

Suffering builds character essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Tough challenges reveal our strengths and weaknesses. This statement is certainly true; adversity helps discover who we are. Hardships often lead us to examine who we are and question what is important in life. The hardships that we endure are the suffering we must go through. This is how character builds. It is often said that without any challenges or obstacles, a person's true character cannot be determined. Clearly, "A Separate Peace" by John Knowles, and "The Joy Luck Club" by Amy Tan demonstrate this point.

"A Separate Peace" takes place during wartime. No one dies in this book and no tragedies take place. Knowles focuses on the war within a human heart, a war that is affected by the events of World War II but exists independently of any real armed conflict. For Gene, every human being goes to war at a certain point in life; war meaning fighting within himself, within the mind of a human being. For most of Gene's classmates, WWII provides the catalyst of this loss, and each character reacts to it in his own way. Gene himself, though, states that he fought his own war while at Devon and killed his enemy there. The implication is that Finny was his enemy, casting an unwavering shadow over Gene's life. Gene suffers a guilt that was held within him every time he encountered Finny. He feels responsible for pushing Finny off the tree. During this time, he is constantly fighting himself. He looks in Finny to find himself. His own identity is revealed within Finny's character and because of that, Gene builds his own character. He learns to accept the truth but is afraid to. This suffering leads to his building of character which is a distinctive feature of Gene.

"A Joy Luck Club" by Amy Tan demonstrates a similar meaning. The narrators meditate on their inability to translate concepts and sentiments

from one culture to another. The barriers that exist between the mothers and the daughters are often due to their inability to communicate with each other. The first time this difficulty is mentioned occurs when Jing-mei relates the story of her mother's founding of the Joy Luck Club. After trying to explain the significance of the club's name, Jing-mei recognizes that the concept is not something that can be translated. She points out that the daughters think their mothers are stupid because of their English, while the mothers are impatient with their daughters who don't understand the cultural nuances of their language and those who do not intend on passing along their Chinese heritage to their own children.

Each character expresses the anxiety over her own inability to reconcile her Chinese heritage with her American surroundings. Most of them have spent their childhoods trying to escape their Chinese identities. But who are they really? The Chinese blood is within them and no matter how hard they try to escape it; they must learn to accept it. Through Jing-mei's experiences, she builds her own character. She learns to accept her Chinese heritage instead of fighting against it. She comes to see that China itself contains American aspects. She says "perhaps, then, there is no such thing as a pure state of being Chinese American; all individuals are amalgams of their unique tastes, hopes, and memories."

Both books demonstrated suffering. Without suffering there cannot be character, and without character you have nothing. Each person is born with a unique character. It just takes time to develop it and truly master it. I think if you face tough challenges, it helps to see that your life is up to you and

that if you learn from negative experiences, they make you stronger and more responsible which the basis of your character is.