

Amy tans two kinds

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

David has a very odd hobby. He is a member of a group that is dedicated to the academic recreation of the Middle Ages while using (and enjoying) the benefits of modern society. He too believes that people can be whatever they want to be. He creates many hare-brained schemes and spends inordinate amounts of time identifying the skills needed to be successful in the SCA. Group members can rise through the various levels of nobility, achieve various peerages (such as knighthood) or even earn the Crown. David believes that anyone who desires such status already knows how to be a peer, they simply have to do it. As Mother did in "Two Kinds", David has chosen skill and is willing to entertain any related notion that comes to mind especially if it is popular.

The mother's focus was on finding something that her daughter was best at. "[Y]ou can be prodigy too[y]ou can be best anything" (Tan, 2006, p. 1).

Mother subjected her daughter to a multitude of tests to determine her special skill and Mother was constantly disappointed. Yet she preserved in her quest to find her daughter's talent. After reading this story several times, the impression was Mother engaged in a selfless quest. Ultimately, Mother's quest met with failure but she came to terms with it although she later stated that her daughter was "just not trying as if announcing a fact that could never be disproved" (Tan, 2006, p. 4).

David also has a quest but it is a personal quest. He has been involved in his hobby for over 15 years and acquired much personal renown especially as an entertainer. He is a minstrel and goes to great lengths to entertain the people. He has also made a name for himself as a woodworker - building period harps, furniture - and as an armorer. During this time, he has also achieved great skill in armored combat and displays the seven knightly

virtues. To date, however, his quest to be recognized as a knight has failed. He has not impressed those who have the authority to elevate him to that particular title. Unlike Mother, David has not come to terms with this failure. He is becoming bitter but continues to make himself miserable by working even harder to gain the needed approval. He is neglecting other portions of his life in an effort to resolve his failure.

This is most certainly not a case of life imitating art. It is not really a case of art imitating life either. Such a comparison does, however, point out how these two things are intimately related. It also calls to mind how at the end of the story, the daughter realizes that the two songs are halves of a whole. Perhaps David will ultimately realize he needs to be a knight in real life as well as in his hobby in order to be at peace with himself.