

# Interpreter of Maladies

Author  
Jhumpa Lahiri

Year Published  
1999

Original Language  
English

## THEMES

### Marriage, Communication & Assimilation

Lahiri's collection of stories explores the emotional "maladies" that affect people and their relationships, often through the lens of Indian immigrants' experiences. Her richly drawn characters face challenges related to loneliness and alienation, assimilation, and miscommunication.



#### Marriage

Married life is a different country, and people don't always adjust well to it.

#### Communication

Communication can be difficult even if two people speak the same language.

#### Assimilation

Every immigrant must decide how much they want to change in a new country.

## Author



**JHUMPA LAHIRI**  
BORN 1967

Lahiri was born in London, and her family later immigrated to the United States. *Interpreter of Maladies*, her first published work of fiction, earned her the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the PEN/Hemingway Award. Her works explore the challenges of assimilation and communication from an immigrant's perspective.

## Context



#### Mosaic of Cultures

With thousands of distinct ethnic groups and tribes, India is incredibly diverse, which is both wonderful and complicated.



#### Partition & Diaspora

Since Pakistan split from India in 1947, further geographic divisions have displaced millions of Indians, leading to mass emigration.

Hello

नमस्ते

#### Common Language

Indians speak a number of diverse languages, but Hindi and English are the unofficial common tongues, and many Indian writers choose to write in English.

## Symbols



#### Children

Represent innocence but also insight and honesty



#### Food

Represents comfort, solace, hospitality, and solidarity



#### Education

Stands for enlightenment and progress but also elitism

**A**s ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination.

Narrator, "The Third and Final Continent"