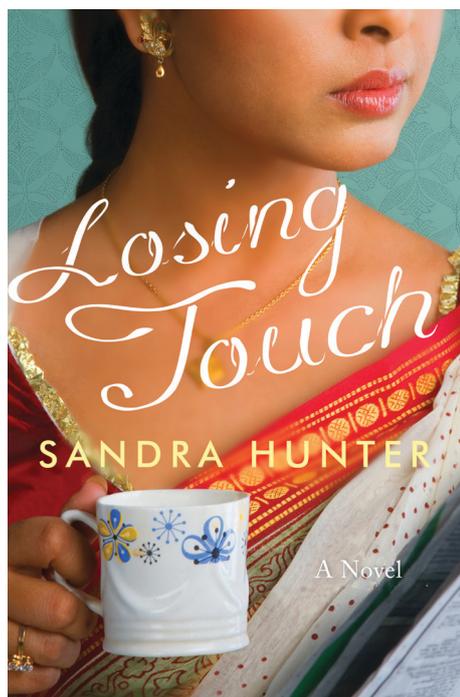




# Oneworld Readers' Guide



## Losing Touch

Sandra Hunter

Arjun brought his family to North West London after Indian independence, but hopes of a better life rapidly dissipate. His wife Sunila spends all day longing for an Aga and a nice English tea service, his son hates anything Indian, and his daughter, well, that's a whole other problem. Reeling from the death of his younger brother, Arjun vainly attempts to enforce the values he grew up with, while his family eagerly embrace the new. But when his right leg suddenly fails him, Arjun's growing sense of imbalance is more than external.

Offering an intimate and touching portrait of an immigrant family precariously balanced on the cusp of East and West, Hunter's strikingly sympathetic characters remind us of our own shortfalls, successes, hypocrisies – and humanity.

## About the Author

Sandra Hunter is a prolific short-story writer. She has won the Arthur Edelstein Prize for Short Fiction, and been a finalist for numerous short-story prizes, including the Pushcart. Born and brought up in England, she now teaches at Moorpark College, California. *Losing Touch* is her first novel.

## Discussion Points

1. *Losing Touch* is a relatively short novel and yet each chapter is set one year later than the last (the story begins in 1966 and ends in 2005). Did you feel that the novel's structure was a success? For example, did the timeline help or hinder your relationships with the characters?
2. Arjun struggles to maintain Indian customs and traditions while simultaneously struggling to maintain control of his body. These could be two factors that endear him to readers, yet the way he behaves towards his wife and children has the opposite effect. Did you empathise with Arjun at all?
3. Consider the chapter titles, such as 'Tremors When the Patient's Hands are Held Out' or 'The Ability to Walk Independently'? Why do you think Hunter chose to use descriptions of Arjun's level of physical wellbeing?



# Oneworld Readers' Guide

- 4.** The novel is written from the perspectives of Arjun and Sunila. Did you feel Hunter got the balance between the two characters right and why do you think she chose not to write from Tarani's and Murad's perspective?
- 5.** Do you think Sunila really would have asked for a divorce if her husband hadn't been ill? How do the dynamics of a family change when one member becomes more and more reliant on the others?
- 6.** Why do you think Hunter switches to calling Arjun and Sunila 'the old man' and 'the old woman' (p.134)?
- 7.** In Chapter 12, Pavi is struggling to breathe and yet the nurse appears to not care. This is just one instance in the novel where it appears elderly people are treated as less important and are perhaps not taken seriously. Discuss.
- 8.** In the beginning, Arjun has a tendency to be stern and cold, seeking to take control of how his family lives. By the end, when disease has stripped him of the many things he once took for granted, he has learnt to let them be their own people and love them regardless. What message did you take from this?
- 9.** Why do you think Hunter chose to end the novel with Sami's short story?