

# Joy luck club film analysis

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The Joy Luck Club Film Analysis The Wayne Wang's film, Joy Luck Club, based on a novel by Amy Tan, tells a story of eight women. The movie is a tale of four mothers and their four daughters and their struggles through out life. The film is divided into four sections; where each mother and her corresponding daughter tell their story from their perspectives. A theme of pain and suffering encompasses each mother's story, while a fear of being a disappointment is a central theme in each daughter's tale.

Many anthropological concepts are addressed in this film, most of which surround culture. Symbolism comes into play. Reoccurring elements such as spirituality are found in each woman's story. Also, gender roles and sexism are also strong elements within the film The Joy Luck Club opens as a story is being told about an old woman remembering a swan that she bought in shanghai for too much money. The market vendor told her that the swan was, " once a duck that stretched its neck in hopes of becoming a goose. And now look, it is too beautiful to eat! The woman journeyed to America with her swan and told the bird that, " In America, I will have a daughter just like me.

But over there, nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husbands belch. Over there, nobody will look down on her because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there, she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow. She will know my meaning because I will give her this swan, a creature that became more than what was hoped for. " When the woman came to America, immigration officials took the swan away and the woman was only left with a single feather.

She had wanted to give the feather to her daughter and tell her, “ This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and carries with it all my good intentions. ” This story is a reoccurring element in the film. It is told by June, the daughter of Suyaan. This story is a symbolic and metaphoric in many ways. The swan was a symbol for amounting to something. In our culture the swan symbolizes aesthetic and beauty.

The swan is not a symbol for beauty in this woman’s story. The mother wants to transgress from Chinese cultural schemas associated with women being of less worth and intelligence than men. The mother wishes to raise a daughter who is strong, independent, and “ so much more than it what was hoped for”. Literature and writing can be a way of examining a culture’s thought patterns. In this film, it can be argued that this is an indirect way for Suyaan to tell June the story of her hopes and aspirations for her. The bird itself is also symbolic for migration from one land to another, something that Suyaan is doing as well.

Love and marriage is a reoccurring theme in this film. Lena’s husband, Harold, accounts for everything within their marriage and divides it by half. The two, financially, split everything. Though, Harold is not a terrible man to Lena, he does not respect her and he does not truly love her. This is hard for Lena’s mother, Yin Yin, to witness.

Yin Yin married a man who put on a sweet and charming front, however, turned out to be a monster. There are extreme gender roles, which will later be mentioned, within this film. Yin Yin and Lena are both able to transgress from these gender roles by escaping their marriages. Rose meets Ted while

in college. Soon after they start dating, Ted brings Rose home to meet his parents. Ted's mother pulls Rose aside and comments on her race.

His mother claims that she, herself, is not racist, however, Ted and Rose's relationship would reflect poorly on the company. This is a form of ethnocentrism. Ted's mother believes that Rose's Chinese heritage is inferior to her own American one. This is also a form of racism. Lindo, Waverly's mother, also displays ethnocentrism.

Lindo disapproves of Waverly's boyfriend, Rich. Waverly had been hesitant to introduce Rich to her family or announce officially the seriousness of their relationship. Lindo passively expresses her dislike for Rich; she believes he is not good enough for her daughter. Waverly decides to bring Rich to dinner at her parent's house, however the meal is a disaster. Rich doesn't understand Chinese table manners.

He takes too much food and does not compliment Lindo the way he is expected to. Rather than that, he, unknowingly, insults her. He doesn't even realize how badly the evening went. Schemas and customs inhibit all aspects of culture, and rituals during meal times are paramount within all cultures. Because Rich cannot understand the aspects of Chinese culture, Lindo feels she is superior to him and her daughter is too good for him, as well. Cultural differences play a very important role in this movie.

Because the mothers are Chinese-born, and the daughters are American-born, cross-culturization is an issue among families, as well. There are elements of diffusion as well. As each generation, mothers and daughter, receive different elements of the other's culture and adapts to it. The four  
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mothers have devastating pasts filled with hardships, struggles, and dark secrets. Suyuan had left her twin daughters on side of the road in China during World War II. Lindo was promised away soon after she was born to a matchmaker.

She was then abandoned at the age of 15 to be married. Yin Yin had married a man who was “happiest when he was cruel”. To get revenge on her husband and hurt him the way he hurt her, Yin Yin drowned their son. An Mei was left by her mother when she was a young girl. Her mother left her to be a man’s concubine.

There are strong themes of abandonment in each mother’s story. Elements of spirit and magic also play a big role in these women’s stories; these strong elements of spirit and magic later affect their daughter’s lives. An Mei’s mother committed suicide because she believed that killing herself and her spirit would give her daughter a stronger one. There are reoccurring elements within this film, for example, Rose became an obedient Chinese wife like her grandmother was, even though her mother, An Mei, tried to teach her the opposite. An Mei shares her mother’s story with Rose, in effort to helping her marriage. Rose takes strength from this her grandmother’s story and develops a more powerful spirit when she confronts her husband.

Lena’s spirit is also linked to her mothers. It is said that Lena has no spirit, because her mother had none to give her. After the Yin Yin drowned her son, she lost her spirit. Yin Yin, never having recovered from what she had done, had faded away as a person and as a mother. However, when she realizes that Lena is living in a passion-less marriage with a man who doesn’t treat

her with love or kindness, Yin Yin finds the strength to restore her spirit and share it with her daughter. She intervenes and tells her daughter to stop settling and leave her husband.

When Waverly recalls her childhood and her chess skills, she says she has this power, a belief in herself to be better than anyone else. However, after a fight with her mother, the power is drained away and soon to be gone. Years later when Waverly is a grown, she cries to her mother about how strong of a power her mother has over her. This “spirit” that reoccurs with the film is associated with Chinese culture, something that we think of as inner strength. The Chinese have a clan-like outlook on their beliefs and believe that that ancestors’ spirits are universal and pass through generations.

This could explain when June sees her half sisters in China; one of them looks like her mother, at first glance. The movie also addresses extreme gender roles and sexism. The discrimination and oppression of women plays a large part in this movie and is another reoccurring theme. An Mei’s mother was seen by Wu Tsing at the temple, where his second wife invites her over to play Mah-Jong. During the night Wu Tsing comes into An- Mei’s mother’s room and rapes her.

When she tells her family about the rape, they do not believe her. They call her dishonorable and throw her out on the street. She is then forced into concubinage, having nowhere else to go. She becomes Wu Tsing’s third wife and maintains very little status in his home. The lack of respect of women is clear-cut in An Mei’s mother’s story.

Even her own family would not believe her in her greatest time of need. The women is looked at as though she is a disgrace, where as no one faults the man. By the age of two, Lindo was promised away. When she was 15, she was sent to the matchmakers who arranged a marriage with her a younger boy. After their marriage, it is clear that Lindo's husband is very young and has no intention of consummating their marriage, sexually.

Lindo is the one repeatedly blamed for not having children. Her mother-in-law blatantly insults her and treats her terribly. This is acceptable within Chinese society, because females do not have any status within the culture and they are not entitled to it. Yin Yin's story best exemplifies that mistreatment of women. After Yin Yin's married a seemingly wonderful man, his true colors came out.

He repeatedly engaged in adultery and abuse. Yin Yin was powerless. Physically and emotionally weaker than her husband she could not fight back. It was his cruelty that led to the drowning of their child. Having had such a horrible past with men, Yin Yin is weary when she sees her daughter falling into that same fate.

Yin Yin sees that Lena is passive and stuck in a loveless marriage with her husband, Harold. Lena's husband, Harold, is also her boss. He receives a larger salary than she does; yet he demands that everything be financially equal in their marriage. Harold insists that all household expenses be divided equally between them. Yin Yin asks her daughter what she wants from Harold. Lena replies that she wants respect and tenderness.

Yin Yin, then, instructs her daughter to tell her husband that, and to not come back until he is able to give her those things. When Lena says she can't do that, Yin Yin replies, "Losing him does not matter. It is you who will be found and cherished". Even today in our culture there is sexism and lack of respect for women. But from learning from past mistakes Yin Yin is able to help her daughter be strong and move on to a better life. The Joy Luck Club is not just one story but four stories and four generations, all tying back to each other.

The mothers have faced suffering and pain, and come together over weekly games of Mah-Jong to celebrate their lives and their culture. The movie covers themes of pain, spirituality, and gender roles. Symbolism and culture are large elements of the film as well. The movie has a central theme of women empowerment despite terrible conditions; each mother and daughter was able to find inner strength and rise above to triumph.