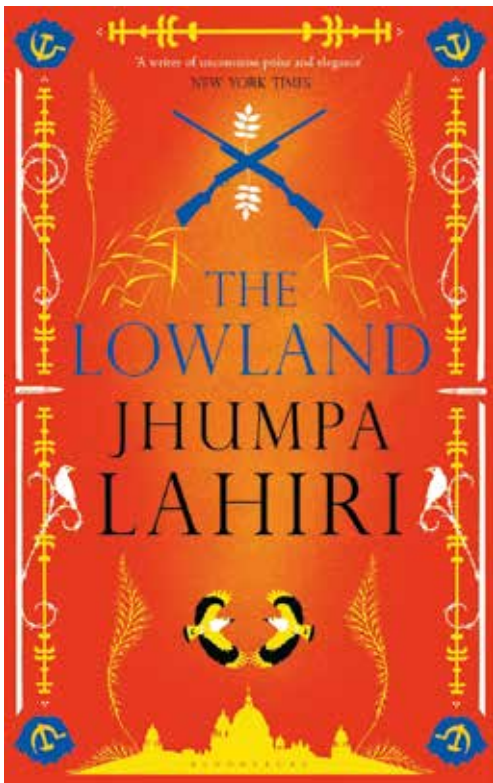


The Man
Booker
Prize

2013

Reader's Guide



Other novels by Jhumpa Lahiri
Unaccustomed Earth (2008)
The Namesake (2003)
Interpreter of Maladies (1999)

The Lowland Jhumpa Lahiri

Bloomsbury

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About the author

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967. She is a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, appointed by U.S. President Barack Obama.

She is the author of four works of fiction: *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), which won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction; *The Namesake* (2003), adapted into the popular film of the same name; *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008); and *The Lowland* (2013), longlisted for the 2013 Man Booker Prize.

The Lowland

From Subhash's earliest memories, at every point, his brother was there. In the suburban streets of Calcutta where they wandered before dusk and in the hyacinth-strewn ponds where they played for hours on end, Udayan was always in his older brother's sight.

As the two brothers grow older their lives, once so united, begin to diverge. It is 1967. Charismatic and impulsive, Udayan becomes increasingly drawn to the Communist movement sweeping West Bengal, the Naxalite cause. As revolution seizes the city's student community and exams are boycotted in a shadow of Paris and Berkeley, their home is dominated by the absence of Udayan, out on the streets at demonstrations. Subhash wins a place on a PhD programme in the United States and moves to Rhode Island, never to live in India again – yet his life will be shaped from afar by his brother's acts of passionate political idealism.

Udayan will give everything for what he believes and in doing so will transform the futures of those dearest to him: his newly married, pregnant wife, his brother and their parents. The repercussions of his actions will link their fates irrevocably and tragically together, reverberating across continents and seeping through the generations that follow.

Discussion points

Udayan's involvement in radical politics has consequences far beyond those he could possibly foresee. To what extent is the collision between the personal and political inevitable in this novel?

In what way do the female characters in the book assert their own authority in a patriarchal society?

'He didn't belong, but perhaps it didn't matter. He wanted to tell her that he had been waiting all his life to find Rhode Island. That it was here, in this minute but majestic corner of the world, that he could breathe.' How does America provide a release for the characters? Are they able to break their ties with India or is India too inextricably a part of their identity and outlook?

'With children the clock is reset. We forget what came before.' Does this prove to be true? Does the birth of Bela allow the main characters to reset the clock?

How does a frequent change in perspective alter our views about Udayan and his actions?

Do any of the characters achieve their desired sense of freedom by the end of the novel?

Useful links

Author's website

<http://www.randomhouse.com/kvpa/jhumpalahiri/>

Guardian interview (2008)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/21/saturdayreviewsfeatres.guardianreview5>

Publisher's website

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/>