From Archive to Platform to Discussion to Scholarship:  
The Dynamic Use of JSTOR’s Collections  
in the Study of Nadine Gordimer’s Work *July’s People*  

Brief Biography:  
For over 15 years, Christian Gregory has been teaching high school English and Philosophy in private schools in NYC and Boston. He holds two degrees in literature from the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College and was recently awarded a full fellowship to Teachers College, Columbia University, where he is pursuing a PHD in English Education. Mr. Gregory was the recipient of two fellowships from the National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH) and his culminating lesson plans for each have been published electronically through the NEH. He was also a semi-finalist for the Bechtal Award through Teachers and Writers in NYC and is currently an adjunct professor at Mercy and Concordia Colleges.

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From Archive to Platform to Discussion to Scholarship:
The Dynamic Use of JSTOR’s Collections in the Study
of Nadine Gordimer’s Novel July’s People

Subjects Covered: Literature and Cultural and Political History.

Target Grade Level: 11-12

Learning Objectives:

Students will immerse themselves in a close analysis of the anti-apartheid novel
July’s People. They will then be introduced to the depth of scholarly research,
the précis and summary, incorporating research into technological platforms,
use of research for literary analysis. In the end, students will gain historical
context and cultural knowledge of literature.

Introduction

How do we as educators address the tradition of teaching the novel in a
contemporary world? How may we, with the tools of scholarly research such as
JSTOR, allow students to build historical context and imagination, depth of
knowledge, and greater nuance in reading?

Some may rightfully claim that days of lecture are over. Classrooms today must
rely on strategies more in keeping with the dynamic nature of 21st century lives
of our students. ¹ Research certainly is a part of that, yet with greater access to
the Internet comes, paradoxically, less wisdom in curating sources and less
scholarly approaches to history and literature.

The challenge for 21st century educators is to introduce students to practice
greater judgment in selecting source material and compressing those sources
with accuracy. Further, students must synthesis multiple sources, apply this
research to literature and write with the scholarship and mien of academic
writing.

While the product of research is crucial in the 21st century, the method and
process provides an additional challenge for educators today --- in effect, how
do we use technology in the research process? To that end, educators must shift
modes of in-class work styles, practices, and student engagement to reflect the

¹ Cazden, Courtney; Cope, Bill; Fairclough, Norman; Gee, Jim; et al. “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social
Futures” Harvard Educational Review; Spring 1996; 66, 1; Platinum Periodicals pg. 60
habits of the technologically driven workplace. This lesson plan attempts to incorporate many of these practices into the plan.

Lesson Plan Overview:

This plan focuses on Nadine Gordimer’s work of Apartheid in South African, July’s People. Please see Appendix I as to how this model might be applied to commonly taught novels in the high school curriculum.

Time:

6 weeks in sum, with 3-4 weeks needed after students have completed their discussion of the novel.

Materials:

- My primary example in this lesson is Nadine Gordimer’s novel *July’s People*
- Access to JSTOR and its Collection to the “Struggles for Freedom: Southern Africa” Collection
- Student access to computers in the classroom or computer lab and at home
- Some electronic platform, such as Moodle, Haiku, or Blackboard that supports Wikispaces or access to the web so that the class can create a Wiki from Google Sites, Wikispaces, or PBwiki.
- A flexible classroom set up for pair work, group work, and a circular Harkness-style discussion.\(^2\)

Progression of Unit

Weeks 1-3: Reading Comprehension/Literary Close Analysis: For this lesson plan, my selection is Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People*, which perfectly dovetails into JSTOR’s collection of resources, “Struggles for Freedom: Southern Africa.” Class discussion, which might move through the work in 2-3 weeks, can follow along the inclinations of the teacher and needs of the students. Since this lesson plan delivers historical and social context after the completion of the novel, there is no need to introduce extensive context at this time, though the teacher should feel free to touch upon such issues as is needed. For the first weeks, the teacher instead can focus on comprehension, class dynamic in discussion, and the close reading of the text.

Week 4: Research/Website/Wikis/WikiProjects: People, Events, and Objects: This week is devoted to research on the historical and social context of the work. Students are asked to research objects present in the novel and historical figures

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\(^2\) This method was first established at Phillip Exeter Academy and refers to a student-driven discussion lightly curated by the teacher. Often in a 45-minute discussion, the educator may, indeed have spoken as little at 3-4 minutes. The focus is on student commentary, while the educator notates, observes and charts the discussion.
and events surrounding the narrative of the novel or its composition. This research will then be posted onto the collective Wikipage visible to the class. Each student’s pages might include photos, video, and correctly cited research. After the completion, students will be assigned a reading of class Wiki pages.

Week 5: **Historical Character:** In this week, students will research an historical figure other than the one they have chosen for their Wikipage. They will research this figure through JSTOR with multiple sources and draft a 1-2 page summary of the ideas and philosophies of this figure. Students will then participate in a conversation exchange with other historical characters in the classroom; Next, students will embody that historical character and her or his ideas in a Harkness Table debate; Finally, students will reflect again on the novel in light of their collective expertise from their research, writing, electronic postings, and enactments.

Week 6: **Paper Assignment Due.** With the novel completed, and a collective pool of research from JSTOR, students will reexamine themes within the novel, pulling new research or extending her or his past research to support their claims. This research will include at least three sources regarding the historical context of the work incorporated into a thesis.

**PART I: RESEARCH:**

The idea behind the research is to open up each novel with greater historical and social context. With Gordimer’s *July’s People*, the research would center on JSTOR’s digital collection, “Struggles for Freedom: South Africa.” The method of this lesson plan is to build through JSTOR a community of shared research, knowledge, and expertise in the social and historical context of the novel. Throughout this plan, students will use JSTOR in three discreet instances: first, to develop their Wikis or Wikiprojects or pages, then for greater background on a historical character in Apartheid South Africa, and last, for the final paper itself.

Preliminary Introduction to Research: JSTOR provides on-line introduction with “Research Basics for High School Students” that guide students through using search engines wisely. Since one should not assume that every student has developed speed and judgment in research, the JSTOR introduction should be used in class or at home to introduce students to the first steps of research.

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3 My classroom platform was Haiku, which had a built-in WikiProject template. But Wikis are free and fairly simple to navigate. One may start at Google sites, Wikispaces, Wetpaint, or PBwiki to create classroom pages.
Possible Topics for Research:

Students will then be asked to research a person, event, and object/or philosophical idea from the novel. Each teacher should feel free to guide these three elements of student research, but many students will follow their own interests and inclinations of the novel to investigate further. From this they will research and build Wikipages. The end result will be a catalogue of historical research. Given a class of 20 students, the result will be 20 pages made public to the class, covering 60 ideas from the novel and its context.

To create their Wikipage, student should be encouraged to research through JSTOR, annotate their articles, and summarize their findings in order to build their pages. To that page, they may add video and images. Each work will be sourced on the page.

Below is a complete list of the work of one class on Nadine Gordimer’s novel *July’s People*, set in South African during Apartheid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/People</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Object/Idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Slovo</td>
<td>South Africa and Land Claims</td>
<td>Telephone lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
<td>Soweto Uprising</td>
<td>Yellow Backie/Truck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard Sekoto</td>
<td>Sharpeville Massacre</td>
<td>Life Magazine photojournalism of S.Africa (mentioned in novel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Suzman</td>
<td>Soweto Bombings</td>
<td>DeBeers Diamonds/Blood Diamonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Biko</td>
<td>Elsie’s River, 1980</td>
<td>Zinc Bathtub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Tambo</td>
<td>The Bishu Massacre, 1992</td>
<td>Role and Distribution of Guns in S. Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Gramsci</td>
<td>Xenophobic Riots</td>
<td>Jan Smuts International Airport, circa 1980.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hector Peiterson</td>
<td>Alexandra Township Riots</td>
<td>SABC Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albertina Sisulu</td>
<td>State of Emergency 1960 and 1985</td>
<td>Red Cross First Aid Kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desmond Tutu</td>
<td>Water Contamination in S. Africa</td>
<td>Rondavel/Hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevie Wonder</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primus Stove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadine Gordimer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bush Pig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African Defence Force</td>
<td></td>
<td>Underground Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendrik Verwoed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Synthetic fiber/Rubbish used as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All of these objects are mentioned in the novel. But teachers can augment the list to include other objects of great political importance, such as the passport in South Africa. In fact, the Lowenstein Collection has several news articles on the seizing of passports and bans on travel that would provide students with a wonderful context for the passport as an object in this time and in Gordimer’s literary work.*
Below is an excerpt from a sample WIKI page from one student.\(^5\)

### Bam Smales Gun
This is a replica of the gun that Bam brought with him from his house. Bam keeps the gun hidden on the roof, it is the only form of self protection he has.

Quote: "He has a gone. The children saw there's a gun, he keeps it in the roof.-When they come, one gun is no use. If he could chase them away one day they would come back the next" (19).

### Role of Guns in South Africa
Up until 1960, there had been little to no gun usage in Apartheid movements. The ANC (South Africa's social democratic party) was strictly opposed to violent protests. They prided themselves on only holding out "non violent" protests. However, during a protest in 1960, the police suddenly started shooting at the ANC protestors, who were simply marching to the police station to protest segregation laws. More than 69 protestors were shot, and the day was soon renamed the Sharpeville Massacre. The Sharpeville Massacre was a turning point in the Apartheid struggle. The ANC protestors decided to change their philosophy of non-violent protest, and suddenly believed that armed, violent protest against the government was necessary. This is why the fact that Bam Smales owns a gun, and the violence that Nadine Gordemer writes about, are historically accurate.


### Oliver Tambo
Oliver Tambo is as best known as being one of the primary leaders of the ANC and the fight against the Apartheid movement. After studying law at the University College of Fort Hare, Tambo

### Jan Smuts International Airport Circa 1980
During the 1980s, the Jan Smuts International Airport represented the division and heightened political uproar of the apartheid movement.

Students uploaded video, images, and they were required to paraphrase text and histories, cite their sources, and cite from Gordimer’s text, if their selection was referenced in the novel. This work was done last year, without the depth of resource JSTOR’s archive would provide. But for this future plan, each student would comb the archives. For example, students could easily use the Lowenstein Collection to discover more about student protests in South Africa

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\(^5\) I have received permission from this student to reproduce this page here. For any sort of publication, I can easily receive a formal release.
(including instructions on picketing) or even the American Negro Student’s Role in the United States policies in Africa.\textsuperscript{6}

Wikiprojects/Wikis: The completion of these pages may be done in class, supervised by the teacher. The Wikipage platform is easy to use, though I noticed that students had varying levels of comfort and proficiency in assembling their pages. Done in class, students can observe each other’s work and ask for assistance from peers or the teacher.\textsuperscript{7} While the teacher provided assistance, students were encouraged to tutor each other through the mechanics of loading videos and images as well as manipulating text. Students now work collaboratively in class, have access to each other’s research and platforms, and can then revise her or his work accordingly to match the look and depth of that of the more proficient students.\textsuperscript{8}

Homework: Students were asked to read through the class pages to familiarize themselves with the collective work of the class.


\textsuperscript{7} The assignment distinguishes itself from the research paper in the open, communal nature of the research in class. Particularly with technology, some students act with expertise, and this method is to encourage one student to apprentice to another or to the teacher. Lave and Wagner write knowledgably about “legitimate peripheral participation” (LPP), a practice of learning common in guilds, which encourages interaction between “newcomers and old-timers” (Lave and Wegner 29). Here, learning how to build the Wikipage can be achieved collectively among the students, with the teacher on hand to assist.

\textsuperscript{8} Larussen and Alterman make the case that the wiki allows students to operate with higher meta-cognitive skills, such as “reflection and self/co-explanation.”
PART II: HISTORICAL ROLE-PLAY AND DISCUSSION

Each student is asked to select one figure in the historical context of the novel’s setting; one figure outside the novel who is an author, critic, philosopher, psychologist, politician or artist and tie this cultural to the time and the work itself. Each student is then asked to assemble data from various sources through JSTOR regarding each figure’s beliefs, political positions, historical background, and ideologies. Students are encouraged to find critical work as well as primary source material. (Think how one might have a student research Karl Marx and comment on the subjugation of labor in The Great Gatsby?)

Note to Teachers: Teachers may prepare a suggestion list, as this should be curated. There should be a diversity of perspectives. For my lesson plan on South African Apartheid, I included the following varied points of view: a diamond miner, a member of the white middle class, the Prime Minister of South Africa, Anti-Apartheid reformers, such as Biko, artists, and a student rebel who protested during the riots. This list demonstrated a variety of points of view from the cultural, political, and socio-economic spheres. The research needed to inform students of each character can be gathered from JSTOR and may include interviews, newspapers, biographies and critical analysis. This past year, students cited the daily wage of diamond miners in discussion; another, the proposals for anti-apartheid legislation; still another quoted verbatim from a speech the Prime Minister of South Africa had made at the time.

Bibliography/Works Cited: Each student must generate a works cited page in the preferred format for the teacher, be it MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, or APA.

Précis: Students will then compose a summary of each character in 5-7 short paragraphs, correctly integrating source materials with significant pull quotes. Students are responsible to submit a 1-2 page paper citing several sources (3-4), including primary course documents, criticism, or news reports.

Character Exchanges in Dialogue: Students use their knowledge of each persona to engage in a series of short discussions with others in the class. The format is conversational, with each student introducing her or himself as a character in history. At first they may deliver the essentials of a profile, but they should be encouraged to focus on a “topic,” such as labor laws, property, apartheid, violence, tribal customs and modernization, the effects of industrialization, or the role of money in culture. Any topic is of value just as long as it ties to the novel or time period, and students should feel free to explore topics from the point of view of their character.

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9 For example, the Commission of Inquiry Collection contains transcripts of riots in Soweto among other cities. For this lesson, students would be able to review, cite, and source actual testimony about the riots and use that for their Wiki Projects or historical characterizations, such as the testimony of Dr. Manas Buthelezi.
Further, the social aspect of the exercise expands each student’s knowledge, and each student must synthesize in each discussion, since they may mark contrasts or similarities within the exchange.\textsuperscript{10}

Method for Character Exchange: With 20 students in the room, each student will pair with five others in a brief, dynamic character exchange. Each round of discussion is three minutes and students rotate five times. The entire exercise takes 25 minutes and may be extended or modified as the teacher sees fit. The effect is to bring each student from the internalization of research, through the process of written summary, to verbalization in conversation. This series of conversations is practice for the Harkness Table discussion.

**Harkness Discussion**\textsuperscript{11}: Once students have research their historical character and practiced introductions, students are now prepared for a 45-50 minute roundtable, Harkness-style discussion.

**Layout of the Room**: As per the Harkness technique, the teacher should circle the chairs as is possible. Ideally, 15 students or fewer should participate.

**Structure**: Here, I introduced several quotation prompts for 15 minute-discussions. Each citation was meant to introduce a topic, but the students were allowed to respond as they saw fit. For South African History, I introduced quotations related to the use of violence for social change, reparations, and philosophy of class struggle.

**Post-Harkness Class Reflection**: After the discussion, it may be valuable to have students reflect on how the discussion illuminated specific scenes from the novel. This need not take the entire class, but it is meant to serve as a pedagogical marker from the close analysis unit completed weeks ago.\textsuperscript{12}

**Final Paper**: Students are now ready to respond in critical, academic prose to the work at hand. It may be best to deliver the topics for the longer paper as the students are working in class on character exchanges. Some overlap may

\textsuperscript{10} There are several pedagogies at work here. First, students are able to translate their research and the summary of that research into conversation; second, they are able to repeat the process, so that more hesitant speakers practice the art of response; last, though there is repetition, the variation of encounters demands that each student listen to another point of view and mark the differences between that perspective and that of their own historical character. Therefore, this exercise incorporates a synthesis of the research, thus moving up Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives.

\textsuperscript{11} The Harkness discussion takes is name from philanthropist Edward Harkness who funded the specific circular table at Phillip Exeter Academy in the 30s. Around these tables students may be seated in full view of each other. Discussions are driven by the students, the topics of which are lightly prompted by the educator. There are many suggested guidelines for discussions for Harkness Discussions. For this lesson plan, I encourage an informed exchange of ideas on topic, gently moderated by an observant teacher. Students are encouraged to listen actively, stay on topic and refrain from interruption. The Harkness Discussion does not require a circular or oval table – a similar effect can be achieved if the chairs in the classroom are encircled. Additional information regarding the Harkness method can be found at http://www.exeter.edu/admissions/109_1220.aspx.

\textsuperscript{12} Much of this lesson plan is to challenge students, yet not make any given task outside of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. Therefore, students collaborate on research, building a collective wiki network of background. Students assist in the metrics of building the online content. Further, students practice historical enactments in a casual, informal setting so that even introverts may build greater comfort in a debate and discussion over political issues.
be useful. Ideally, one can introduce topics from a cultural, political, or philosophical point of view. Students then will enfold research from JSTOR to support various details of the text. Some of this may be pulled from previous work they have done or they may use reexamine some of the articles introduced by their classmates on their Wikipages. My suggestion is that these papers do not enfold literary analysis of the work, but rather incorporate historical, social, and philosophical commentary. Final papers should cite liberally from the work of fiction, as well as from at least three sources found on JSTOR. Students should provide a Works Cited page in the correct format as outlined by the teacher.
Works Cited


Appendix I

Note to Teachers: This lesson plan can be implemented with any of the standard novels of high school curriculum, be it *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, *Huck Finn*, *Great Expectations*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Things They Carried*, or *Things Fall Apart*.

Below are preliminary charts that might prime a student’s preliminary research for commonly taught novels. Students would then be directed toward the appropriate collections or to search within the overall JSTOR database for research on the following topics.

### Huck Finn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/People</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Object/Idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illustrated Depictions of Jim African-American Leaders of the 19th Century</td>
<td>Occurrences of Runaway Slaves; Slave Uprisings</td>
<td>Blackface and performance Caribbean folklore The American Con Game Boats, Rafts, and Transport on Water in the 19th Century.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Great Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/People</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Object/Idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Labor Force/Blacksmithing; Figures of Class Mobility in England; Aristocracy and Hierarchy of Class</td>
<td>Child Labor Reform; Shifts in the Class Relations in the 19th Century</td>
<td>The Criminal in 19th London; Incarceration in London; Money and Commerce; Metal in the 19th Century</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other novels that can be used for this project

*Jane Eyre*: Role of women in the 19th century, domestic Work, the development of orphanages, Imperialism, and Colonization.

*Beloved*: History or miscegenation and rape, the torture of slaves, slave uprisings and escapes, the history of ghosts and the supernatural in the 19th century.
The Great Gatsby: The underclasses in NYC, automobiles and the effect of speed, the new women, alcohol in the 20’s, and Modernism in Painting and Literature.

Things Fall Apart: Indigenous cultures in African and tribal histories, Colonization, African tribal rituals and political structures of powers, the history of missionary work in Africa.

In adapting this plan for other novels, teachers may find it necessary to survey JSTOR’s archives and collections. Student may do general searches, but their may be curated collections that may serve each novel’s historical context with greater focus.