

Amy tan style analysis



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In Amy Tan's novel of conflicting cultures, *The Joy Luck Club*, the narrators contemplate their inability to relate from one culture to another. The novel is narrated by and follows the connected stories about conflicts between Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-raised daughters. Jing-mei, one of the daughters, has taken her mother's place in a weekly gathering her mother had organized called the Joy Luck Club, in which four women would gather to gamble together to help each other.

Through use of many different perspectives and concise diction, Tan reveals her theme of building bridges between cultures and generations and the revelation that tragedy shapes us. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan's deceptively simple yet dramatic style efficiently helps the reader to see the cohesion of family and tradition, along with the separations between the old Chinese customs and the new American ideas. Part of Tan's style is the organization of the novel, which has an effect on the message sent by the author.

Throughout the novel, ideas of the theme emerge through the organization method the author uses. *The Joy Luck Club* is divided into four sections that include four stories each. Each story has either a mother or a daughter who becomes the narrator. Before each story, the theme for the section is expressed via a vignette. Because accounts of the mothers and the daughters are placed close together, it is easier for the reader to notice similarities between the mothers and daughters based on how they express themselves.

For instance, in the story of Lindo's first marriage, she tries to think ways to "escape this marriage without breaking [her] promise to [her] family". (Tan

59). Lindo seems very independent and intelligent for her age. Similarly, her daughter, Waverly, seems to be adept in chess and she notices that her “ability to play chess [is] a gift... it [is] effortless... [she] [can] see things on the chessboard that other people [can] not” (Tan 187). Lindo and Waverly share a bond of aptitude. In this situation, the mother has had an influence on the daughter that is separate from culture and is universal: intelligence.

Though much of the novel focuses on the differences between the cultures, the organization allowed for subtle similarities like this to be noticed without aid. The melancholy tone of this novel was achieved through a blur of two languages and complex sentence structures and comparisons. In regards to her use of diction as part of her overall style, Tan uses broken English a mother is speaking, and English with fragments of Chinese for when the daughters are speaking. For instance, Mrs. Woo lectures her daughter saying, “ You never rise. Lazy to get up” and “ You just not trying.

This level of English allows Tan to reveal the mother’s prominent Chinese heritage. This also establishes her as someone from another country who has experience working endlessly to get to where she is now. The words of the daughters are English, punctuated by Chinese. Rose Hsu Jordan, one of the American raised daughters, complained that she had been “ feeling hulihudu” and that her life was “ heimongmong,”. These phrases translate to feeling puzzled and her life was full of fog. Her speech is a reflection of both her prevalent American mentality and her Asian roots.

She weaves in and out of the two languages in a desperate need to be both part of the present and connected to the past in order to find her identity.

Through her meticulously selected words, Amy Tan is able to demonstrate the difference between mother and daughter, as well as the problems with which they contend. In the parts of the novel where one of the women mediates on an event in her life, Tan almost always uses metaphysical conceits to compare something tangible to emotional matters, adding to the complexity and the appearance of their intelligence.

The sentence structure is also very elaborate in these cases as opposed to when they communicate with people. An example would be this sentence: “ I also beg[in] to cry again, that this [is] our fate, to live like two turtles seeing the watery world together from the bottom of the little pond,” (Tan 244) the complex structure of it gives the reader a sense of despair and pity, which adds to the distressing tone of the novel. In addition, the uses of imageries throughout the novel illustrate the melancholy tone.

Amy Tan’s works, *The Joy Luck Club*, “ *Second Nature*,” “ *Lost Sister*,” and “ *My Polish Grandma*,” all share a similar theme, the common factor being conflicts between cultures. All of her works incorporate Amy Tan’s unique carefully chosen words, telling sentence structures, and overall organization that create an equally unique style; a style that emphasizes the clash between generations and the ties that bring them together in order to reveal the theme.