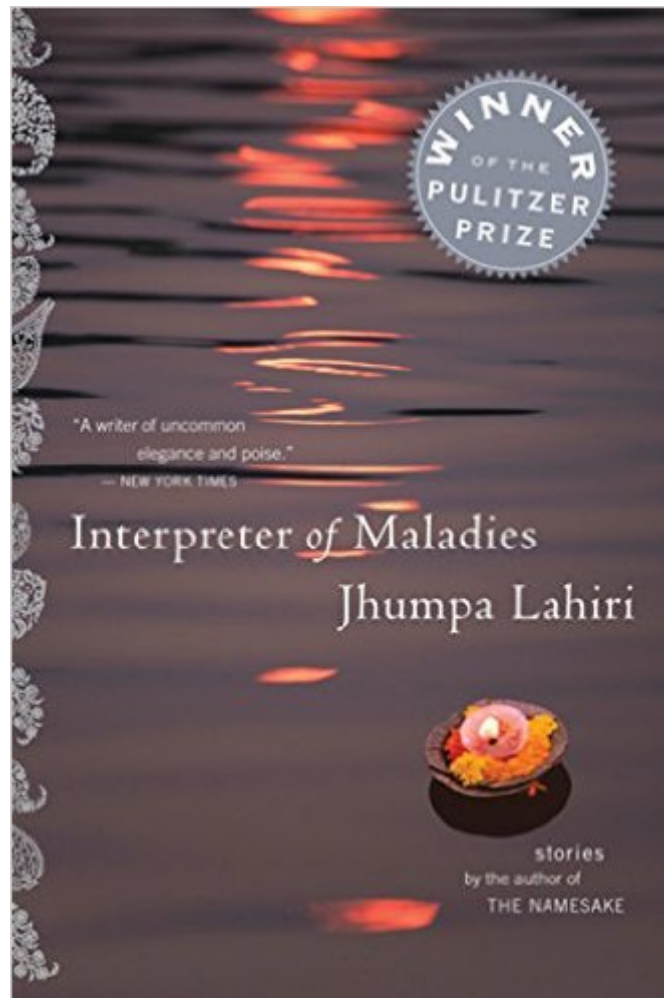


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Interpreter Of Maladies



Synopsis

Navigating between the Indian traditions they've inherited and the baffling new world, the characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's elegant, touching stories seek love beyond the barriers of culture and generations. In "A Temporary Matter," published in *The New Yorker*, a young Indian-American couple faces the heartbreak of a stillborn birth while their Boston neighborhood copes with a nightly blackout. In the title story, an interpreter guides an American family through the India of their ancestors and hears an astonishing confession. Lahiri writes with deft cultural insight reminiscent of Anita Desai and a nuanced depth that recalls Mavis Gallant. She is an important and powerful new voice.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,006 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Jhumpa Lahiri is an ethnic Bengali writer, born in London. brought up in America, who writes in English. As someone caught between the rootless culture of the modern developed world and the more tradition-bound culture of India, she is well positioned to exploit that vague sense of unease that we feel when we turn our back on our roots and traditions. The short stories collected in this Pulitzer Prize-winning volume focus on different aspects of the modern Indian experience. Stories like "Sexy" and "This Blessed House" deal with Filofax-toting, young Indian professionals, apparently successful in the academic or computer fields in the USA, but nevertheless unsure of themselves and spiritually cast adrift in their adopted country. Often a contrast is made between traditional lifestyles, which, although far from perfect, seem somehow more real than modern ones. This echoes the way Chekhov used to juxtapose the hollow, glittery lives of the Russian bourgeoisie

with the earthy lives of the peasants. In "Mrs Sen's" the painstaking method of preparing proper Indian meals, involving a litany of vegetables, is seen through the eyes of a young white boy whose single mother is too busy to look after him. But Lahiri is a good enough writer not to commit herself to narrow clichés about a 'spiritually vacuous West' or a 'soulful India.' Her stories set in the Subcontinent, like "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar," show how superstitious and narrow-minded such societies can be regarding illness and the need for marriage. The women in "This Blessed House" and "A Temporary Affair," by contrast, seem liberated by their lives in America.

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