

Lessing

- 1919 b. Kermanshah, Persia (father works for Imperial Bank of Persia)
- 1925 family moves to Southern Rhodesia to farm
- 1937 Communist Party circles (antiracism)
- 1949 moves to London
- 1950 *The Grass Is Singing* (London: Michael Joseph)
- 1956 banned from Rhodesia and South Africa
leaves the British CP
- 1962 *The Golden Notebook* (London: Michael Joseph)
- 1963 “To Room Nineteen,” in *A Man and Two Women* (London: MacGibbon & Kee)
- 1979 *Re: Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta* (London: Jonathan Cape): first volume of an “inner-space” pentalogy
- 1988 *The Fifth Child* (London: Cape)
- 2007 Nobel Prize
- 2013 d.

Sources: Elizabeth Maslen, “Lessing [née Tayler], Doris May,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2017, [doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/108270](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/108270); Jan Hanford, “Doris Lessing: A Retrospective,” dorislessing.com.

[In Rhodesia] Doris Lessing left behind two ex-husbands, Frank Wisdom and Gottfried Lessing, and the two young children of her marriage to Frank. Men do this all the time—desert the family, shall we say, in one form or another—but we assume, partly because of sloppy, ill-considered thinking and partly with some element of truth, that the wrench is too great for any but the hardest-hearted woman....

To me, the most interesting aspect of Doris arriving in London with her third child and a novel, while her two other children remained in Southern Rhodesia with their father, was that it required a move across the world. It was, as I see it, an instance of Doris putting as much space between herself and an unwelcome truth as she could. From the way she described Southern Rhodesia, I thought, as she did, that she couldn’t possibly stay if she was to do what she wanted to do....I am a feminist and a mother. I applaud the escape to freedom of a woman living her own life at such a time and in such a place, and her determination to fulfil her passion, to experience the power of her need to write.

Jenny Diski, “Why Can’t People Just Be Sensible?” *London Review of Books*, July 30, 2015, lrb.co.uk. Diski was fostered by Lessing as a young woman.

A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.

It is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. Susan Gubar (1929; Orlando: Harcourt, 2005), 4, 103. £500 a year was an upper-middle-class income in Woolf's time.