

***Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

REFLECTION PAPER

Write a 2- to 4-page reflection paper (typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins) answering one of the following questions. Remember to provide sufficient textual evidence — properly cited with page numbers — to support your claims. Be prepared to share your responses at our next class meeting.

1. What kinds of marriage are presented in the stories? One reviewer has written that Lahiri's "subject is not love's failure,...but the opportunity that an artful spouse (like an artful writer) can make of failure..." Do you agree or disagree with that assessment?
2. For Mrs. Sen, "Everything is there" (that is, in India). What instances are there in these stories of exile, estrangement, displacement, and marginality — both emotional, and cultural?
3. Another reviewer has written, "Food in these stories is a talisman, a reassuring bit of the homeland to cling to." How do food and meal preparation maintain links to the characters' homelands? What other talismans — items of clothing, for example — act as "reassuring bits of the homeland"?
4. The narrator of "The Third and Final Continent" ends his account with the statement, "Still, 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 what ways are Lahiri's characters "bewildered"?
5. In "Interpreter of Maladies," Mr. Kapasi finds it hard to believe of Mr. and Mrs. Das that "they were regularly responsible for anything other than themselves." What other instances of selfishness or self-centeredness do you find in these stories?
6. In "Interpreter of Maladies," visitors to Konarak find the Chandrabhaga River dried up, and they can no longer enter the Temple of the Sun, "for it had filled with rubble long ago ..." What other instances and images does Lahiri present of the collapse, deterioration, or passing of once-important cultural or spiritual values?