

Two kinds by amy tan



TWO KINDS BY AMY TAN.

Because of her mother's constant pressure for her to play music, Jing-Mei's desire to be a normal Chinese-American girl turns into a search for her own identity and a struggle between her and her mother.

In the story *Two Kinds*, Jing-Mei's mother believes that children in America can achieve anything they desire. Suyuan had a difficult time in China where she lost her husband and children. These painful memories serve to motivate her to mold Jing-Mei into a successful woman. She wants Jing-Mei to become a genius or a prodigy. They watch the movies of Shirley Temple over and over again hoping that Jing-Mei will get some valuable lessons from her. The lessons Suyuan takes Jing-Mei through are so rigorous that she finds herself falling short of her mother's expectations. From the story however one can tell that this was the norm among Chinese immigrant parents in Chinatown. They had big dreams for their children and pushed them too hard that the children ended up unhappy as portrayed also by Auntie Lindo's daughter Waverly. Auntie Lindo says that her daughter spends all day playing chess and she is tired dusting the trophies she brings home.

The story portrays generational differences among Chinese immigrant families. The parents come to America with unrealistic dreams for their children and spend their hard-earned money on trying to force them into various activities. After watching *Ed Sullivan Show* on TV, Suyuan decides that Jing-Mei must become a famous pianist. She gets her into piano lessons and even buys her a second-hand piano. However, Jing-Mei is no longer interested in becoming what she is not. She is tired of trying to fit into her

mothers expectations and makes no effort to learn how to play the piano. She takes advantage of the fact that her piano teacher Mr. Chong is not only deaf but also partially blind. She only learns a few simple chords and then continues to play what she describes as a cat running up and down on top of garbage cans (Tan). During the talent show she plays the piano terribly and this breaks her mothers heart. Her mother and father had proudly invited some members of their club to come watch her perform.

Another theme that stands out in the book is that of mother and daughter relationships. The relationship between Jing-Mei and Suyuan is a strained one. With time Jing-Mei resents her mother and finds great joy in letting her down. She is no longer interested in her lessons. She tells her mother that she is not a genius and she should be left to be who she is. After the terrible performance at the talent show she refuses to take any more piano lessons. Her mother says that there are only two types of daughters, those who are obedient to their parents and those who are not (p. 5). Being from a Chinese family, obedience was highly valued and expected of Jing-Mei. Their relationship suffers the final blow when Jing-Mei tells Suyuan that she wishes she was not her daughter and hopes she were dead like her brothers and sisters who had died in China. This breaks Suyuans heart and from that day all her dreams of Jing-Mei being successful died.

In conclusion, It can be said that the high expectations parents have for their children can be detrimental not only to the relationship between parents and children but also to the childrens emotional wellbeing. It leads to low self-esteem and self-resentment among those children who do not meet their

parents expectations. The children end up rebellious and act out and may become social misfits.

Work cited

Tn, Amy. The Joy Book Club: Two kinds. New York: penguin, 2006.