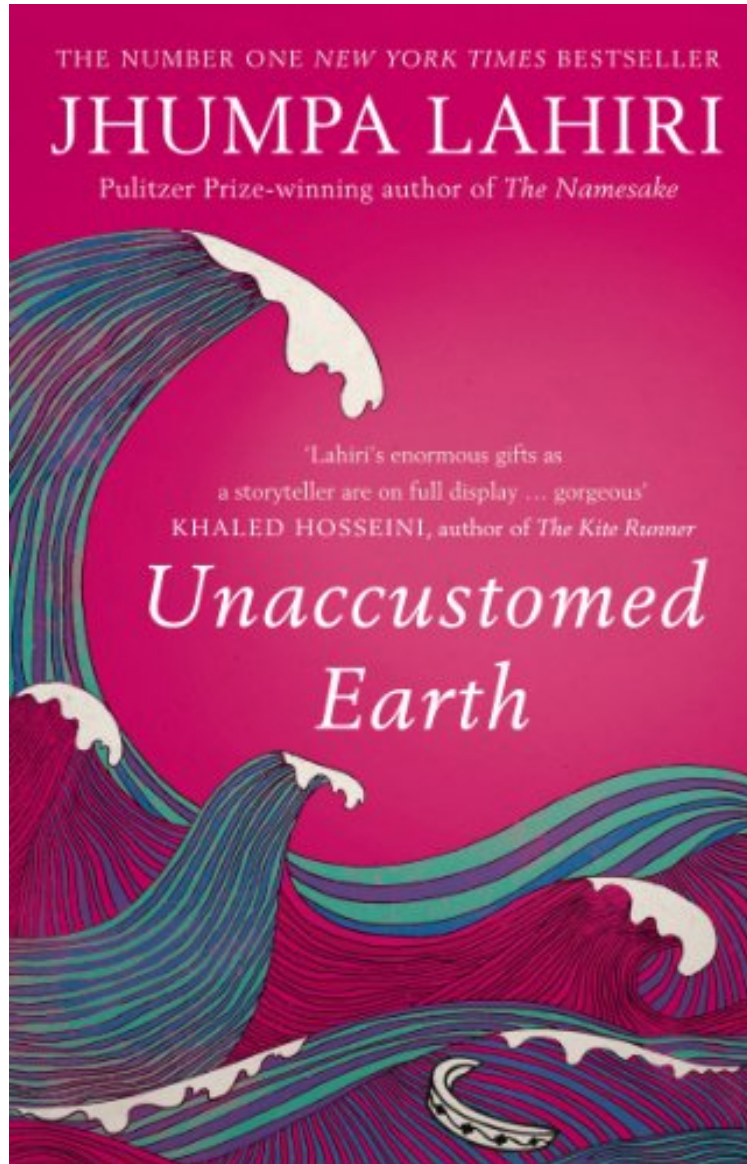


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Unaccustomed Earth

Von Jhumpa Lahiri

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Von Jhumpa Lahiri : Unaccustomed Earth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unaccustomed Earth:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. UnparalleledVon HansBlogDie Geschichten aus Unaccustomed Earth handeln - wie auch die anderen Bcher dieser Autorin - meist von indischstmmigen US-Akademikern an der US-Ostkste, dazu ein paar wenige Szenen aus Kalkutta, London und Italien. Ungewhnlich fr Lahiri: Eine Geschichte spielt diesmal in Seattle, aber es musste nur irgendein Ort

fern der Ostküste sein, und dann gibt es hier noch ein paar Seiten aus Thailand. Sie schöpft wohl weitgehend aus der eigenen Biographie und nicht nur die Orte, auch die Figuren in den unterschiedlichen Geschichten und Bchern hneln sich oft. Diese Inder, genauer gesagt Bengalen, sind gut assimiliert in den USA und mitunter scheint es, als knnten die Geschichten auch direkt von weien Amerikanern handeln. Doch die Inder - auch in den USA - haben engere Familienbande als viele Weie, strengere Sitten, mechanisch arrangierte Ehen, Heimweh, und das erzeugt interessante Konflikte, auch und gerade in den USA. Von diesen Konflikten erzht Lahiri wie gewohnt ruhig, lakonisch, mit unterkhlter Melancholie, lssiger Gleichgltigkeit, doch in hchster Przision; Dramen spielen sich mit wenigen Worten oder nur indirekt ab; Alkoholismus und tdliche Krankheiten kommen vor, whlen aber nicht auf. Mitunter wirkt der Begriff Drama bei Lahiri schon bertrieben, sie seziert eher kleine Verstrtheiten und Irritationen, und dies meisterlich. uere Spannung entsteht nur in zwei Geschichten - in beiden Fllen geht es um Dreiecksbeziehungen und eine daraus resultierende besondere Dynamik. Hatte ich die Figuren einer Geschichte erst kennengelernt, konnte ich kaum noch absetzen. Und schon auf den ersten Seiten einer Erzhlung zieht Lahiri sofort in die Handlung hinein. Quality time mit einer Meisterschreiberin. Die letzten drei, lose verbundenen Geschichten begleiten Hema und Kaushik von der Jugend bis in ihre mittldreier Jahre, es ist schon ein kleiner Roman und speziell die erste Geschichte wre ohne die Fortsetzung nicht sehr interessant, sie hat auch ein un rundes Ende. Dieser Jugendbericht hat mich nicht ganz so interessiert, aber generell liefert Lahiri auch hier tolles Hot Country Reading. Diese Hema- und Kaushik-Erzhlungen erschienen auf Deutsch als eigenes Buch, Einmal im Leben. Noch strker sind aber die anderen fnf unabhngigen Kurzgeschichten aus *Unaccustomed Earth* (auf Deutsch als *Fremde Erde* ohne den Hema-Kaushik-Teil); sie zhlen vielleicht zum Besten von Lahiri berhaupt, sind jedenfalls besser als Lowland und noch beilufiger, hintergrndiger, alltgllicher komplex als *The Namesake* und *Interpreter of Maladies*. 1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Wunderbare Geschichten Von S. Kuner Normalerweise bin ich kein Fan von Kurzgeschichten. Lahiri schreibt jedoch eher "Kurzromane". Sie schafft es auf unbemerkte und ruhige Art und Weise, einem die Protagonisten vertraut zu machen, dass man diese am Ende der jeweiligen Geschichte nur ungerne verlsst. Die Geschichten haben mich sehr berhrt. Nicht nur, aber vor allem die dreiteilige Geschichte um Hema und Kaushik. Ein Buch, dessen Geschichten lange nachwirken und das ich immer wieder zur Hand nehme. Unfassbar gut. 3 von 4 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Genial Von Yolante Gedeck Lahiri ist eine Meisterin der suggestiven, klaren und doch sehr komplexen Sprache und Beschreibung von Lebensumstnden, von Menschen, von der Liebe und vom Tod. Die amerikanische Short Story wird in ihren Geschichten um eine stliche, besser wohl die "bengalische" Weltsicht erweitert. stliches Denken, das Leben als immerwhrender Kreislauf, trifft mit westlichem Denken, in der das Leben eben eher an ueren Dingen, Architektur, Mode, Beruf etc. orientiert und darin auch endlich ist, zusammen. Wirklich groartig. Hoffentlich erscheint das Buch bald auf Deutsch und erfhrt Lahiri in Deutschland den angemessenen Erfolg, der ihr und ihrem Werk zusteht.

Kurzbeschreibung *Beginning in America, and spilling back over memories and generations to India, Unaccustomed Earth explores the heart of family life and the immigrant experience. Eight luminous stories - longer and richer than any Jhumpa Lahiri has yet written - take us from America to Europe, India and Thailand as they follow new lives forged in the wake of loss. From Publishers Weekly Starred . 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. Pressestimmen Splendid . . . The fact that America is still a place where the rest of the world comes to reinvent itself accepting with excitement and anxiety the necessity of leaving behind the constrictions and comforts of distant customs is the underlying theme of Jhumpa Lahiri's sensitive new collection of stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*. . . . Lahiri's epigraph . . . from *The Custom-House*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, [is] an apt, rich metaphor for the transformations Lahiri oversees in these pages, in which two generations of Bengali immigrants to America the newcomers and their hyphenated children struggle to build normal, secure lives. . . . Except for their names, Hema and Kaushik [the title characters of the final trilogy of stories] could evoke any Americans 70s childhood, any Americans bittersweet acceptance of the compromises of adulthood. The generational*

conflicts Lahiri depicts cut across national lines; the waves of admiration, competition and criticism that flow between their two families could occur between Smiths and Taylors in any suburban town; and the fight for connection and control between Hema and Kaushikas children and as adults replays the tussle that has gone on ever since men and women lived in caves. Lahiri handles her characters without leaving any fingerprints. She allows them to grow as if unguided, as if she were accompanying them rather than training them through the espalier of her narration. Reading her stories is like watching time-lapse nature videos of different plants, each with its own inherent growth cycle, breaking through the soil, spreading into bloom or collapsing back to earth. Liesl Schillinger, *The New York Times Book* (cover review) Jhumpa Lahiri's characters tend to be immigrants from India and their American-reared children, exiles who straddle two countries, two cultures, and belong to neither: too used to freedom to accept the rituals and conventions of home, and yet too steeped in tradition to embrace American mores fully. . . . Ms. Lahiri writes about these people in *Unaccustomed Earth* with an intimate knowledge of their conflicted hearts, using her lapidary eye for detail to conjure their daily lives with extraordinary precision . . . A Chekhovian sense of loss blows through these new stories: a reminder of Ms. Lahiri's appreciation of the wages of time and mortality and her understanding too of the missed connections that plague her husbands and wives, parents and children, lovers and friends. [Lahiri] deftly explicates the emotional arithmetic of her characters families . . . showing how some of the children learn to sidestep, even defy, their parents wishes. But she also shows how haunted they remain by the burden of their families dreams and their awareness of their role in the generational process of Americanization. . . . The last three overlapping tales tell a single story about a Bengali-American girl and a Bengali-American boy, whose crisscrossing lives make up a poignant ballad of love and loss and death. They embark on a passionate affair that concludes not with a fairy-tale happy ending but with a denouement that speaks of missed opportunities and avoidable grief. . . . an ending that possesses the elegiac and haunting power of tragedy a testament to Lahiri's emotional wisdom and consummate artistry as a writer. Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* Stunning. [Lahiri] delves deeply and richly into the lives of immigrants. [But though] immigrants may be the stories protagonists, their doubts, insecurities, losses and heartbreaks belong to all of us. Never before has Lahiri mined so perfectly the secrets of the human heart. . . . In part, Lahiri's gift to the reader is gorgeous prose that bestows greatness on life's mundane events and activities. But it is her exploration of lost love and lost loved ones that gives her stories an emotional exactitude few writers could ever hope to match. Carol Memmott, *USA Today* Shimmering . . . The literary prize committees should once again take note . . . To read [*Unaccustomed Earth*] and only take away an experience of cultural tourism would be akin to reading Dante only to retain how medieval Italians slurped their spaghetti. Lahiri's fiction delves deep into the universal theme of isolation. . . . Lahiri is a lush writer bringing to life worlds through a pile-up of detail. But somehow all that richness electrifyingly evokes the void. . . . Its customary when reviewing short story collections to adopt a one from column A, two from column B kind of structure you know, the title story always gets a ritual nod, followed by a run-down of which stories are the strongest, which have just been included for filler. But another stereotype-confounding aspect of Lahiri's writing is that there aren't any weak stories here: every one seems like the best, the most vivid, until you read the next one. . . . Lahiri ingeniously reworks the situation of characters subsisting at point zero, of being stripped down like Lear on the heath. [*Unaccustomed Earth*] certainly makes a contribution to the literature of immigration, but it also takes its rightful place with modernist tales from whatever culture in which characters find themselves doomed to try and fail to only connect. Maureen Corrigan, *Fresh Air* Profound . . . Powerful . . . Haunting . . . Lahiri's prose here is deceptively simple, its mechanics invisible, as she enters into her characters innermost journeys. [In the title story,] the moment-to-moment rendering of Ruma's vulnerability and her father's rising panic at all that he's keeping secret sweeps the reader into a compelling emotional landscape. . . . Lahiri invests [her characters] with great depth. [She is] a writer working at the height of her powers. Lisa Fugard, *Los Angeles Times Book* Peripatetic, sweeping stories Lahiri's best yet which move from Boston to Bombay and back again to evoke intricate topologies of emotion and characters who often feel more at home abroad. [They] possess the gravitational pull of short novels. . . . The final three stories, a trilogy in which an educated, thoroughly American girl's choice of an arranged marriage over romantic love (a decision Lahiri deftly makes relatable) has cataclysmic repercussions, form the rhapsodic culmination to the collection. Lahiri, a master storyteller who, along with Alice Munro, has arguably done more to reinvigorate the once-moribund form than any other contemporary English-language writer comes full circle with this book, imbued as it is with a sense of passage, of life and death and rebirth. Megan O'Grady, *Vogue* Five of five stars. . . . Commanding and seamless . . . There might not be a better book of fiction by an American writer published this year. . . . Extraordinary . . . The long, absorbing *Unaccustomed Earth*, the title story [deals with] familiar themes [for Lahiri]: the alienation that Indian immigrant parents feel toward their American-reared children and the guilt those children feel as they assimilate into the melting pot of the U.S. But as she proved in *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*, Lahiri writes so compellingly about these conflicts and pays such careful attention to the most emotionally telling of details that each story feels freshly minted. . . . The range of human experiences [Lahiri] chronicles is epic, again and again. [Hell-Heaven is] a universal story of yearning and unrequited desire, rooted so specifically and powerfully in a sense of time and place that we feel as if we are living right alongside the characters . . . For all that's comfortingly familiar about *Unaccustomed Earth*, though, one of its chief pleasures is that it shows Lahiri stretching in entirely new directions. In

A Choice of Accommodations, for instance, the author serves up a slice of Updike-ian Americana while managing to put her own distinct twist on the proceedings. . . . Only Goodness, arguably the strongest story in the collection, gets under your skin like nothing Lahiri has written before. The first five stories are varied and accomplished [and the final three] are gripping and affecting . . . Whereas so many story collections feel like uneven grab-bags, Unaccustomed Earth seems to have poured forth from the authors pen in one swoop, and it eloquently circles back over the same sets of themes and motifs without growing tired. Its like a symphony in eight movements. Christopher Kelly, Fort Worth Star-Telegram Four stars. Jhumpa Lahiri continues to probe culture and generational clashes among Bengali brethren living in the U.S. (and occasionally abroad) in her penetrating second collection . . . No character exists in isolation in Lahiris new work, which is deeply aware of the power of blood ties; her book is a congregation of siblings, parents, spouses. Neither an exultation of nuclear families nor a cynical catalog of their dysfunction, Unaccustomed Earth is something braver and more difficult: a compassionate inspection of the fissures and disappointments of deep attachment. . . . trenchant. Whether they are middle-aged mothers who tire of years of keeping house in small Northeastern towns, thousands of miles away from Calcutta, or sisters who finally relinquish responsibility for alcoholic younger brothers, these characters are somehow redeemed by their courage to face the day, as typical and terrifying as any other. Melissa Anderson, Time Out New York [Lahiris] stories are quiet, deliberate, setting one foot down in front of the other, then exploding with a secret, an encounter, a clash. Quietly, then, they lay back down, leaving the reader astir in their unnerving calm. Lahiris [work], however, is rife with characters that are larger than the Bengali immigration experience, experiences larger than mere discontent. Shes an artist of the family portrait. The eight stories in Unaccustomed Earth have an emotional wisdom weightier than in Lahiris first collection, Interpreter of Maladies, which won the Pulitzer Prize, and they contain a more nuanced tightness than her neo-Chekhovian first novel, The Namesake . . . Her new stories are better, strong evidence of a writer pushing herself to a deeper level. . . . Old-fashioned in her approach, contemporary in her subject matter, Lahiri anchors these stories in character. . . . In [Unaccustomed Earth and Only Goodness], new life brings hope to broken families, and mothers awash in tears must carry on when the baby cries. [Lahiri] captures these moments with clarity and grace, a tangible knowledge of how souls twist in the wind. . . . The Hema and Kaushik stories, a trilogy that closes the book, prove the most haunting. The characters, Lahiri has said in interviews, lived with her for a decade, and their presence feels imprinted in these pages as if by letterpress. . . . In these three stories, Lahiri experiments with point of view. Forsaking her usual third-person narrator, she goes for the intimate whispers of first person. If one felt like a fortunate fly on the wall in previous stories, now the effect is to sit in between the beats of her characters heartaches. Leonora Todaro, The Village Voice Lahiri writes largely about the American-born children of middle-class Indian immigrants, but in doing so, she also nails the mores of affluent, educated Americans, both Indian and non-Indian. [Only Goodness] presents a very believable picture of a relationships slow decline in a very recognizable urban setting. And thats precisely what Lahiri does well. . . . Lahiri is a literary heir of Anthony Trollope in her ability to capture the way we live now. And thats a testament to the way society has changed . . . but also to Lahiris skill at evoking this world empathetically and unironically. Adelle Waldman, The New Republic Eight stories [that] are longer than those in [Lahiris] previous collection but just as absorbing and beautifully written. . . . Wonderful prose and masterful delineation of character. [Unaccustomed Earth] fulfills every expectation of her mastery of the prose medium. . . . Unaccustomed Earth is [Lahiris] customary style at its very best. Nancy Schapiro, St. Louis Post-Dispatch Beautifully crafted . . . Lahiri navigates the interlocking themes of identity and assimilation, familial duty and grief . . . employ[ing] quiet language to reveal debilitating truths. . . . Unaccustomed Earth showcases some of Lahiris best work and reinforces her claim to our literary high ground. Tamara Titus, The Charlotte Observer Eagerly awaited is a phrase too often used to hype a new work. But in the case of Lahiri, its accurate. Lahiri again delicately writes of the Bengali immigrant experience, perfectly communicating the tension between the ideals of transplanted parents and the ones of their American children, in the short story format that made her so popular in the first place. Billy Heller, The New York Post Poignant . . . precisely rendered, elegiac . . . Lahiri details with quiet precision the divide between American-born children and their Bengali parents. Yvonne Zipp, The Christian Science Monitor Four stars. Beautifully rendered . . . Unaccustomed Earth explores the dilemmas faced by Bengali immigrants in the west, yet its appeal is universal. Lahiri takes the reader from Massachusetts to Italy to London to Thailand as her characters discover love, freedom and the heartbreak of leaving one family to create another. In the standout title story, a lawyer on maternity leave struggles with her mothers death and her own ambivalence toward motherhood. Only Goodness, about the complexity of loving an addict, contains a darkness that proves the author capable of leaving her usual realm, quiet domestic tragedy, for rougher waters. Reading her stories is hypnotizing like falling into a dream where colors are brighter, smells sharper and time moves more slowly than in real life. Danielle Trussoni, People Lovely . . . elegant, unsettling . . . Unaccustomed Earth is full of lost old-world parents and the modern marriages that cant quite replace them. . . . The saga of Hema and Kaushik is . . . a masterfully written and powerful drama. Though Lahiris characters construct sophisticated new identities for themselves, they are still irresistibly drawn to the reassuring traditions theyve abandoned. The past exerts a wicked pull, even (maybe especially) when youre all grown up and least expecting it. Jennifer Reese, Entertainment Weekly [Jhumpa Lahiri is] a succinct realist writer in an era of attention-getting

maneuvers. Stylistically, [theres] no genre bending, no comics-inflected supernaturalism, no world-historical ventriloquism, no 9/11 flip books. Just couples and families joining, coming apart, dealing with immigration, death, and estrangement. This is true of her debut short-story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (which won a Pulitzer in 2000); her novel, *The Namesake* (a best seller turned Mira Nair film); and her new book, *Unaccustomed Earth* mature stories each stretching almost to novella length. . . . What makes Lahiris corner of the world seem so important, to her and to us? Maybe, for all the polish, its the lack of ironic layering that tends to distance us from the tragedies chronicled in most literary fiction. Lahiri isnt afraid to make people cry. . . . Lahiri writes often of illnesses, failing marriages, and just plain loneliness, but thanks to her economy and mastery of detail, it never quite crosses over into the sentimental. Nor does it rely on the melodramatic twists that are staples of more middlebrow writers. Boris Kachka, *New York Magazine*Jhumpa Lahiri already has carved out a distinctive literary niche . . . her tales of Indians encountering contemporary American lives have resonated with a wide swath of readers. *Unaccustomed Earth* will only burnish that estimable reputation. Its an emotionally astute, character-driven assortment of stories that carry forward and deepen the themes shes explored in her previous works. . . . Her prose style is graceful, elegant, understated. Like Alice Munro, Lahiri is adept at handling chronology, ranging backward and forward in time, compressing lifetimes into a single artfully crafted paragraph. Relish this gorgeous collection. Harvey Freedenberg, *Bookpage*Emotionally intricate and exquisitely crafted, *Unaccustomed Earths* descriptions of love and conflict are rendered through the lives of people whose traditions include arranged marriages and cultural cohesion. Much of the older generation seeks to honor tradition, and the younger seeks to explore personal choices. . . . One of Lahiris great strengths is to concentrate myriad conflicts into individual scenes where cultural, romantic and family betrayal coalesce. Like Jane Austen, Lahiri is brilliant at describing ambivalent emotions. . . . Stories of star-crossed lovers are not new, but when handled by Lahiri in the books second section, Hema and Kaushik becomes a nearly perfect example of the linked story form. The stories are so richly detailed in their accounting of time, and so socially layered, that the meeting feels convincingly like destiny . . . Masterful. John Holman, *Paste*Ferociously good . . . acutely observed . . . In exquisitely attuned prose, Lahiri notes the clash between generations . . . She is emotionally precise about her characters and the way the world appears to them, especially in the superb Hema and Kaushik [trilogy], which achingly reveals how two very unlikely families end up under one suburban roof, and how destiny entwines them forever. These are unforgettable people, their stories unforgettablely well told. Elaina Richardson, *O, The Oprah Magazine*A great book . . . to move you. Whether American or Bengali by birth, Lahiris protagonists valiantly walk a tightrope between personal choice and family expectation. Faltering or triumphant, each tugs at the heart. Good Housekeeping[Lahiri] explores with her modulated prose a full range of relationships among her subjects. So thoroughly and judiciously does she use detail that she easily presents entire lives with each story. These are tales of careful observation and adjustment . . . Most moving is the final trio of intertwined stories about loss and connection. The Atlantic Dazzling . . . [Lahiris] comparisons with literary masters such as Alice Munro are well-earned. In these eight exquisitely detailed stories, Lahiri is less interested in painful family conflicts than in the private moments of sadness that come in their aftermath. In the outstanding title story, a woman struggles to reconnect with her father and to accept how he has changed since her mothers death. In *A Choice of Accommodations*, Lahiri writes refreshingly about an aging body . . . Subtle and wise, Lahiri captures a universal yearning. Carmela Ciuraru, *More*Lahiris finely drawn prose makes [*Unaccustomed Earth*] feel less like reading and more like peering into the most raw, intimate moments of peoples lives. Marie ClaireLahiri has boasted an enviable literary career since nabbing the Pulitzer for *Interpreter of Maladies*. Her new story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth*, should have no problem upholding her reputation . . . Lahiri delves into the souls of indelible characters struggling with displacement, guilt, and fear as they try to find a balance between the solace and suffocation of tradition and the terror and excitement of the future into which theyre being thrust. . . . [*Unaccustomed Earth*] further establishes her as an important American writer. Kera Bolonik, *Bookforum*Lahiris enormous gifts as a storyteller are on full display in this collection: the gorgeous, effortless prose; the characters haunted by regret, isolation, loss, and tragedies big and small; and most of all, a quiet, emerging sense of humanity. Khaled Hosseini, author of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner*Pulitzer Prize winning Lahiri returns with her highly anticipated second collection exploring the inevitable tension brought on by family life. The title story takes on a young mother nervously hosting her widowed father, who is visiting between trips he takes with a lover he has kept secret from his family. What could have easily been a melodramatic soap opera is instead a meticulously crafted piece that accurately depicts the intricacies of the father-daughter relationship. In a departure from *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri divides this book into two parts, devoting the second half to Hema and Kaushik, three stories that together tell the story of a young man and woman who meet as children and reunite years later halfway around the world. The authors ability to flesh out completely even minor characters in every story, and especially in this trio of stories, is what will keep readers invested in the work until its heartbreaking conclusion. Recommended for all public libraries. Sybil Kollappallil, *Library Journal*The tight arc of a story is perfect for Lahiris keen sense of lifes abrupt and powerful changes, and her avid eye for telling details. This collections five powerful stories and 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 a 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. Lahiri writes insightfully about childhood, while the romantic infatuations and obstacles to true love will captivate teens. Donna Seaman, *Booklist* (starred) Stunning . . . 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 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 . . . 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. *Publishers Weekly* (starred) (January 28, 2008) Lahiri extends her mastery of the short-story in a collection that has a novel's thematic cohesion, narrative momentum and depth of character. . . . Some of her most compelling fiction to date. Each of these eight stories . . . concerns the assimilation of Bengali characters into American society. The parents feel a tension between the culture they've left behind and the adopted homeland where they always feel at least a little foreign. Their offspring, who are generally the protagonists of these stories, are typically more Americanized, adopting a value system that would scandalize their parents, who are usually oblivious to the college lives their sons and daughters lead. . . . The stunning title story presents something of a role reversal, as a Bengali daughter and her American husband must come to terms with the secrets harbored by her father. The story expresses as much about love, loss and the family ties that stretch across continents and generations through what it doesn't say, and through what is left unaddressed by the characters. . . . An eye for detail, ear for dialogue and command of family dynamics distinguish this uncommonly rich collection. *Kirkus* (starred) (February 1, 2008) From the Hardcover edition.