

NAME

DATE

PERIOD

OPENING PASSAGE ANALYSIS - THE NAMESAKE CHAPTER ONERead the first few paragraphs from *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri.**Consider and annotate for these ideas:**

context	language	imagery	point of view	structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● background info ● character development ● thematic development ● before/after 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● complex vs. simple ● formal vs. informal ● diction ● syntax ● dialogue vs. narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● setting ● figurative language ● concrete details (5 senses) ● mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1st/2nd/3rd ● tense ● shifts ● attitude/tone ● trustworthiness or ambiguity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● chronology ● flashback/foreshadowing ● shift in time/location ● plot structure

1968

On a sticky August evening two weeks before her due date, Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment, combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix. Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones. Even now that there is barely space inside her, it is the one thing she craves. Tasting from a cupped palm, she frowns; as usual, there's something missing. She stares blankly at the pegboard behind the countertop where her cooking utensils hang, all slightly coated with grease. She wipes sweat from her face with the free end of her sari. Her swollen feet ache against speckled gray linoleum. Her pelvis aches from the baby's weight. She opens a cupboard, the shelves lined with a grimy yellow-and-white-checked paper she's been meaning to replace, and reaches for another onion, frowning again as she pulls at its crisp magenta skin. A curious warmth floods her abdomen, followed by a tightening so severe she doubles over, gasping without sound, dropping the onion with a thud on the floor.

The sensation passes, only to be followed by a more enduring spasm of discomfort. In the bathroom she discovers, on her underpants, a solid streak of brownish blood. She calls out to her husband, Ashoke, a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at MIT, who is studying in the bedroom. He leans over a card table; the edge of their bed, two twin mattresses pushed together under a red and purple batik spread, serves as his chair. When she calls out to Ashoke, she doesn't say his name. Ashima never thinks of her husband's name when she thinks of her husband, even though she knows perfectly well what it is. She has adopted his surname but refuses, for propriety's sake, to utter his first. It's not the type of thing Bengali wives do. Like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over. And so, instead of saying Ashoke's name, she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as "Are you listening to me?"

At dawn a taxi is called to ferry them through deserted Cambridge streets, up Massachusetts Avenue and past Harvard Yard, to Mount Auburn Hospital. Ashima registers, answering questions about the frequency and duration of the contractions, as Ashoke fills out the forms. She is seated in a wheelchair and pushed through the shining, brightly lit corridors, whisked into an elevator more spacious than her kitchen. On the maternity floor she is assigned to a bed by a window, in a room at the end of the hall. She is asked to remove her Murshidabad silk sari in favor of a flowered cotton gown that, to her mild embarrassment, only reaches her knees. A nurse offers to fold up the sari but, exasperated by the six slippery yards, ends up stuffing the material into Ashima's slate blue suitcase. Her obstetrician, Dr. Ashley, gauntly handsome in a Lord Mountbatten sort of way, with fine sand-colored hair swept back from his temples, arrives to examine her progress. The baby's head is in the proper position, has already begun its descent. She is told that she is still in early labor, three centimeters dilated, beginning to efface. "What does it mean, dilated?" she asks, and Dr. Ashley holds up two fingers side by side, then draws them apart, explaining the unimaginable thing her body must do in order for the baby to pass. The process will take some time, Dr. Ashley tells her; given that this is her first pregnancy, labor can take twenty-four hours, sometimes more. She searches for Ashoke's face, but he has stepped behind the curtain the doctor has drawn. "I'll be back," Ashoke says to her in Bengali, and then a nurse adds: "Don't you worry, Mr. Ganguli. She's got a long ways to go. We can take over from here."

Now she is alone, cut off by curtains from the three other women in the room. One woman's name, she gathers from bits of conversation, is Beverly. Another is Lois. Carol lies to her left. "Goddamnit, goddamn you, this is hell," she hears one of them say. And then a man's voice: "I love you, sweetheart." Words Ashima has neither heard nor expects to hear from her own husband; this is not how they are. It is the first time in her life she has slept alone, surrounded by strangers; all her life she has slept either in a room with her parents, or with Ashoke at her side. She wishes the curtains were open, so that she could talk to the American women. Perhaps one of them has given birth before, can tell her what to expect. But she has gathered that Americans, in spite of their public declarations of affection, in spite of their miniskirts and bikinis, in spite of their hand-holding on the street and lying on top of each other on the Cambridge Common, prefer their privacy. She spreads her fingers over the taut, enormous drum her middle has become, wondering where the baby's feet and hands are at this moment. The child is no longer restless; for the past few days, apart from the occasional flutter, she has not felt it punch or kick or press against her ribs. She wonders if she is the only Indian person in the hospital, but a gentle twitch from the baby reminds her that she is, technically speaking, not alone.

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OPENING PASSAGE ANALYSIS GUIDE - THE NAMESAKE CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT

How do these opening paragraphs set the tone for the rest of the novel?

NARRATOR'S TONE	WORDS & PHRASES THAT SUPPORT THIS TONE

What predictions can you make about the topics and themes of the rest of the novel?

	TOPIC	EVIDENCE FROM TEXT
PREDICTION 1		
PREDICTION 2		
PREDICTION 3		

IMAGERY

What concrete details and descriptions stand out to you in this passage? Use THREE different colors to highlight/underline details related to the following:

India	the United States	Ashima's pregnancy
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POINT OF VIEW

Which perspective is this narrated from? 1st 2nd 3rd

Which tense is this narrated in? past present future

SHORT ANSWER

Which of Jhumpa Lahiri's methods is MOST effective at helping the reader to relate to Ashima? Why? Provide at least one example from the text.
