

# Two kinds by amy tan

Literature



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7 July Analysis of Two Kinds by Amy Tan Brief Summary The story of Two Kinds is part of the Joy Luck Club stories written by Amy Tan that speaks of the difficult and sometimes convoluted relationships between the Chinese mothers in the story, who lived through the early years of Republican era China, and their daughters who were born in the in the environment of the United States. In the story of Two Kinds, the focus is on the narrator and main character, Jing-mei, as she is being pushed by her mother to become a musical prodigy. The motivation behind the prodding of Jing-mei's mother is to compete with bragging rights to their family friend, Lindo Jong, whose daughter Waverly is a publicized young chess champion. While Jing-mei reluctantly obeys her mother's wishes at the onset of things, this causes personal conflict with Jing-mei since she feels that her mother is pushing her to be someone that she is not. This becomes the frustration between both mother and daughter, which eventually leads Jing-mei to wonder what the rationale is behind her mother's actions.

Main Character Analysis The story's main character, Jing-mei Woo, could be considered as a conflicted character. The tension of this conflict is found towards her mother with regards on how they view the way her life should be. The reason that causes this tension is the manner as to how Jing-mei was raised in a different environment from that of her mother. Unlike her mother, Jing-mei grew up in an environment that was more culturally American. The cultural environment in the United States is very liberal and highly individualistic. Jing-mei's reluctance to her mother's prodding and wishes is not really that of baseless defiance or rebellion, but because Jing-mei does not feel obliged to it and does not see herself anything like her mom's idea of her being a musical prodigy. While Jing-mei did accept the idea at first, she eventually felt that her mother was

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pushing her a little too hard. She would learn to play the piano, but she learns only with mediocre efforts and attitude later on. This leads to her mother's disappointment and further deepens the conflict. This leads Jing-mei to help understand her mom's reasons after she passes away. In contrast, Jing-mei's mother, whose name is Suyuan, has a different kind of cultural mindset. Suyuan believes that the obedience of a daughter is most important and that a mother's age and wisdom is essential with the times and traditions. Suyuan was raised at the ending days of the short-lived Republican China and the initial invasion of the Japanese. When the Japanese did invade China, Suyuan was forced to leave everything behind, as well as losing her husband to the war and abandoning her first twin daughters in order to escape a war-torn China and start a new life in the United States. There she remarried and gave birth to Jing-mei. These series of misfortunes are what likely made Suyuan want to push Jing-mei to find some sort of talent to attain fame, and also to be a competitor with her Joy Luck Club friend Lindo Jong and her chess champion daughter Waverly.

**Plot Structure**

The plot starts with an exposition by the narrator and main character, Jing-mei, narrating her mother's escape from China and arrival at the United States. She did that in order to leave her war-ravaged homeland. When she was to give birth to Jing-mei, Suyuan made it a goal that she will raise a child who will possess exceptional talent, and who will earn great fame and accolade from the public. The rising action of the plot starts as Suyuan tries to find some sort of hidden talent in Jing-mei. After watching the television shows of the child star Shirley Temple, Suyuan then pushes Jing-mei to be a child star and enrolls her in piano lessons. Suyuan was also intent in having a rivalry with her friend Lindo Jong. This leads Jing-mei to be frustrated and

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exasperated. Thus, she made sure that her mother's plan would not transform into reality. The climax of the story occurs during the piano recital of Jing-mei, in which the local community was there to watch. Even Suyuan's friend and rival Lindo went, along with her daughter Waverly. While not having practiced enough due to lack of motivation, Jing-mei felt a little too confident with her performance. In fact, the recital was actually terrible and a disappointment to everyone who listened, except Jing-mei's piano teacher, who was actually deaf. After the day of the recital, Suyuan attempted to make Jing-mei practice more with the piano to which Jing-mei fiercely refused. After much upbraiding by her mom, Jing-mei cried out wishing she died or was never born, like her family that died in China. This silenced Suyuan, and the relationship between mother and daughter drifted away. The falling action of the story occurs some time after, when Jing-mei realized that she did feel some degree of pride when playing the piano, and felt a tinge of regret in not excelling more with it for the mere reason of ill thinking against her mother's wishes. She later on inherits the piano, fixes it and starts to play again. Conclusion The message being sent by the author Amy Tan tells us that we must understand others from each perspective. Some people do things in the manner of low context communication and culture, in which things are dealt with in a straightforward and no-nonsense manner. There are others who communicate through high context culture, who use subtle messages and indirect manner of communicating with others. Conflicts and misunderstandings arise when one side refuses to understand the other, whether it is amongst friends, or mothers and daughters. It might take some effort to understand, but the results are always worth a good try.