

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



**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\*\*)  
**Recommended edition:** ISBN: 978-0143038092

The expectation of summer reading is that you have finished reading the novel by the start of school on August 17th. The lessons and assessments that we do during the first three weeks will all be related to this text and there will not be class time given to complete the reading. The following guide provides key themes, figurative language, and literary devices that you should focus on throughout your reading.

## BACKGROUND

The Japan-China War is the catalyst for many events in *The Joy Luck Club*. Tensions between the two countries had been building since 1931 when the Japanese took over Manchuria but the war officially 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:

- **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.

**CP Assignment:** Please read the entire novel before the first day of school. You should be an active reader of the text to be ready for class. (See below for more details!)

You will be expected to write on *The Joy Luck Club* within the first week of school and participate in a class discussion to check your knowledge of the text. Both assignments will be graded.

To be successful in English, you must be an active reader. In other words, you are not passively reading to be entertained - you are actively reading to seek out what you can learn from the text/ what the novel teaches you. What is annotation? It is how you interact with the text – take notes in the margins, highlighting, marking pages with sticky notes – all ways to actively read. Your annotations or notes will not be collected, but they will help you to prepare for the class discussion and the writing assignment in the first week of school. Read actively!!

In [Background](#), we defined for you the following literary devices: historical and cultural context, conflict, comparing/contrasting characters, symbolism, narrative structure.

Look for these devices as you read to guide your active reading. You can also consider the following questions as you read to guide your annotations.

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")