

Two kinds paper amy tan

Profession, Writer



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In Amy Tan’s short story “ Two Kinds” Jing-Mei, the story’s main character, takes a stand against her mother. The story opens as she describes her childhood, which was full of pain and resentment caused by never becoming the “ prodigy” that her mother desperately wanted her to be. Despite her best intentions, Jing-Mei always fell short of her mother’s expectations and one night, she made a pact to herself that she would never allow her mother to try to change her.

After her mother saw a young Chinese girl play the piano on a television show she decided that Jing-Mei should take lessons from the neighbor. The neighbor, Mr. Chong, Jing-Mei discovered was deaf, and that she easily could get away with playing the wrong notes. Months later, Mr. Chong and her mother entered Jing-Mei in a talent contest. She believed that her inner prodigy would surface and allow her to play well, but the performance proved to be an utter disaster. Two days later, while being urged to go to practice an argument of devastating proportions began.

Her mother never spoke of piano lessons ever again. Decades later, she received the family’s piano as a present for her thirtieth birthday. Months after her mother’s death, she plays it and realizes the truth about her mother’s intentions. The central idea in Tan’s story is, parents cannot control or dictate their children’s lives but only try to guide them in the right direction. Tan’s main character Jing-Mei was self centered, bratty and very inconsiderate of the effects of her behavior had on the people in her life.

She is buried so deep in her ways that it is not until she is an adult that she recognizes how messed up she is. Her mother’s character was forceful and

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pushy it was only natural that Jing-Mei rebelled against her. If she had only been gentle with her the results may have been different. To say the least both characters were deeply flawed and made for a catastrophic relationship. “ It was not only the disappointment my mother felt in me. In the years that followed, I failed her so many times, each time asserting my own will, my right to fall short of expectations” (Tan, 48).

That regretful rant she went on about her shortcomings in life proves that she remained too stubborn to change her ways and not give her mother the satisfaction of being great at something. The point of view of Jing-Mei is crucial to the central idea of the story. The story is written in first person, told by Jing-Mei as she recounts the events of her childhood. The reader is able to understand from her perspective the relationship between her and her mother and the revelations she had after her mother's death.

The first hand style only allows us to see Jing-Mei; s perspective where as her mother may have recalled her childhood differently. The writing style of omniscient narration from the point of view of the child adds depth to the central idea of the story. The reader experiences first hand it being brought to life through the eyes of the child as the plot progresses. The reader can relate from this view-point and recall their childhood as Jing-Mei narrates her own. The progress of the protagonist seemed to be cut short by her stubborn behavior to remain true to her ways well into her adult life.

Jing-Mei doesn't grasp the meaning of her mother's intentions until her demise making for an ' every cloud has a silver lining' ending, but serves the purpose in putting her in the static character category for the majority of Tan's story. Had Jing-Mei come to the realization early on in the story, the

outcome would have varied differently. Her mother, the antagonist, was only a mere muse for Jing-Mei to have someone to blame for her not trying. Her mother ultimately wanted the best for her daughter and to surpass her like every other parent would want for their child. “ You have natural talent.

You could been genius if you want to. ”(Tan, 48) Jing-Mei’s mother’s words were attempts to make peace with her daughter. Jing-Mei’s real enemy was herself who denied her to exceed at everything and finally she came to terms with it. The conflict was external between the heated relationship between Jing-Mei and her mother, which is for the majority of the story. In closing, “ Two Kinds” was a well-written story with meaning and purpose, a great plot and a great alternative ending that the reader doesn’t see coming. The reader feels that the little girl will eventually repair what is broken in her relationship with her mother.

Seeing that not happen until her mother’s death is devastating to the reader; even more so Jing-Mei is unable to apologize to all these facts after she realizes what she has done. This cold fate could very well insight feelings of anger within the heart of the reader upon the story’s ending. The central idea remains true through out the story’s entirety only to be confronted, regretted and digested by Jing-Mei. Works Cited Tan, Amy. “ Two Kinds. ” Literature Craft & Voice. Vol 1 1st. Cheuse Alan. Ed 40-47. McGraw Hill. New York 2010. Print.