



## Human Beings Create Their Own Destruction: Critical Discourse Analysis of *Once Upon a Time* by Nadine Gordimer

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### Abstract

The prezzie study is a Critical Discourse Analysis of Nadine Gordimer's short story *Once Upon A Time*. The idea is to spotlight that is in Nadine Gordimer's mind how human beings create their own destruction. Gordimer's work is full of racial discrimination and social insecurity in the people of the South-African society and this insecurity and racial discrimination show how insecure they people are. The study is the scrutiny of Ruth Wodak Model. Research explores the human race is responsible for creating its own devastation. Moreover, the study tells us how we prepare ourselves in the danger of insecurity and how we can prevent ourselves in such circumstances.

**Key words:** Nadine Gordimer's once upon a time; CDA; Insecurity; Racial discrimination; Ruth Wodak model

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### INTRODUCTION

Before elaborating the term of discourse analysis there is a need to define the term discourse itself in order to

understand the basic concepts of discourse analysis. As a branch of language study, discourse is a complete unit that has two forms i.e written and spoken. Discourse is a unit of language that is the most higher and complete than a clause. There are high cohesion and coherence in discourse. Discourse can be delivered in both written and oral form. According to Widowson (2007), discourse is an area of language study concerned with how people making meaning, and make out of meaning in the text as social practice. All texts are uses of language which are produced with the intention to refer to something for some purpose. Discourse is a term used in linguistics to describe the rules and conventions underlying the use of language. Discourse practically relies on the speaker or the writer and the hearer and the reader. In discourse analysis, each of linguistic analysts uses different theories and techniques. There are four main headings related to the ways and means of discourse analysis, rules and disciplines, contexts and cultures, functions and structures, and power and politics. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk. Critical Discourse analysis is a practically oriented form of discourse analysis addressing social problems. "Critical" is used in the special sense of aiming to show up connections which may be hidden from people such as the connection between language power and ideology. Critical Discourse Analysis may be defined as being primarily concerned with evaluating the opaque and transparent structural relationship of dominance and discrimination. Critical Discourse Analysis aims to examine critically social dissimilarity as it is expressed, created by language use or in discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis is a form of applied Linguistics. Critical discourse analysis emerged in late 1980s. It was spearheaded by Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Van Dijk and some others. There are many

of reasons for studying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Another reason is that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows you to look at topics in which you have a proper trust. CDA has more depth in it and will give you new tools with which to study language, not just academically, but in everyday life too, for example, when reading newspapers or magazines, or watching the news. It may be capable to enhance your vision. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) also seeks to examine language as a form of cultural and social practice, and is an approach which allows the description and interpretation of social life as it is represented in talk and texts.

Nadine Gordimer's short story *Once Upon A Time* focuses on a family living in apartheid-era South Africa. At first, the family is happy. However, they soon become distrustful about the world around them. Rumors spread of migrant workers breaking into houses. To protect themselves, they fix a variety of security devices ranging from an alarm system to a tall brick wall topped with thorny wire. In trying to "protect" themselves from unseen robbers, they disturb and eventually destroy their way of life. Although they are never directly confronted by any threats, they act upon rumors and paranoia. One day, the little boy of the family reads a book of fairy tales and decides to become the brave knight who braves the tunnel of thorns and climbs through the tunnel of hooked wire on the top of the wall surrounding his house. The very device that was meant to protect him and his family from the outside world caused his own death. So actually Gordimer tells us how we make our destruction.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

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There are different works on this short story and also different analyses have examined it in their own way. Miss Gera is a journalist who analyzed, *Once Upon A Time* on 26 November 2012, she said *Once Upon a Time* a social Fairy tale has always been told to us as children; whether to comfort or entertain us, they always seem to be a part of everyone's childhood. *Once Upon A Time*, the title is a characteristic of a fairy tale, but she leads the story to an ending that is anything other than "happily ever after" (Gordimer, p.12). Although Nadine Gordimer's title is typical in a fairy tale in the story "Once Upon a Time", the story she writes anything but typical. The author uses irony to reflect the idea of human being leading into their destruction. It is analyzed that human beings are responsible for their own destruction, human is doing progress, but some time; their own made things are harmful for the human beings. On another site under the of cliff notes.com there is also some analysis of this short story, on this site it is written that once upon a time she wrote the story to caution her readers about a threat in all our lives. This story reflects the dangers of allowing us to become focused on the wrong things in

life taking our distractions to an extreme can destroy our quality of life, in this society, discrimination is the main problem of human destruction, and human beings are fights with each other due to caste supremacy or power and money. Another author Emily Hines made analysis of this story she told that in Nadine Gordimer's story, the most important element is its theme. The entire story is set about telling its readers that human beings are responsible for their own destruction. She also discussed the setting of this story, two parts of story are important as well as the ironic structure. Suspense and tone also add good effect on the story.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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Critical research on discourse needs to satisfy a number of requirements in order to its aim. First of all it is read the whole short. The research has tried to analyze all the aspects of the whole story very carefully. Then it has evaluated Nadine Gordimer's *Once Upon A Time* in the eyes of Ruth Wodak Model. The study has also evaluated in a research tool, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The research has found that although its title *Once Upon A Time* and the simplicity of language make it a kind of children-bedtime story but in fact it is an allegory, containing multiple meanings and interpretations of the story. First of all there is the introduction, where writer told the reason for writing this short story as well as her own experiences and fears while living in an apartheid society. So we tried to explore all the possible interpretation of this story by applying Ruth Wodak Model. At the end we have summed up all the aspects and synthesized it by our self.

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## 3. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

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In Nadine Gordimer's *Once Upon A Time*, the important thing is its moral lesson because this story describes the most striking aspect of our social life. The setting of two parts of the story is important as well as the ironic plot of structure is presented. The story begins with the description of a family living "happily ever after" in a city suburb. The story quickly tells us about the protagonists, who are the husband, wife, and their little boy. Although having a large sign that reads, "You Have Been Warned", the wife, especially is very suspicious about keeping their house safe and secure from the alarming drunkards and riots, which are frequent in their area. The trusted house maid continues to give her advice about how to keep their belongings and lives robber-free. The story moves on to explain how they secure their house. Then the husband's mother, or "the wise old witch", buys a metallic coil with shards encircling it to top their fence, which lines the entire perimeter of the family's property. Even the names of characters are symbolic like Wise Old Witch: She is

the mother of the husband. Gordimer very artistically hide the names of all other characters as husband, wife and their boy but the name of the grandmother of little boy is significant for two reasons, first of all it gives the idea of a typical children story in which there are witches and other creatures like this to make it interesting, secondly the contribution of her gifts in the wife of the family brought miss happenings. The boy was hurt when he was trying to copy the same adventure of prince as he read in the story books presented by the Wise Old Witch.

The story explains that even the cat rests just within the walls and does not try to jump or challenge the wall. The ending of this story is really unhappy, surprisingly it ends with the idea that how we people cause and contribute in our own destruction. He falls into the mess of metal heavily bleeds and while the gardener and housemaid attempt to rescue him. At last little boy lose the game of his life. In some ways, the ending of *Once Upon A Time* is indeterminate because the story is exact evidence of the following events of the boy, like if he lives or dies. Although left with a sort of cliff hanger, the artistic unity of the plot leads to a full comprehension of the stories and the relationship between them. The characterization of *Once Upon A Time* is not very deep. Indirectly presented, each of the characters is relatively flat. The parents stay on the edge through the entire story, and the child does not change either. These characters are not complex, seeing as all that is known is their fear of the outside world. Even their names are not evident in the story. The abstractness of the story is used so that it is not related to any other type of children's bed time story. Basically these all things tell us about that how we make their own death path strong. So we can say that human nature is not to be satisfied at any stage. The most important aspect of *Once Upon A Time* is its interpreted plot. The theme of the story is "fear caused by our own fear can lead to bigger problem because fearness has the ability to consume our mind". The husband and wife were so consumed by protecting their house that they failed to enjoy what was inside it. They were so worried about their security. They need maximum security even cats and birds not be able to enter in the house. So we can say that humans are also superstitions and they are not satisfied at any level. This madness causes the horrified results. Symbols are used in *Once Upon A Time*. These symbols lead to the allegorical element of fantasy; however, this story is considered a reverse fantasy. The husband's mother is named *The Wise Old Witch*, which is present in a lot of fantasy works. The appearance of the house and its security features are related to common castles which were protected by different obstacles like moats or curtain walls. The company from which the family buys the metal coil is named Dragon's Teeth (Gordimer, p.224). Dragons are very common in literary fantasies. The dragon symbol is important to this story because the

teeth allude to the danger of the fence coil. These dragons symbolize the dangers in this short story. In relations to *Once Upon A Time*, the housekeeper is the loyal sidekick to the family in the way that she always gives those suggestions of how to better protect their house. The most obvious symbol of the story is an attempted heroic quest in which the child grabs a ladder to fare the jagged coil. In almost any fantasy or fairy tale there is a heroine that must put themselves in danger in order to succeed at their set mission. A little twist occurs in this symbol when the little boy does not succeed like normal protagonists. This symbol of the story is often where it is believed to be a reverse fantasy. Another important element of literature in *Once Upon A Time* is humor and irony. In the story, "happily ever after" is constantly repeated which is rather humorous because they live in a criminal society. This family is forced to primarily to keep their own house and be scared for their lives, yet they are living "happily ever after." This situation would be ironic because of a separation of appearance and reality. The biggest irony of *Once Upon A Time* is the child getting hurt by what was to protect him, especially since bed time stories are supposed to end happily. Irony is used in large carries the interest of the plot. *Once Upon A Time* is an enjoyable literary fictional work. It also gives us a great moral lesson that human creates its own destruction.

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## CONCLUSION

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The short story *Once Upon A Time* by Nadine Gordimer has a great world of meaning. The main message is that the walls of prejudice we build, and the limits we put within our minds, due to the fear of threat to ourselves, cause us to get isolated from the outside world, and human relationships. The main concentration of the story is an unjust social system creates an environment of fear that can destroy the both. Human beings are just selfish they are just things for their own self. So this story is the best way to judge what we are doing with our self or our neighbors. We are just thinking about our own self. So thing is not better for us and others, that's why Nadine Gordimer said that human creates their own destruction.

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