

Describes the tales of  
four families



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Every child in this world knows the feeling of their parent constantly nagging them to do chores or even just give their opinion. Children who don't know any better are annoyed at their parents because they don't understand that their parents are attempting to better their children. The book, *The Joy Luck Club*, written by Amy Tan, describes the tales of four families, mainly focused on the mother-daughter relationship.

Each tale is a recurring theme of a daughter not understanding what their mother is attempting to say to them, but in the end they realize their mother's true intentions.

One of the daughters, Jing-mei remembers when she was a young child her mother, Suyuan, always pressuring her to practice her piano. Jing-mei at the time felt like her mother wanted her to be so great that she didn't even try to be good at it. Jing-mei gave up trying and she wished her mother would also lose hope in her. As she grew older, Jing-Mei felt as if she kept failing her mother by not living up to the expectations that the mother placed on her. However, when Suyuan offers her daughter the piano again and she replays the piano again, she realizes that her mother just wanted her to do something that had the possibility of becoming good at.

When Jing-Mei was a little girl, Suyuan put the idea in her head that she could be anything she wanted to be including being a prodigy. 'Of course you can be prodigy, too,' my mother told me when I was nine. 'You can be best anything. What does Auntie Lindo know? Her daughter, she is only the best tricky.' (Tan, 132). From the start of a young age, Suyuan is already laying down expectations upon Jing-mei. Jing-Mei went through being a

Chinese Shirley temple to being a genius. None of these went how Suyuan wished her daughter to be, a prodigy. Mr. Chong was a retired piano teacher and my mother had traded house cleaning services for weekly lessons and a piano for me to practice on every day, two hours a day, from four until six.

When my mother told me this, I felt as though I had been sent to hell, I whined and she kicked my foot a little when I couldn't stand it anymore. (Tan, 136). Suyuan willingly cleaned just for her daughter's sake in hopes that her daughter would be her best. 'Who ask you be genius?' she shouted, 'Only ask you be your best. For you sake. You think I want you be genius?' (Tan, 136). Jing-mei believes that her mother wants her to be a genius, to be so smart that her mother would finally approve of her, but in reality the mother just wants the daughter to try. But I was so determined not to try, not to be anybody different that I learned to play only the most ear-splitting preludes, the most discordant hymns. (Tan, 138). Jing-mei never gave herself the opportunity to be good at piano because she wanted to prove her mother wrong. No accusations.

No blame. And in a way, I felt disappointed. I had been waiting for her to start shouting, so I could shout back and cry and blame her for all my misery. (Tan, 141). Jing-mei wanted to place the blame on someone else so she would feel better about herself. It was her fault that she never tried practicing the piano and the way she played the song at the recital is the result of that. She just wanted to blame her mother for forcing her to do something, but her mother was actually helping her. 'You pick up fast,' said my mother, as if she knew this was certain 'You have natural talent. You could be genius if you want to.' (Tan, 143). After Suyuan's failed attempts

on attempting to get Jing-mei to be good at something, she had lost all hope. What she was saying didn't make sense to Jing-mei; Suyuan wanted the best for her daughter and believed she could be great if she had just tried.

Then I wish I'd never been born!' I shouted. ? I wish I were dead! Like them. (Tan, 142). After Jing-mei did horrible at her recital, Suyuan continued to ask Jing-mei to practice piano, her last slivers of hope still alive in her. However, Jing-mei at her last straw lashed out at her mother because she had already lost all hope in becoming what she thought her mother expected her to be, a prodigy. Her mother never asked her again after that to do something that required trying. Jing-mei, growing older, continued to believe that she always disappointed her mother by not getting straight A's, didn't become class president, or stay in college. She didn't try and her mother never asked her to try. Suyuan offers the piano that Jing-mei used to practice piano for her birthday gift when Jing-mei turns thirty. Jing-mei takes this as a sign of forgiveness for the event that happened at the recital.

It was called ? Perfectly Contented.' I tried to play this one as well. It had a lighter melody but the same flowing rhythm and turned out to be quite easy. ? Pleading Child' was shorter but slower; ? Perfectly Contented' was longer, but faster. And after I played them both a few times, I realized they were two halves of the same song. (Tan, 144). Jing-mei doesn't take the piano until her mother passes and that is when Jing-mei realizes as she reviews her childhood, what her mother's true intentions were. These two songs represent her life, the pleading child that had finally come to peace to the conflict with her mother.

Just like the conflict over the piano lessons, Waverly Jong and Lindo Jong have a similar misunderstanding between the mother and daughter over a simple thing, chess. Better to lose less, see if you really need. (Tan,) Lindo Jong was just trying to offer advice but Waverly gets annoyed by it. ? Why do you have to use me to show off? If you want to show off, then why don't you learn to play chess.' (Tan,) Waverly doesn't understand that her mother is proud of her and is expressing it by telling her friends. Waverly takes it the wrong way and believes that her mother is using her to get more fame around their town. It means we are looking one way, while following another. We're for one side and also the other. We mean what we say, but our intentions are different. (Tan,). Waverly

Throughout the entire book, there is miscommunication between the mothers and the daughters. The daughters always think the mother's advice are bad and take it the wrong way. However, when they grow older and reconcile with their mother, their perspective on the event changes and understands what their mother was trying to say.