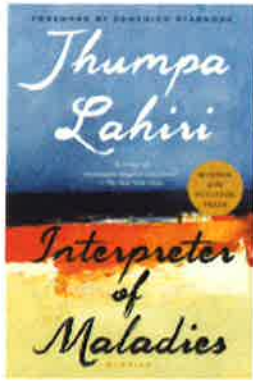


Proposed Core Literature Titles

The following summary is provided by the California Department of Education's "Recommended Literature List", and the top three Google searches of the book title and author name (e.g. Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri) that produced a description of the title.

Interpreter of Maladies

Proposed Grade Level: 12



Title: Interpreter of Maladies

Author: **Lahiri, Jhumpa**

First Published: **1999**

Proposed Grade Level: 12

Lexile Measurement: 1050L

California Department of Education, Recommended Literature List:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/rl/archivedlitlist.xlsx> (live.com)

This collection of short stories was Lahiri's first published work and winner of the Pulitzer Prize. The stories are carefully constructed and focus on the complicated relationships with people built and dismantled and on identity and cultural recognition. All the characters are Indian or Indian American. Lahiri primarily writes for an adult audience, but the ideas of love, respect, and family can be understood by young-adult readers.

Descriptions From Top 3 Google Searches:

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5439.Interpreter_of_Maladies

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.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpreter_of_Maladies

Interpreter of Maladies is a book collection of nine [short stories](#) by American author of Indian origin [Jhumpa Lahiri](#) published in 1999. It won the [Pulitzer Prize for Fiction](#) and the [Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award](#) in the year 2000 and has sold over 15 million copies worldwide. It was also chosen as *The New Yorker's* Best Debut of the Year and is on [Oprah Winfrey's](#) Top Ten Book List.

The stories are about the lives of [Indians](#) and [Indian Americans](#) who are caught between their roots and the "New World".

Interpreter of Maladies garnered universal acclaim from myriad publications. Michiko Kakutani of the *New York Times* praises Lahiri for her writing style, citing her "uncommon elegance and poise." *Time* applauded the collection for "illuminating the full meaning of brief relationships—with lovers, family friends, those met in travel" Ronny Noor asserts, "The value of these stories—although some of them are loosely constructed—

lies in fact that they transcend confined borders of immigrant experience to embrace larger age-old issues that are, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'cast into the mold of these new times' redefining America."

Noelle Brada-Williams notes that Indian-American literature is under-represented and that Lahiri deliberately tries to give a diverse view of Indian Americans so as not to brand the group as a whole. She also argues that *Interpreter of Maladies* is not just a collection of random short stories that have common components, but a "short story cycle" in which the themes and motifs are intentionally connected to produce a cumulative effect on the reader: "...a deeper look reveals the intricate use of pattern and motif to bind the stories together, including recurring themes of the barriers to and opportunities for human communication; community, including marital, extra-marital, and parent-child relationships; and the dichotomy of care and neglect.

<https://www.amazon.com/Interpreter-Maladies-Jhumpa-Lahiri/dp/039592720X>

Mr. Kapasi, the protagonist of Jhumpa Lahiri's title story, would certainly have his work cut out for him if he were forced to interpret the maladies of all the characters in this eloquent debut collection. Take, for example, Shoba and Shukumar, the young couple in "A Temporary Matter" whose marriage is crumbling in the wake of a stillborn child. Or Miranda in "Sexy," who is involved in a hopeless affair with a married man. But Mr. Kapasi has problems of his own; in addition to his regular job working as an interpreter for a doctor who does not speak his patients' language, he also drives tourists to local sites of interest. His fare on this particular day is Mr. and Mrs. Das--first-generation Americans of Indian descent--and their children. During the course of the afternoon, Mr. Kapasi becomes enamored of Mrs. Das and then becomes her unwilling confidant when she reads too much into his profession. "I told you because of your talents," she informs him after divulging a startling secret.

I'm tired of feeling so terrible all the time. Eight years, Mr. Kapasi, I've been in pain eight years. I was hoping you could help me feel better; say the right thing. Suggest some kind of remedy.

Of course, Mr. Kapasi has no cure for what ails Mrs. Das--or himself. Lahiri's subtle, bittersweet ending is characteristic of the collection as a whole. Some of these nine tales are set in India, others in the United States, and most concern characters of Indian heritage. Yet the situations Lahiri's people face, from unhappy marriages to civil war, transcend ethnicity. As the narrator of the last story, "The Third and Final Continent," comments: "There are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept." In that single line Jhumpa Lahiri sums up a universal experience, one that applies to all who have grown up, left home, fallen in or out of love, and, above all, experienced what it means to be a foreigner, even within one's own family. --Alix Wilber