, Hamilton Motsamai, they realise in shock that this must be a black man. While Claudia points out that she is not prejudiced, she is worried that “where murder is done, old prejudices still writhe to the surface” (*The House Gun* 33). At the start of Duncan’s trial, Harald and Claudia are invited to have dinner at Motsamai’s home. Although both work with black people on a daily basis, this is the first time they actually go to a black man’s home. While they had rather stayed at home, they decide to accept Motsamai’s offer and regard this fact of “the black man asking, the white man accepting” as a Left-wing gesture, not something they would have done during the apartheid days (*The House Gun* 165). Although racism does not play a vital role in *The House Gun*, these passages show the reader that it does play a significant part.

Another reason why Gordimer has written a book with such a theme, is to demonstrate how in the new South Africa, the tables are turned. The conversations and actions that take place in *The House Gun* mostly revolve around the murder of a white man committed by a white man. Whereas it is a murder that is committed within the white community, Duncan asks for Hamilton Motsamai, a black solicitor, to defend his case. Harald and Claudia react in shock, but they appear to be the only ones. They come to realise that in the new, modern South Africa, a white man can be assisted by a black solicitor. As Nadine Gordimer is a white South African who has lived through both the apartheid days, the transitional period and now lives in a democratic South Africa, she is able to tell the story of the Lindgards “from the inside” (Rochman). Gordimer herself has experienced the shift of power, in which the black South Africans went from having no rights at all to being allowed to live a free life in which they could finally participate in society, study and fulfil jobs that used to be only for the white, well-educated South Africans. This subject is of great interest to Gordimer, and many of her books consider the apartheid era and its consequences (Interview 571-573). For

instance, similarly to Gordimer's 1981-novel *July's People*, *The House Gun* shows that all of a sudden, whites have to rely on blacks for their own safety. In *July's People*, Gordimer predicts in which manner apartheid will end one day. She tells the story of a white middle-class family who have to flee from their house and seek shelter in the rural village of one of their black servants. While they are used to instructing their black servants in their home in the city, they have to hand over their power once they settle in the village. While white used to dominate black, the new situation constitutes a shift of power (Gordimer, *July's People* 1981). This is also what happens in *The House Gun*, as the white Lindgard family has to rely on the black Senior Counsel and on one of Duncan's black friends to help them defend their son. As Lois Browne puts it, "ironically, the Lindgards find comfort and support among people who owe them the least" (32). As Claudia and Harald never actively participated in the movement against apartheid, they start to feel guilty because of the situation in which they find themselves.

In *The House Gun*, Gordimer shows the reader what the new South Africa is supposed to look like, be it on a small scale. Unlike Magona in *Mother to Mother* and Mda in *Ways of Dying*, Gordimer moves away from the traditional and focusses on modern relationships in contemporary South Africa. In *The House Gun*, Gordimer focuses on the new possibilities in modern South Africa, where black and white can live together and be friends. She also touches upon homosexuality, a subject that is still rarely discussed and regarded as taboo by many in contemporary South African society. The arrangement of the housemates that Duncan shares a house with provides the reader with an example of society in the new, free South Africa. Duncan, who has distanced himself from the house as he chose to live in the cottage in the garden with his girlfriend Natalie, shares the house with three homosexual men and one woman. One of the men, Khulu, is a black South African and the victim, Carl Jespersen, is a Norwegian. Although Duncan considers himself to be straight, he has a short

homosexual relationship with Carl and while Carl is gay, he has had sex with Duncan's girlfriend. Until then, all of them living together seems to work out relatively well. In the course of the novel, Harald comes to think of it as a house in which everything is possible: "in that house, as the saying goes: no problem, black and white, brothers in bed together" (*The House Gun* 160). According to Medalie, the composition of the house is an example of "the society that the new South African constitution is making possible" (638). On the one hand, Gordimer shows how South Africa has evolved and has become a modern country, as the house in which Duncan lives accommodates a mixture of race, gender and sexual orientation.

Gordimer also seems to suggest that in the new South Africa, race is no longer necessarily the main reason for dispute; there is room for other motives. Similar to Mda in *Ways of Dying*, Gordimer's novel points out that racism and apartheid are no longer the main issues that provoke acts of violence in the new South Africa. In *Ways of Dying*, the focus is more on black-on-black violence, while in *The House Gun*, the reason why white Duncan has killed his white housemate Carl is purely emotional. Duncan Lindgard lived relatively happy together with his four housemates Natalie James, David Baker, Nkululeko "Khulu" Dladla and Carl Jespersen. Even though Carl broke up their short relationship and the relationship with Natalie was complex as they had many arguments after which Natalie would disappear for a couple of days, Duncan claims in court that the five of them living together was "better than a nuclear family, a lot of friendship and trust between us" (*The House Gun* 208). The relationship with Natalie was complicated, but Duncan did not want to leave her as he had already saved her from committing suicide twice. In court, Khulu states that Natalie is "a strange person" and that Duncan was "so patient with her [...] although she gave him hell" (*The House Gun* 223-224). Duncan had saved Natalie, which made him feel like he brought her back to life. He was prepared to save her over and over again, which she did not appreciate. Natalie explains in court how she hated that Duncan controlled her life and turned

her into his property. As Khulu puts it, Duncan “felt responsible for her” (*The House Gun* 225). Apart from the fact that Duncan had an intimate relationship with both Carl and Natalie, which could make the incident in the common room feel like a double betrayal, Duncan knew all about Carl’s casual way of handling relationships and, more importantly, about the disgust he felt for women (*The House Gun* 207). Duncan’s sense of responsibility and the fact that he regarded it as his duty to protect Natalie from harm is probably what made him pull the trigger and shoot Carl in the head.

The presence of a house gun that is simply there to protect the housemates, demonstrates the persistence of violence in the new South Africa. The title of Nadine Gordimer’s novel already suggests that violence is part of life, as even in the domestic area, a gun is needed or at least available to the inhabitants. When Duncan is questioned about the gun in court, he explains that it belonged to everyone living in the house, “it was the gun kept in the house so that if someone was attacked, intruders broke in, whoever it was could defend himself” (*The House Gun* 218). Violence and crime, as mentioned before, are part of everyday life and murder seems to be no exception. The fact that Duncan and his housemates own a gun and that throughout the book, nobody seems to think this is unusual implies that the story could not have taken place in a European country. Throughout the book, indirect connections are made between violent acts, murder and city life in South Africa. According to Stephen Clingman, the story suggests that Johannesburg but also South Africa as a country are in one way or another built on murder. Murder has always been there and will always exist, as it is part of society. Moreover, Clingman claims that the murder in the novel stands for South Africa’s past, “an inscrutable past whose essence will not finally be interpreted, understood, or redeemed” (156). In the end, the murder committed by Duncan cannot be interpreted, understood or redeemed; Duncan is sentenced to seven years in prison, but why

he was able to commit such a crime remains hard to understand for the majority of the people that are involved.

Both Gordimer in *The House Gun* and Magona in *Mother to Mother* look at the violence that is used in the present situation and with this they indicate a certain prediction for the future. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, Gordimer seems to predict that although South Africa has modernised and has moved on, violence, crime and racism will continue to be a problem in a country which knows such a violent and unbalanced past. In *Mother to Mother*, Magona demonstrates that apartheid has left its marks; in an act of revenge, a white student gets killed in a black residential area in the transitional period. With *Mother to Mother*, Magona not only reveals the anger and resentment that black South Africans feel about the way they have been treated, she also predicts the persistence of racism in the new South Africa. As many people have learned from the history of South Africa, the anger about inequality has often been expressed through demonstrations, riots and other acts of violence. On their behalf, the oppressor used violence to control the opponents and the rioting crowds (Lodge 416). Both Gordimer and Magona seem to express that in their country, violence was, is and will be part of society. In the transitional period, but also in the years that follow, they perceive the influence of the past on the present. Medalie rightly argues that “part of the anxiety of transition lies not in knowing whether past encumbrances will be shed, or whether they will remain to threaten the new society” (638). The fact that Duncan and his friends need a house gun to feel safe and protect themselves indicates that violence, even in present-day South Africa, is part of society and will remain part of it in the future.

While the book revolves around murder, the first part of Gordimer’s *The House Gun* mainly is about parents who are trying to make sense of their son’s deed. While Gordimer’s novel is not a “who-dun-it mystery,” Duncan’s parents are desperately looking for reasons for the violent act of their son during the first part of the book (Browne). They wonder whether

the other “terrible thing” that had happened to him, the suicide of a companion in junior school, has had an influence on Duncan. Also, they ask themselves if the time Duncan had to spend in the army has introduced their son to violence (*The House Gun* 63-70). The reader has to follow Claudia and Harald’s thoughts, conversations and movements to make sense of what kind of process they are going through. Gordimer does not make this particularly easy, as she does not use speech markers. From time to time, the reader has to guess whether the words are spoken or thought and by whom these words are used (Clingman 148). Similar to Duncan’s parents, main character and mother Mandisa tries to make sense of her son’s actions in Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother*. Nonetheless, Mandisa’s story is very straightforward; she tells the story from her point of view while including information from her own childhood to make the picture complete for herself, but more so for the reader. However, it is clear from the start that whereas Mandisa’s son Mxolisi has committed a murder out of racial anger, the murder committed by Duncan is one influenced by relational emotions. In his review, Simon points out that whereas people understand that shame, anger and monetary gain are motives that might lead to criminal action, “love - the love Duncan felt for both [Carl] Jespersen and [Natalie] James - and blind hurt - the hurt he must have felt, seeing them together - do not yield easily to criminal interpretation when we are expecting vendetta rapes and township riots” (26). Though Duncan’s parents are looking for an explanation, Mxolisi’s mother already knows why and how her son has come to commit the criminal act; the events that took place during his youth and the road he chose to follow turned him into the fundamentalist he is now.

In *The House Gun*, Duncan’s parents experience the direct consequences of his actions and realise that in this situation, they are powerless and can no longer rely on the white community which they belong to. From the very beginning, it becomes clear that the lives of main characters Claudia and Harald Lindgard used to be relatively easy before the arrest of

their son. Both parents have jobs in which they show that they care for the disadvantaged; Claudia works as a doctor in a clinic for the poor, black community and Harald works for a large insurance company that supports housing projects for the deprived. Even so, their son, whom they thought they knew from the inside out, suddenly changes everything: the way they see their son, themselves, each other and society as a whole. They not only ask themselves whether their son has thought about what will happen to himself, but also what will happen to their lives, the lives of his parents. For example, when Claudia pays her son a visit in prison, she asks herself the question which she fails to ask Duncan: “didn’t he think about what would happen to *him*? To her. To Harald” (*The House Gun* 84). In the course of the novel, Claudia and Harald understand that their old friends and the white community they belong to cannot be of any help. In fact, they have to rely on the black South Africans who happen to have the knowledge and therefore the power in this specific situation. These black South Africans, Motsamai and Khulu, have the best intentions to help them and their son Duncan. According to Clingman, Claudia and Harald “experience a loss of authority; a certain helplessness in the face of fate; [...] and dependence on the help and power of others” (140).

Furthermore, the awful event the book revolves around turns Claudia and Harald Lindgard into outcasts within South African society. As mentioned before in this paper, the community and being part of a group is regarded as very important, especially in a time in which groups of people are separated and discriminated against. In Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, it is main character Toloki who deliberately chooses to separate himself from his community, and it is Noria who shows him the importance of the community and teaches him how to become part of it again. In Magona’s *Mother to Mother*, it is Mandisa who guides the reader through her past as a member of a tightly knit community and shows the advantages, but also the disadvantages of being a member. In Gordimer’s *The House Gun*, the feeling of unity and the community in general is less present and not as important. However, an

important feeling of unity for the Lindgards is the fact that they are a family. Nevertheless, this feeling disappears the moment Claudia and Harald realise that their son has committed murder. Taking someone else's life is a crime that they would never even consider and the fact that their son, their own blood, has committed this crime creates a gap between parents and son. Also, murder is strictly against the law and it turns Duncan into a criminal, which makes Claudia and Harald aware of the change of their roles in society, within the community. According to Medalie, "the interruption of the calamitous event [...] alienates Harald and Claudia from other people" (637). Whereas Claudia and Harald used to have close friends who are willing to help them through the turbulent times, they realise that it is impossible to turn to these friends, as "Harald and Claudia know that they have little in common with them now" (*The House Gun* 84). Similar to what Mxolisi's act did to Mandisa's life in Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*, the action and thus the decision of the son has a serious effect on the lives of his parents.

The events in Gordimer's *The House Gun* can be read as a symbol for South Africa's past and present, while it questions people's will and ability to forgive and forget. Duncan's act, killing his own housemate, is not only an example of the violence that has remained part of everyday South African life, it can also be connected to the position of the white community in South Africa's past. Whereas white South Africans did not necessarily kill black South Africans, they did take away their rights and made it almost impossible for them to live normal lives. As Clingman mentions, the murder Duncan has committed can never really be explained, let alone be understood or redeemed, which is comparable to South Africa's past (156). The punishment Duncan has to endure, not only the seven years he has to spend in prison, but more so the burden he has to carry being a murderer for the rest of his life, can be compared to the burden the white community has to bear in the years after apartheid. Browne rightly questions: "If one unplanned death, carried out in a moment of

tumultuous emotion, can evoke such a determination not to forgive, what must be the result of apartheid's routine torture and murders of tens of thousands over the years?" (32). *The House Gun* suggests that for black but also for white South Africans, it might take a long time before all that happened in the past is forgiven and forgotten. Like Claudia and Harald, white South Africans will at some point have to work with or rely on black South Africans and come to realise the reversal that has taken place. The guilt they feel for not having participated in the anti-apartheid movement, while they now need the assistance of their black compatriots can be interpreted as a punishment. As Gordimer quotes from Amos Oz's *Fima* at the opening of *The House Gun*: "The crime is the punishment" (*The House Gun*). This quote enforces Gordimer's prediction for the future in which whites will feel guilty for the crime they have collectively committed in the past.

To conclude, although Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* tells a personal story, it can be interpreted as an example of how violence, crime and the issue of racial differences continue to exist in the new South Africa. At first, *The House Gun* seems to render mainly a personal and private story, as it revolves around the Lindgard family, the criminal offence their son has committed and the different relationships with people that are involved. Yet, *The House Gun* also has a political and a public side particularly when regarding South Africa's violent history and its controversial politics. While Gordimer has written a post-apartheid novel, it does not look back on the apartheid days but instead focuses on the shift of power and the question of who is in charge in the new South Africa. What is more, by portraying life on a small scale in modern South Africa, Gordimer demonstrates the freedom the South African society now allows. However, by pointing out the fact that within this small community, a house gun is needed for protection and is even used in a domestic dispute, Gordimer also reveals the persistence of violence in South Africa. Both Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* portray the doubts and despair of

parents who are trying to come to terms with their son's criminal and violent act. In both books parents show that they disapprove of the behaviour of their offspring, while they have to endure the consequences of their son's actions. *The House Gun* can be interpreted as a symbol of South Africa's past and present, while it predicts that it will take time for the white South African to overcome their feeling of guilt. Also, *The House Gun* paints a picture of how on the one hand, the new South Africa has created new opportunities and allows for power to be shared with black South Africans, but on the other, it shows that the country remains haunted by its past, and violence and crime affects all races and all layers of society.

Conclusion

On the whole, by scrutinising Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*, Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*, it becomes clear that although these three authors have different backgrounds, literary styles and approaches, the novels all seem to share the idea that post-apartheid South Africa is still largely divided and has to deal with the remnants of its violent past. As all three authors were born and raised in South Africa and have witnessed apartheid and its outcome, they were able to make their stories come across as personal accounts; stories that are told from the inside. Both Mda's and Magona's stories are set before the democratic elections and show that because of apartheid and the use of violence throughout the history of South Africa, it will still take time to repair the damage that has been done. While both authors have spent several years outside of South Africa, which has had a significant influence on the way in which they perceive the world and thus their home country, their stories have been influenced by their past experiences and paint a picture of traditional South African life. However, Mda is the only one who chose not to focus only on the sadness apartheid has brought along. Instead, he uses humour and wit, by which he expresses the hope for a better future for South Africa. Gordimer, who unlike Mda and Magona tells her story from the perspective of a white South African, shows how the white community in contemporary South Africa starts to realise that black and white are now on an equal level, or have even switched places in some instances. In *The House Gun*, Claudia, Harald and Duncan become familiar with the shift of power as they see that it is no longer the white but the black South Africans whom they have to trust and rely on, as they appear to be the ones who have the power and knowledge to help them. Gordimer predicts a future in which white South Africans will continually be confronted with the reversal, which will reinforce their guilt over the harm that was done in the past. What is more, both Gordimer and Magona write about a murder committed by someone's son and the way in which this affects

the main characters and other people that are involved. Whereas Magona mainly aims to explain that the hardships of the past have contributed to the situation in transitional South Africa, Gordimer takes it one step further and predicts South Africa's continuous struggle with violence in the future. Furthermore, all stories in some way demonstrate the importance and the need for feeling part of a group, for belonging to a community and the way in which female characters play an important role in this process. While Magona and Gordimer point out that prejudices about race remain part of South Africa, Mda chose to focus on the black-on-black violence in the transitional period. Nonetheless, similar to the books written by Gordimer and Magona, Mda's novel demonstrates how violence and crime continue to play a vital role in South African society, albeit apartheid has become part of the past and racism is no longer the main motive.

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Appendix

Lesson Plan

Lesson One: an Introduction to the History of South Africa

Level	Advanced
Timeframe	70 minutes
Goal	To introduce the history of South Africa.
Learning Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, students have a better understanding of South Africa's history.
Evidence of Achievement of Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, students will select a topic in South African history which they will focus on and which they will connect to a literary work in the following lesson.

Phase	Activity	Goal
Pre task	To introduce the students to South Africa, write a few words on the blackboard which they can connect to a moment in the history of South Africa (e.g. Nelson Mandela, apartheid, Cape Town). Ask the students whether they can explain what the different words stand for and what they know about South Africa. Ask them to come up with other words that can be connected to South Africa.	By letting the students find out for themselves what they know about South Africa, you will make them feel more involved in the lesson, as it stimulates them to participate and pay attention. Also, students will be more likely to remember the new information by finding it out for themselves.
Pre task 2	Provide the students with a short overview of the history of South Africa, for example by creating a timeline on the blackboard and by showing them a map of the country, along with giving them a short explanation.	By providing the students with a little bit of extra information, the students will have a better understanding of the history of South Africa. When students have the possibility to both listen to the information and get visual aids that support the information, they will be more likely to remember it.

Task	In pairs, students will pick a subject or an event in South African history which they will focus on. Allow them to go to the library or use the internet to find more information on their topic. During the third lesson, they will have to present their topic, which they have to connect to a literary work.	This task encourages the students to further explore a certain part of South African history, and with this information they will be able to combine the event with a literary work.
Post task	At the end of class, students will sign up for the topic they have chosen to present and they are required to do some research on their topic for homework.	By now, they should have a basic understanding of South Africa and its history.

Lesson Two: an Introduction to South African Literature

Level	Advanced
Timeframe	70 minutes
Goal	To discuss the most important South African authors and literary works.
Learning Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, students have a better knowledge of the different South African authors and books.
Evidence of Achievement of Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, students are able to pick a book which they can connect to the topic they have chosen for their presentation.

Phase	Activity	Goal
Pre task	To introduce the students to South African literature, give them a short presentation on South African authors and their novels. Also, provide them with a small overview of books that can be used for the presentation.	As the students have chosen a topic which they will focus on in their presentation, they now need to find a literary work which they can connect to the topic. By guiding the students through South Africa's literature, they get the opportunity to pick a book they can use.
Task	The students will read two passages from two prominent South African novels (e.g. J.M. Coetzee's <i>Disgrace</i> , Nadine Gordimer's <i>July's People</i> or Zakes Mda's <i>Ways of Dying</i>). After this, the students will discuss the passages in small groups.	By doing this activity in groups, students are able to learn from each other. If it turns out that the students find it difficult to accomplish this task, finish the activity with the whole class. This will give you the opportunity to steer the learners in the right direction.
Post task	With the present knowledge, the students will be able to find a suitable literary work to connect to the topic of their choice. In pairs, they will pick a novel and by the end of the lesson they will give a short explanation of the topic and the literary work they have chosen.	By allowing the students to prepare their presentation in class, you can guide them in the right direction and help them when necessary.

Lesson Three: Presentations

Level	Advanced
Timeframe	70 minutes
Goal	To practice and improve the presentation skills of the students while they are teaching each other about South Africa and its literature.
Learning Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, the students will have a good understanding of the history as well as the literature from South Africa.
Evidence of Achievement of Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, all students have presented the outcome of the research they have conducted.

Phase	Activity	Goal
Task	The students will give a 5-minute-presentation in pairs. Examples of topics for the presentations are Nelson Mandela and his autobiography <i>The Long Walk to Freedom</i> , apartheid and J.M. Coetzee's <i>In The Heart of The Country</i> or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Nadine Gordimer's <i>Burger's Daughter</i> .	By giving the students the task to present their findings, you do not only broaden their knowledge about South African history and literature, but you also allow them to practice their research and presentation skills.

Lesson Four: an Evaluation of the Presentations

Level	Advanced
Timeframe	70 minutes
Goal	To evaluate last lesson's presentations and the topics and books which have been discussed.
Learning Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, students will have a better understanding of South African history and its literature, but also of their performance during presentations.
Evidence of Achievement of Outcomes	By the end of the lesson, students are able to express their opinion on different subjects and literary works that are important in South African history.

Phase	Activity	Goal
Pre task	As an introduction to this lesson, make the students listen to and/or watch Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech. After this, discuss this speech but also the South African English accent in class. Also, touch upon the other official languages of South Africa.	By providing students with audio and/or video material, the situation in South Africa might become more realistic to them.
Task	Evaluate the presentations from last week's lesson. Allow the students to give each other feedback and correct them or add your own comment when needed.	By giving each other feedback, the students can learn from each other and learn from their own mistakes. Also, they get an insight in their own and each other's strengths and weaknesses, which they can work on in the future.
Post task	Start watching the 2009-film <i>Invictus</i> by Clint Eastwood, a film about Nelson Mandela's first term as President of South Africa and the ambitions of the rugby team to win the 1995 World Cup.	By watching a modern film about post-apartheid South Africa, the students will get a better idea of the impact of apartheid in contemporary South Africa.

Lesson Five and Six: Watch and Evaluate Film about Post-apartheid South Africa

Level	Advanced
Timeframe	2 x 70 minutes
Goal	To watch and evaluate the 2009 film <i>Invictus</i> .
Learning Outcomes	By the end of the two lessons, students will have a good understanding of South African history, literature and the concept of apartheid.
Evidence of Achievement of Outcomes	By the end of the year, the students will have to show their knowledge of South African history and literature in a final exam on World Literature.

Phase	Activity	Goal
Task	Watch the film <i>Invictus</i> with the students.	By watching a modern film about post-apartheid South Africa, the students will get a better idea of the impact of apartheid in contemporary South Africa.
Post task	Evaluate the film with the students. When possible, also evaluate what has been learned in the six lessons on South African history and literature. Ask the students what they liked, but also what they think could be improved.	This final task allows the students to rethink about what they have learned. Repetition has been proved to be useful for young learners.