

The american dream in the joy luck club



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Thousands of immigrants arrive in America every year with the hope that a new life, a better life, awaits them. They come in search of “the American Dream,” the hope that there are higher paying jobs, quality public schools to send their children to, and a safer environment filled with opportunities and choices. Typically, immigrants make the long journey in hopes of creating a better future for their children so that they can grow up in a country where they only have to worry about earning good grades and qualifying for a decent job. The characters in *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan demonstrate these American dreams by providing insight into both their difficult pasts and their hopes for their children.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan wrote about Chinese immigrants who are mothers to American-born daughters. The book focuses on the relationships between the mothers and the daughters, who just want to fit in with the rest of their American friends. The mothers always want their children to be the most successful, and tend to boast about their daughters' accomplishments, often exaggerating them. For example, Waverly Jong was a chess prodigy during her childhood; she won multiple championships and was even on the news. Her Chinese mother, Lindo Jong, enjoyed bragging about her daughter's victories to anyone who would listen, and she also liked to think that she also had a part in those victories. At the end of one particular tournament, she told Waverly, “Lost eight pieces this time. Last time was eleven. What I tell you? Better off lose less!” (pg. 49). By making this remark, Lindo expresses how she feels responsible for the wins and how she likes to be involved in her daughter's life. Lindo's pride in Waverly's accomplishments represents “the American dream” because she clearly did not say that comment for

attention, although that is what Waverly assumes. She said it because she was proud of Waverly and felt that her daughter's successes were also her successes. Tan thus reinstates the idea that immigrant parents want many opportunities for their children and feel great pride when the children do something that they didn't even have the opportunity to do, which is one of the many reasons why they come to America.

Another way in which *The Joy Luck Club* represents "the American dream" is by discussing the fact that many of the mothers immigrated in order to escape unsafe situations or to find a safer environment. Suyuan Woo, Jing Mei "June" Woo's mother, experiences a situation of this sort. Suyuan escaped a Chinese city named Kweilin when the Japanese army began bombing and invading the city. She had to abandon all of her possessions, even her two twin babies, on the side of the road while fleeing. She eventually meets a man, gets married, and moves halfway around the world to the United States for a better life. She fled China because she wanted not only herself, but her future children as well to be in a safer environment with fewer hardships. She didn't want them to have to experience what she went through. She also tries to get June to be a prodigy like Waverly Jong, but couldn't succeed because June didn't seem to be interested in any of the proposed activities, including piano. June states, "My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America" (pg. 141). This expresses Suyuan's belief in America's ability to give everyone a chance at a better life despite past hardships. Even though June did not become a prodigy like her mother wanted her to be, the fact that it was even possible for June to take up almost any hobby she pleased is a lot more than what China had to offer

at the time. Fortunately, Suyuan was able to escape and provide a safer environment filled with possibilities for her children.

“ The American dream” is the hope of many people looking for “ light at the end of the tunnel.” Whether it has to do with making a fortune with a new business in the land of opportunities, or simply being satisfied with life, it will continue to attract immigrants and opportunity-seekers. As demonstrated by The Joy Luck Club, the people who come looking for “ the American dream” may be leaving behind so much from their past when coming to the United States. In the book, the mothers left behind family members, their languages, and even their culture, all to make sure their children have a chance to do what they couldn't: follow their dreams.