

WIKIPEDIA

Olive Schreiner

Olive Schreiner (24 March 1855 – 11 December 1920) was a South African author, anti-war campaigner and intellectual. She is best remembered today for her novel *The Story of an African Farm* (written in Matjiesfontein) which has been highly acclaimed since its first publication in 1883 for the bold manner in which it deals with some of the burning issues of the day, including agnosticism, existential independence, individualism, the professional aspirations of women, and the elemental nature of life on the colonial frontier. In more recent studies she has also been identified as an advocate for those sidelined by the forces of British Imperialism, such as the Afrikaners, and later other South African groups like Blacks, Jews and Indians – to name but a few. Although she showed interest in socialism, pacifism, vegetarianism and feminism amongst other things, her true views escape restrictive categorisations. Her published works and other surviving writings promote implicit values like moderation, friendship and understanding amongst all peoples and avoid the pitfalls of political radicalism which she consciously eschewed. Although she may be called a lifelong freethinker, she continued to adhere to the spirit of the Christian Bible and developed a secular version of the worldview of her missionary parents, with mystical elements.

Karel Schoeman, the South African historian and leading authority on Schreiner's life in South Africa, has written that she was an outstanding figure in a South African context, albeit perhaps not quite the same abroad. Schoeman acknowledges that while *The Story of an African Farm* is by no means perfect, it is still unique and gripping even to the modern reader. He also outlines the basic pattern of her life which may serve as a useful guide to both this article and the pursuit of further interest in the subject:

From a chronological viewpoint, Olive Schreiner's life shows an interesting pattern. After she spent the first twenty-five thereof in South Africa ... she was in England for more than seven years, and also lived during this time in Europe. After this she lived in South Africa for twenty-four years, the time of her friendship with Rhodes, the Anglo-Boer war and her growing involvement in issues like racism and the lot of women, after which another exile followed in England for seven years; it was only shortly before her death in 1920 that she returned to South Africa. (*Olive Schreiner: A Life*

Olive Schreiner



Native name	Olive <u>Emilie</u> Albertina Schreiner
Born	24 March 1855 Wittebergen Reserve, Cape Colony (in present-day Lesotho)
Died	11 December 1920 (aged 65) Wynberg, South Africa
Occupation	Novelist, suffragist, political activist
Notable works	<i>The Story of an African Farm</i> , <i>Woman and Labour</i>
Relatives	<u>William Schreiner</u> (brother)

Signature

Olive Schreiner