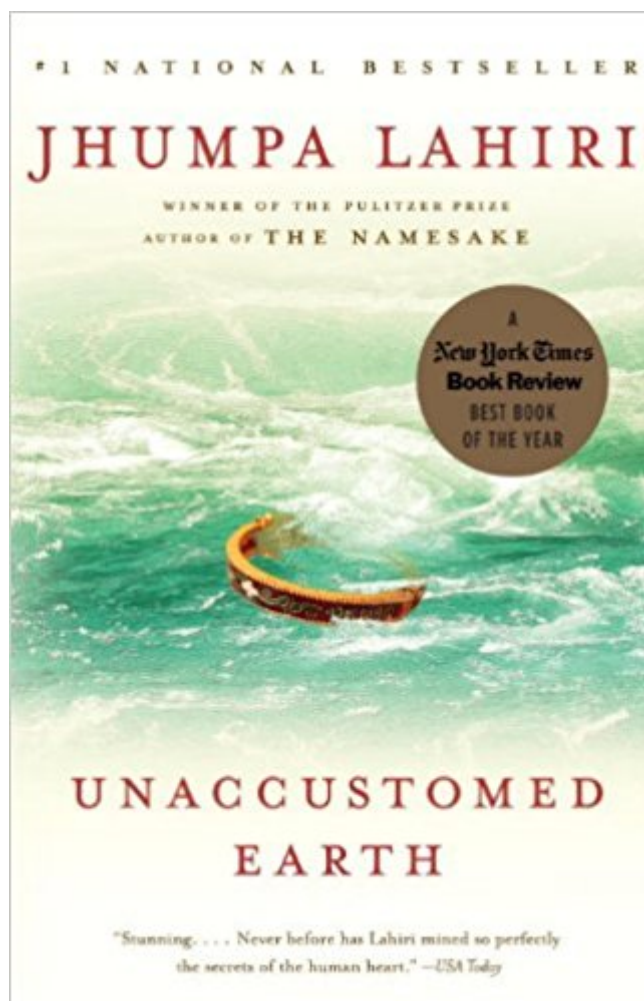


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Unaccustomed Earth (Vintage Contemporaries)



Synopsis

These eight stories by beloved and bestselling author Jhumpa Lahiri take us from Cambridge and Seattle to India and Thailand, as they explore the secrets at the heart of family life. Here they enter the worlds of sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers, daughters and sons, friends and lovers. Rich with the signature gifts that have established Jhumpa Lahiri as one of our most essential writers, *Unaccustomed Earth* exquisitely renders the most intricate workings of the heart and mind.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The gulf that separates expatriate Bengali parents from their American-raised children "and that separates the children from India" remains Lahiri's subject for this follow-up to *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*. In this set of eight stories, the results are again stunning. In the title story, Brooklyn-to-Seattle transplant Ruma frets about a presumed obligation to bring her widower father into her home, a stressful decision taken out of her hands by his unexpected independence. The alcoholism of Rahul is described by his elder sister, Sudha; her disappointment and bewilderment pack a particularly powerful punch. And in the loosely linked trio of stories closing the collection, the lives of Hema and Kaushik intersect over the years, first in 1974 when she is six and he is nine; then a few years later when, at 13, she swoons at the now-handsome 16-year-old teen's reappearance; and again in Italy, when she is a 37-year-old academic about to enter an arranged marriage, and he is a 40-year-old photojournalist. An inchoate grief for mothers lost at different stages of life enters many tales and, as the book progresses, takes

on enormous resonance. Lahiri's stories of exile, identity, disappointment and maturation evince a spare and subtle mastery that has few contemporary equals. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review Following her thoughtful first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), which has been made into a meditative film, Lahiri returns to the short story, the form that earned her the Pulitzer Prize for her debut, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). The tight arc of a story is perfect for Lahiri's keen sense of life's abrupt and painful changes, and her avid eye for telling details. This collection's five powerful stories and a haunting triptych of tales about the fates of two Bengali families in America map the perplexing hidden forces that pull families asunder and undermine marriages. "Unaccustomed Earth," the title story, dramatizes the divide between immigrant parents and their American-raised children, and is the first of several scathing inquiries into the lack of deep-down understanding and trust in a marriage between a Bengali and non-Bengali. An inspired miniaturist, Lahiri creates a lexicon of loaded images. A hole burned in a dressy skirt suggests vulnerability and the need to accept imperfection. Van Eyck's famous painting, *The Arnolfini Marriage*, is a template for a tale contrasting marital expectations with the reality of familial relationships. A collapsed balloon is emblematic of failure. A lost bangle is shorthand for disaster. Lahiri's emotionally and culturally astute short stories (ideal for people with limited time for pleasure reading and a hunger for serious literature) are surprising, aesthetically marvelous, and shaped by a sure and provocative sense of inevitability. --Donna Seaman

Jhumpa Lahiri enables her readers to gain valuable insight into the cultural twists and turns endured by those who leave the land of their birth to live and work 'Unaccustomed Earth'. Her style is unabashedly that of the traditional 'storyteller', with the novel's structure drawing strongly on the form of the short story. Each section is a short story that could probably stand alone, but strung together they combine to tell a meaningful tale of human experience. 'Dialogue' is sparse in these tales, but Lahiri's use of language is rich, her powers of observation are astute, and her insight into human character is profound. These talents come together as Lahiri pulls back the curtain on a portion of human experience that -- while increasingly common in all parts of the world -- is not yet well understood anywhere at any level. It is significant that a writer of Lahiri's gifts has chosen this theme. Highly recommended.

I was given a copy of the *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri for Christmas. It is a selection of

short stories that won the Pulitzer for fiction in 2000. I simply loved it - achingly beautiful stories. So, I ordered *Unaccustomed Earth* by the same author. Once again these are heart rending short stories. One reviewer said that the author explores the secrets of the human heart. So true.

This is one of the greatest authors of our time and this book is fantastic!! She writes about what she knows so her stories have a similar vein.....young Indian people who come to America (usually the northeast...most often the Boston area) and go to top universities and then become successful and participate in arranged marriages and try to raise children in the United States with their values. Some of the characters are successful and others fail. The writing is beautiful and seamless. I never want to put her books down. Exceptional!!!

Jhumpa Lahiri doesn't disappoint with this one- Just like in "The Namesake", you end up seeing the pov of all the characters, which is not an easy thing for the author to get the readers to do. The last trilogy, "Hema and Kaushik", is just heartbreaking!

I read this book for a book club. Usually I do not like short stories but these ones were intertwined with Bengali-American family life. I really enjoyed the book and the conversation about it was energetic and positive.

I had delayed reading this book and made a mistake in doing so! The characters are so thoughtfully developed, the reader is instantly drawn into the themes of self-identity and struggles for discernment and direction. The Bengali culture of the characters sets the framework but in a way that both universalizes and personalizes the experiences of each individual. The short-story framework allows Ms. Lahiri to quickly create new settings that seem simultaneously familiar and foreign--to both the reader and the characters themselves. Definitely worth reading and discussing with others.

The two short stories books by Jhumpa Lahiri are her best work. I hope she publishes more as I was very sad when I finished both books.

This book was beautifully written, with vivid language and cultural references, tense settings and relationships, and abundant heartache. My only complaint was that sometimes it felt like it was the same story, being told several times over. They were short stories, but the themes and, all too often,

the results were the same for these characters. I would have liked some range in their development. And at least ONE happy ending would have been nice

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