

Academy of the Holy Names
Freshman Summer Reading Assignment 2021-2022
English I Honors

Required: *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan (students must have a hard-copy version of the novel; audiobooks may be used as a supplement**)

BACKGROUND

The Japan-China War, the catalyst for many events in *Joy Luck Club*, started in July 1937 when Chinese troops fired on the Japanese near Beijing. The Japanese then launched an invasion of China. By the end of 1937, all major cities in China were under Japanese control. When the war ended in 1945, China had 4 million casualties and 60 million homeless people. The rise of the communist government in China prompted the emigration of many Chinese. The mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* came to California during this time.

As you read *The Joy Luck Club*, keep the following literary elements in mind:

([Watch this introductory video made by 9H English teacher, Mrs. Kosaka, for a few more tips before you start](#))

- **Historical and cultural context** of a work is the background of events, laws, beliefs, and customs of the particular time and place in which a work is set or in which it was written. Consider how the time period and the setting of war-torn China set story events in motion and shape the lives and personalities of the characters.
- **Conflict** is a struggle between opposing forces in a narrative. Notice the **external conflicts** between the Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters. Then, consider how these relationships in turn cause the characters to experience **internal conflicts** over their opposing ideas, feelings, and choices.
- **Comparing and contrasting** characters involves examining their similarities and differences in terms of appearance, background, personality, and actions. Compare and contrast the lives and personalities of the mothers with their daughters as you read their stories.
- A **symbol** is a person, place, or thing that stands for something else. Notice the symbolism of everyday things in the lives of the Chinese women, as well as the interpretation of symbols they find in their dreams.
- **Narrative structure** is the way in which story events are organized and revealed. *The Joy Luck Club* consists of interrelated stories that, while separate, share common elements. Consider the connecting ideas of cultural and historical context and the commonality of characters that are woven into each story. Also, look for the frame stories that reveal a story within the larger narrative. Consider how this complex story structure relates to the content of the work.

DIRECTIONS: Use the above literary devices to underline or highlight evidence **in the book** that would answer the following questions (you do not have to answer these questions on paper, just annotate in the book):

1. **Why do you think that, after being lost and then found during the Moon Festival, Yingying says that she is not the same girl?** (Chapters 1-4: “The Joy Luck Club,” “Scar,” “The Red Candle,” and “The Moon Lady”)
2. **How did Waverly’s talent cause external conflict between her and her mother?** (Chapters 5-6: “Rules of the Game” and “The Voice from the Wall”)
3. **In bed listening to her neighbors argue, Lena thinks, “...which was worse, our side or theirs?” (Tan 113). Which side is worse, in your opinion? Cite from the text.** (Chapters 5-6: “Rules of the Game” and “The Voice from the Wall”)
4. **How is Ted characterized at the start of “Half and Half”? Provide examples of direct and indirect characterization.** (Chapters 7-8: “Half and Half” and “Two Kinds”)
5. **At the end of “Two Kinds,” Jing Mei-Woo realizes that her two piano pieces are, in fact, two halves of the same song. How does this realization connect to her childhood and relationship with her mother?** (Chapters 7-8: “Half and Half” and “Two Kinds”)
6. **How is the end table and vase in Lena St. Clair’s guest bedroom a symbol of her marriage with Harold?** (Chapters 9-10: “Rice Husband,” and “Four Directions”)
7. **What is the “invisible wall” (172) that Waverly struggles against after she shouts at her mother? (see also the “Rules of the Game” chapter.) Does this struggle take place throughout both “Rules of the Game” and “Four Directions?” Give evidence from the text to support your answer.** (Chapters 9-10: “Rice Husband,” and “Four Directions”)
8. **Rose’s mother once told Rose that she “was without wood” (191). Explain this analogy. Is it a fair description of Rose? Why or why not? Use the text to support your answer.** (Chapters 11-12: “Without Wood,” and “Best Quality”)
9. **What does the New Year’s dinner in “Best Quality” reveal about the narrative structure of this novel? (See above for definition of narrative structure.)** (Chapters 11-12: “Without Wood,” and “Best Quality”)
10. **How does the final chapter connect to the first? Do you find this narrative structure interesting? Confusing? Both? Explain.** (Chapters 15 and 16: “Double Face” and “A Pair of Tickets”)

WHAT TO EXPECT THE FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL:

- You will be discussing all of the discussion questions above on the first day of class.
- You will have a test that is a combination of multiple choice questions (concerning character conflicts, symbolism, foreshadowing, and other literary devices beyond simple plot recollection) and short answer responses requiring you to analyze using specific literary elements within the first two weeks of school.

Sample Test Questions:

What symbol appears in the following passage? "Five months ago, after a crab dinner celebrating Chinese New Year, my mother gave me my "life's importance," a jade pendant on a gold chain."

*

- ☐ crab
- ☐ jade pendant
- ☐ gold chain
- ☐ Chinese New Year

...

Read the passage below and then answer the following prompt: This occurs after the glass vase falls in Lena's guest bedroom where her mother is waiting. What is implied by this conversation? (What are they really talking about?)

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-----"And then I see my mother sitting by the open window, her dark silhouette against the night sky. She turns around in her chair, but I can't see her face. "Fallen down," she says simply. She doesn't apologize. "It doesn't matter," I say, and I start to pick up the broken glass shards. "I knew it would happen." "Then why you don't stop it?" asks my mother. And it's such a simple question."

Long answer text

- You will have a socratic seminar with new discussion questions about the novel within the first two weeks of school.

DISCLAIMER FROM THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT:

Any student who initiates and confirms a schedule change between now and the first weeks of school is responsible for the completion of the subsequent summer assignment of their updated class choice.