

# Ying-ying st. clair's narrative journey

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



According to Joseph Campbell, the hero's journey is comprised of many different stages that test the hero's ability to overcome obstacles, as well as find their sense of identity along the way. In the book *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, Ying-Ying St. Clair, one of the four members of the Joy Luck Club, undergoes many challenges that shape her personal hero's journey. Ying-Ying's life goes through the three main stages of the journey, starting with the comfortable ordinary world, traveling to the special world, and ending with the return to the ordinary world as a changed person. As Ying-Ying experiences each stage, her perspective of life changes as her experiences help her mature and become stronger in order to endure the many challenges thrown her way.

In the beginning of the story, Ying-Ying is a lively, headstrong young girl living with her parents under her Amah's meticulous care. At this point, Ying-Ying is oblivious in regards to reality's true nature and lives life the way she wants to, as an outgoing young girl who tends to pay little attention to others' feelings as long as she herself is satisfied. Later, at her youngest aunt's wedding, Ying-Ying meets her future husband, whom she predicts that she will marry. This call to adventure is vehemently refused by Ying-Ying, who, at the time, believed that no one was worthy enough to become her husband. Ying-Ying had no mentor except for her own mind, thinking, "I fought his eyes with mine... I pushed so hard to keep him from my thoughts that I fell into a marriage bed with him" (Tan, 140). Ying-Ying may have been against the marriage, but she did not physically do anything to try to stop this from happening. Instead, she continued to believe that this was to be her fate, so she just let things play out the way she thought it would without

doing anything to alter the events. Although she later comes to terms with her marriage once she has left home to live with her new husband, Ying-Ying is still unaware of the drastic changes that will come into her once comfortable life, and even if she did know, she still would not have done anything to help herself.

After crossing the threshold of her husband's house, Ying-Ying starts her new life away from her childhood home. In the beginning, Ying-Ying is hesitant and unsure of her feelings, but she later comes to love her husband in her own way. After this change of heart, Ying-Ying no longer tries to push her husband away, but instead changes her once headstrong ways to become obedient and servile, constantly doing everything she can to please her husband. Ying-Ying recalls, " If I put slippers on my feet, it was to choose a pair that I knew would please him" (Tan, 141). Ying-Ying succeeded in persuading herself that she truly loves this man who thought so little of her, and she continued to live her facade of a life until her husband abandons her with an unborn son. After his abandonment, she becomes full of hate and anger, provoking her to kill her son out of spite. Ying-Ying chooses to live a life full of resentment and hatred towards her husband, since he abandoned her like she was worth nothing, when in the past, she saw herself as above everyone else. This major event in Ying-Ying's life has changed her perspective on life forever, because for the first time in her life, she will not live the comfortable, innocent life she once knew. Ying-Ying then leaves to live with some relatives in the country, where she spends ten years deciding how she wants to live the rest of her life. Then Ying-Ying decides to return to normal civilization and work as a shop girl. There, she meets Mr. St. Clair, a

man who waits for four years before Ying-Ying allows him to marry her and take her to America. Ying-Ying feels that this may be the start of a new life away from past sorrows, but she still continues to live a quiet, restrained life. Ying-Ying may feel all-knowing since she can predict things before they happen, but by not doing anything about her predictions, she does not take things into her own hands in order to improve her own life. As a result, Ying-Ying continues living like a ghost that does not have any actual feelings and does not want to talk or interact much with anyone else, only with her own thoughts. This shows how Ying-Ying's past has affected her view on life and how she now feels that life is worth nothing when she feels no more alive than being dead.

After marrying Mr. St. Clair, Ying-Ying has a daughter, Lena, who seems to suffer a similar fate as Ying-Ying, since Lena has married a "bad man", just like Ying-Ying did in the past. Ying-Ying continues to quietly observe, but she still does not do anything because Ying-Ying still clings onto the belief that she is like a ghost with no real existence in the real world. As Ying-Ying witnesses Lena's suffering, she then contemplates her own past and how her past actions has affected her current life now. Through her daughter's suffering, Ying-Ying realizes that she must not let history repeat itself by regaining her own spirit to pass on to Lena so her daughter can have the confidence to fix her current situation. Ying-Ying decides, "I will gather together my past and look. I will see a thing that has already happened. The pain that cut my spirit loose. I will hold that pain until it becomes hard and shiny... I will use this sharp pain to... cut her [Lena] tiger spirit loose" (Tan, 144). Throughout this whole process, Ying-Ying recalls her painful past, with

which she finally has the courage to confront in her memories. This shows how Ying-Ying has come to the point in her life where she can no longer avoid her past mistakes, or else her daughter will continue to suffer unhappiness in her current marriage. Ying-Ying chooses to express her love for her daughter by passing on her tiger spirit so her daughter will have the strength to fix her marriage. This decision shows that Ying-Ying has spent enough time waiting, and now, she has reached the most important milestone in her life where she will no longer be the ghost that she believed she was before now. Ying-Ying has acquired the strength to overcome her past fears in order to pass on her strength so Lena can avoid the mistakes that Ying-Ying had committed before.

In the past, Ying-Ying was only familiar with a pampered lifestyle where she was able to have anything she wished for, but after experiencing life's challenges, she has changed from a stubborn, innocent girl to a mature, thoughtful woman. Throughout her journey, she has had to endure many challenges similar to the stages that a hero must experience on the hero's journey. Ying-Ying's personal journey has helped to shape her viewpoint on life so that she can learn how to overcome the many obstacles in her way. Ying-Ying becomes more mature and strong as she finds ways to resolve the many problems that arise in her life. In the book *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, Ying-Ying's perspective of life is altered as she embarks on the hero's journey, as described by Joseph Campbell, and becomes stronger as she endures life's challenges.