

Understanding of
culture in who's irish,
two kinds and
everything that rises
must...

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This essay will effectively highlight the overall importance as well as generalized impact of “ Cultural Differences” in addition to, “ gaps” in ideologies between generations as well as the overall importance of remaining “ true” to yourself while at the same time remaining loyal to family.

By its own definition “ Culture” is best defined as a collection of beliefs, behaviours, objects, practices, shared values and other characteristics common to members of a specific group or segment/population of society”(Little, W. (2015, July 21). With regards to the texts readings entitled “ Who’s Irish?” By Gish Jen, as well as “ Two Kinds” by Amy Tan & “ Everything That Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Conner there are several well noticeable references to not only wanting keep in line with “ traditional” beliefs, values and “ virtues” but also highlight the potential “ clashes” which can take place between those whom have officially adopted a “ different” way of life in direct comparison to those whom chose to embrace their “ cultural roots, beliefs, values and ways of life.

To being with, the work entitled, “ Who’s Irish?” By Gish Jen, is a fantastic example of not only the overall impact of cultural differences as highlighted by the statements made by the native Chinese Grandmother (almost 80 years old) with regards to her “ Son in Law”. Some of the main “ cultural difference” are conveyed when the Chinese Grandmother open up and reveals her true feelings about the differences. As stated in the story, as grandmother highlighted that despite her Son in Laws mother being a hard worker, she has four male children specifically, “ four brothers in the family,

not one of them work, but instead receive so-called severance pay or disability pay” (Gish, J., & Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher. (1999). Furthermore, the largest “ irrefutable “ evidence of an expression of cultural differences highlights the sadness in which the Chinese Grandmother experiences in the quote “ Sophie is three years old American age, but already I see her nice Chinese side swallowed up by her wild Shea side.”(Gish, J., & Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher. (1999). Still, there are more instances relating to the overall impact as it pertains to this specific story. For example, the overall impact of the cultural combination of both the Chinese grandmother’s family as well as the Shea Family. This is clearly made noticeable in the highly awkward conversation between both grandmothers by which the “ skin color” of their “ Brown” grandchild was the main discussion of the conversation in addition to the mentioning of John’s mother commenting on Race and stating that, “ I was never against the marriage, I never thought John was marrying down. I always thought “ Nattie” was just as good as white.” (Gish, J., & Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher. (1999).

Meanwhile, some examples of “ Gaps” in the ideologies between “ Generations” in this story focuses on “ Spanking”, stated by the Chinese Grandmother, “ You spank her, she’ll stop, I say another day. But they say, Oh no. In America, parents not supposed to spank the child. It gives them low self-esteem, my daughter say” (Gish, J., & Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher. (1999). Of course the grandmother end up “ spanking” her granddaughter despite having being told not to by both her daughter and son in law. Fortunately, both mother & daughter “ Bond” was not broken & the spanking

proved correct as the children behaviour was corrected. Most importantly Natalie didn't walk out on her mother (Grandmother, 80) despite, her brother in laws asking when her mother was going to be sent back to China, of which Natalie defended and is highly " Loyal" to her Chinese mother, boldly exclaiming that all house visitors & family members know that her Chinese mother (Grandma) is here (in the home) to stay. The latter act is a direct display of " Reverence" from daughter to her mother because, " in China, daughter take care of mother" (Gish, J., & Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher. (1999), the complete and utter opposite of American values which stress the " individual" over the " family".

However, in the story entitled, " Two Kinds" by Amy Tan" there is much more conflict between mother & daughter and indeed is a " push" & " pull" relationship. This story involved a mother who wanted her daughter to succeed in becoming a so called " Prodigy". As indicated by the main character's (the mother's) Daughter. Specifically the cultural difference in this story is that for the most part, the Daughter (Two Kinds, Tan) has become somewhat more " Americanised" than her other family (counterparts) including her Chinese mother. For instance, the young daughter just wants to sit and watch television instead of practicing on a piano which she (at first) had no genuine interest in, but I believe grew close to it as it symbolized the " will" of her mother to help " drive/inspire" her to try her best.

According to the daughter in the story, " My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America, open a restaurant, work for the

government , get a good retirement, buy a house with almost no money down, could become rich and even instantly famous” (Tan, A. (1989). Two Kinds). However, her daughters view about herself was vastly different as stated, “ Unlike my mother, I did not believe I could be anything I wanted to be, I could only be me.” (Tan, A. (1989). Two Kinds). This was clearly a distinctly different “ perception” of two different ideologies between mother & daughter. As mother had grew up in China living in a “ fantasy” in China but in her daughters generation, opportunities in America had changed with no reliable “ boom” in the economy like her mother generation. According to the texts, “ America was where all my mother’s hopes lay. She had come to San Francisco in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret” (Tan, A. (1989). Two Kinds).

Still, the daughter was “ true” to herself because, she eventually went on to peruse her own genuine interests, yet also remained loyal to her family especially her late mother who by then had pass away, by not only “ restoring” the old piano that her parents worked so hard to earn for her practice lessons (not to mention her mother bartering her piano lessons in exchange for her weekly cleaning services).

Finally, in the “ Everything That Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Conner texts, To begin with, the “ Gap” between the two characters (mother & son (Julian) is that both individuals lived in two different time periods one of which was marked by tremendous “ social progress” and the other generation, by a long string of Banking thefts, & Global Recessions. Julian is

bracing for the possibility of not being able to obtain “ steady employment”. This is “ confirmed” when Julian states in the readings that, “ Someday, I’ll start making money,” Julian said gloomily- he knew he never would” (O’Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1967). Despite his mother assuring him otherwise by telling Julian “ I think you’re doing fine,” “ You’ve only been out of school a year. Rome wasn’t built in a day”, and that “ It takes time the world is in such a mess” (O’Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1967). Indeed Julian is able to correct his mother and offer her a piece of his mind by telling her that, “ Knowing who you are is good for one generation only, you haven’t the foggiest idea where you stand now or who you are” (O’Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1967). I believe the latter comments can also apply to the “ highly racial “ comments made by Julian’s mother while as Julian was only stressing to his mother how times had changed. Especially as it pertained to his family despite at one point and time owning “ His great-grand-father had a plantation and two hundred slaves, his grandmother being a “ Godhigh” & his Grandfather being a prosperous landowner” (O’Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1967). In this conversation, Julian is also expressing massive “ cultural differences” between his mother whom has entirely different “ beliefs” and seems proud of their family history, especially when she racially remarks, relating to Blacks such as “ They were better off when they were, They should rise, yes, but on their own side of the fence.” (O’Connor, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1967). Julian also seems more “ Humble” in contrast to his older mother especially when the old family mansion is brought up. Specifically, it is Julian whom mutters while in transport, “

Doubtless that decayed mansion reminded them, as he never spoke of it without contempt or thought of it without longing.” (O’Connor, Everything That Rises Must Converge, 1967). Still, his mother talked about how the mansion belonged to the “ God highs” until Grandfather Chestny paid for the mortgage and saved it for them” (O’Connor, Everything That Rises Must Converge, 1967). It is clear that Julian’s mother also has an issue with finances as she was struggling to decide rather or not to purchase a purple hat over paying an electric/gas bill. Julian is both Loyal to his mother because he loves her, understands her needs and knows the overall importance of family, which is you take the “ Good” with the “ Bad”

Conclusion:

All three of these readings contain more than just the aforementioned /direct quotes taken from textual excerpts, as there are plenty more not highlighted within this essay but are still contained within the stories themselves.

Nevertheless, all quotes have been well supported with arguments pertaining to their overall under meanings.