

Suyuan and jing- mei's relationship in the joy luck club



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Suyuan and Jing-Mei's relationship in *The Joy Luck Club* In *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, Jing-Mei and her mother have a very rocky relationship. Tan develops a relationship between Suyuan and Jing-Mei that is distant in the beginning due to culture differences and miscommunication, but gradually strengthens with time and understanding. Both of them have different backgrounds and have been influenced by two different cultures. Suyuan grew up in China and behaves according to the Chinese culture and her American-born daughter Jing-Mei is influenced by the American culture that surrounds her and wants to become part of it.

Their relationship is also shaped by the pressure Suyuan puts on Jing-Mei. She wants her to be a perfect Chinese daughter. She expects her daughter to be smart, talented, and a respectful Chinese daughter. After Suyuan immigrates to America from China, she remarries and gives birth to a daughter, who she names Jing-Mei. Because Jing-Mei was born in America and therefore grew up in a different atmosphere, culture, and environment, the relationship between mother and daughter is tense.

Suyuan Woo would continuously educate Jing-Mei in the Chinese culture; however, Jing-Mei did not care about this part of her background. When she was younger, and her mother would tell her about the Joy Luck club, she, "imagined Joy Luck was a shameful Chinese custom, like the secret gathering of the Ku Klux Klan or the tom-tom dances of TV Indians preparing for war," (Tan, 28). She did not understand the Chinese tradition and did not care learning about it. Suyuan wanted her daughter to live like an American, but at the same time think like a Chinese.

Jing-Mei felt humiliated with her mother's Chinese behaviors, causing their relationship to be more distant. They did not understand one another's cultural differences. However, this part of their relationship changes when Jing-Mei goes to China to see her half-sisters. After her mother passes away, Jing-Mei travels to China to meet with her sisters and finally understands the Chinese culture that she had never valued before " and now I see what part of me is Chinese. It is so obvious. It is my family. It is in our blood.

After all these years, it can finally be let go," (Tan, 288) Also, their relationship is shaped by the pressure Suyuan puts on her daughter. When Jing-Mei was growing up, her mother had the need for her daughter to be smart, talented, and a respectful Chinese daughter. This pressure put on Jing-Mei resulted in misunderstanding between mother and daughter. Jing-Mei constantly believed, " that she was disappointing her mother," because she felt as if she failed at everything her mother wanted her to do. She believed she could never be as perfect as her mother was.

Therefore she doesn't think she is worthy enough to take her mother's place at the Joy Luck Club " They must wonder now how someone like me can take my mother's place" (Tan, 27). Jing-Mei does not understand that her mother wanted the best for her; Suyuan wanted Jing-Mei to challenge herself because that is how one builds up character. Suyuan thinks her daughter could do anything she proposed to do but never put enough effort into anything " Lazy to rise to expectations" (Tan 31). Furthermore, Suyuan forced Jing-Mei to learn how to play the piano and then perform at a recital.

Jing-Mei rebelled against her mother and refused to learn how to play the piano well. So, at the recital she ends up forgetting the music notes. Jing-Mei blames her embarrassment on her mother and states, "'You want me to be someone that I'm not! ' I sobbed. ' I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be! '" (Tan 142). Suyuan's high expectations for her daughter cause miscommunication and misunderstanding in their relationship.

However, this relationship gradually changes as Suyuan passes away and Jing-Mei gets older and becomes an adult.

Through reflecting on her mother and visiting China she starts to understand her mother's ways and actions and respects them. She also realizes that her mother always did love her and believed in her. Although Jing-Mei never believed that her mother approved of her throughout the book it is present. An important moment is after the New Year's dinner when Suyuan gives Jing-Mei her green jade pendant, calling it Jing-mei's " life importance. " Suyuan tells her daughter that the Jade isn't good quality, but it will improve with time. Jing-Mei is like this young jade, improving and deepening over time.

Also, Suyuan tries to comfort her daughter when she is insulted by Waverly Jong and admires her for not choosing the " best quality" crab like everyone else but leaving the best ones for them and the worse one for herself.

Therefore, because of cultural differences Suyuan and Jing-Mei have many opposing ideas and beliefs. This coupled with their lack of communication are responsible for many of the problems they face during the course of their relationship. These conflicts are only resolved when Jing-Mei reflects and learns about her mother's past and accepts their