

Symbolism in amy tan's



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Contents

Confucius once said, They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom. Amy Tan used personal change in her characters in The Joy Luck Club to convey the transformation women go through in the Chinese culture, when faced with adversity. Centering around four women who form The Joy Luck Club to play mahjong and talk about their lives, the novel digs into the memories and pasts of these four women who pass along life lessons to their American daughters.

The mothers' hope that their daughters can learn from those lessons and create a brighter future for themselves. Tan uses symbolism of a scar, pure gold, and a tiger to show the key moment in the mothers' lives that ignited a transformation within them that molded them into who they are today.

One of the most important symbols in the novel is a scar An-Mei Hsu has on her neck. When An-Mei was a young girl, her younger brother and her were raised by their grandmother Popo because their mother had left to be Wu Tsing's, a famous merchant's, fourth concubine. An-Mei's mother was shunned by her dead father's family because of the shame her mother had put on them as a result of her lowed status. One day An-Mei's mother comes back to their family's home unannounced which causes a fight to arise. The fighting between the adults of the family results in a pot of hot soup spilling on An-Mei causing a scar on her neck. Her mother rushes out the door soon after the incident, leaving An-Mei to reflect on the pain she felt both physically and emotionally, That is the way it is with a wound. The wound begins to close in on itself, to protect what is hurting so much.

And once it is closed, you no longer see what is underneath what started the pain (Tan 47). An-Mei realizes that the pain caused by her mother's appearance was only temporary, as was the scarring on her neck. She began to hide her pain beneath her skin and the pain her absent mother caused, an ache in her every time she were to think about her mother, as her scar aches when she touches it. The pain that was the hot soup represented the pain An-Mei wore on her sleeves before her mother's visit, while the pain of her scar represented An-Mei learning to hide her pain beneath her skin as her mother does.

Another important symbol in the novel is the pure gold worn by Lindo Jong, which represented her breaking free of the mold she was kept in as a wife and her obtained freedom. Lindo Jong, one of the four founders of the Joy Luck Club, was forced into an arranged marriage when she was two-years-old by her village's matchmaker. When her family's home was ruined in a flood, Lindo was forced to live with her in-laws and her future husband. Although Lindo was headstrong in her mission for independence before her marriage to Tyan-Yu, the promised child-like husband of Lindo Jong, Lindo began to lose her sense of self after the repeated and grueling training from her mother-in-law, I came to think of Tyan-Yu as a god, someone whose opinions were worth much more than my own life (Tan 56).

Lindo was trained by her mother-in-law to be a traditional Chinese wife, she was trained to be a mindless worshiper of her husband. She was given golden bracelets to showcase her new found wealth given to her through her marriage. The golden bracelets represented chains in her mind blocking her from leaving her marriage, They say this is what happens if you lack metal.

You begin to think as an independent person (Tan 63). The golden bracelets were thought to be the cause of her infertility and were removed from her possession.

Once the bracelets were removed, Lindo devised a plan to escape her marriage by claiming that Tyan-Yu's ancestors have seen their marriage and it was doomed. This impending doom was prophesied through three signs: a mole on Tyan-Yu's back that would eat his flesh, a tooth missing in Lindo's mouth that had fallen out when she was young, and a pregnant servant who was Tyan-Yu's true soul mate. Tan used the golden bracelets to symbolize the change in Lindo from a mindless and obedient young girl to an independent and strong woman who was able to escape from a marriage that would have traditionally been life-long in the Chinese culture.

Aside from the symbols of pure gold and a scar used to describe two women's transformations in the novel, a tiger is used to signify the change in Ying-ying. St. Clair from the orange side to the black side of her tiger. Ying-ying was a stubborn girl who was raised by a rich family in her home city of Wushi. When Ying-ying was sixteen, she went to her aunt's wedding where she met a bad man, and her future husband, who was unnamed in the novel because of the bad memories she has associated with him. Ying-ying, who was known to be able to predict events, predicted her marriage to the man and her pregnancy of a boy. After her marriage crumbled and her baby's death, Ying-ying learned to use her black side, It has two ways.

The gold side leaps with its fierce heart. The black side stands still with cunning, hiding its gold between trees, seeing and not being seen, waiting

patiently for things to come (Tan 248). During her marriage, Ying-ying had her gold side facing the world. She did not think and wait before rushing into her marriage, she was too headstrong and stubborn to see the bad man for who he was until it was too late and she was married to him. After the man had left with another woman, Ying-ying learned to hide her gold side and use her black side to hide, wait, and think before acting hastily. The tiger in the novel symbolizes the transformation Ying-ying went through after her marriage to protect herself from others.

Tan uses the stories of the mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* to represent a transformation that was essential to their character development in their lives. The symbols in the novel convey messages and themes that are used as connections between the different characters in the novel, and as life lessons meant to be passed along to the children of the mothers in the novel. The scar, golden bracelets, and the tiger are not only important in their individual aspects as personal lessons, but can be related and taught to the modern generation. The themes in the novel, such as woman are strong and the pain of a mother's departure on a girl's life can have, are present in the lives of girls in every culture and every background.

" Confucius Quotes." Quotes. net. STANDS4 LLC, 2018. Web. 5 Oct. 2018. .

Ebrey, Patricia. Women in Traditional China. Asia Society, Center for Global Education, asiasociety.org/education/women-traditional-china.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. Penguin, 2016.