

Two halves of the same song

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Two Halves of the Same Song “ My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America” (526). This is the first sentence in “ Two Kinds” by Amy Tan spoken by the narrator’s point of view, Jing-mei, the daughter. The story was a direct reflection of love vs. rebellion with the mother and the daughter, presented in a humorous almost sounding sarcastic tone to show the two kinds of people in the story; the one the mother thought the daughter should be and the one the daughter thought she should be, and in the end they realized that that was the same person.

The story begins by giving humor to some of the mothers beliefs as if they were silly; such as in America a person is unlimited to what they could be even if that is to be famous or simply a homeowner, To understand what the mother meant you would have to know a little about her background and where she came from. She was from China where women didn’t have very many options on what their role in life could be, so for her daughter she felt that there were endless possibilities. Her mother in my eyes was more of what we like to call “ stage moms”.

She hoped for her daughter to be the best at something, anything instead of nothing at all, so she came across pushy verses loving. One would think that these were the mothers dreamstriving to be fulfilled through the daughter. Jing-mei started to feel like she had to be someone she wasn’t in order to make her mother proud. She said “ I was filled with a sense that I would soon be perfect. My mother and father would adore me” (527). Apparently she felt like if she wasn’t great at something they wouldn’t love her.

The narrator makes it seem like it was the mother all along who wanted the daughter to be something she wasn't, but at one point the daughter wanted to succeed just as much as her mother did, but the fear of failure and rejection stopped her. Next came the piano lessons. The idea of Jing-mei playing the piano was odd, because her mother was watching an American TV show and saw a young Chinese girl playing. "Ni-Kan" her mother would say which meant, you watch, and then made her practice the piano day after day to become better than the Chinese girl on TV.

After this point the daughter rebels against the mother trying to fail to prove that this is who she was, "ordinary". If she didn't try at anything she couldn't fail. The daughter didn't realize how proud her mother was of her just for trying. In the earlier days when you were born you were born into a certain class, and that class defined who you could become in life whether it be a king, farmer, merchant, or a blacksmith. In this story the situation seems very similar. Why would Jing-mei want to be famous or talented when her mother was merely a house cleaner?

Maybe she was content with the life she was born into and didn't feel as if she needed to be talented to be happy. Her mother put her in a recital bragging to her friends how Jing-mei loved to play the piano. This was her opportunity to show her mother who she was and it wasn't the person she wanted her to be, so Jing-mei went up and played horribly. However, through all of the disobedience trying to stay true to who she was, which seemed to be a slacker, the mother still pushed her to try and not give up.

Years later the mother dies and Jing-mei realizes that her mother truly did love her and was proud of her. She only pushed her because she wanted her to be the best at who she wanted to be and let her know that just because you are born into a certain lifestyle that doesn't define who you are, you define who you are. The tone of the story begins to sound happy verses the angry, sarcastic, and once comical tone making fun of the mother. Jing-mei actually starts to get the point her mother tried so hard to install in her.

One of the last sentences of the story caught my eye. It seemed to sum up everything in the story and why the conflicts of interests occurred. " And after I played them both a few times, I realized they were two halves of the same song"(534). Two halves of the same song could have been the title for Any Tan's short story. The mother and the daughter both wanted the same things: for the daughter to be happy, and be the best at what made her happy but looking at it from only one way you would not have figured that out.

In this story it was told solely from the daughters point of view. If the mother were to narrate this story it would have been completely different. Maybe she would have not seemed as so unhappy with her life that she had to live it through her daughters, but the daughter would have seemed as someone who didn't care for there mothers affection and just wanted to be disobedient. There is always two sides to a story but in this case they seemed to be arguing the same story. " Two halves of the same song"(534).