

Book review on "who is irish"

[Sociology](#), [Immigration](#)



Gish Jen, the author of "Who is Irish" gives a recount narration of an elderly American citizen woman aged sixty-eight-years-old and of Chinese ethnicity. This immigrant struggles to cope with other cultures that are different from her own. Although the main character has spent her lifetime in the United States, she is still suspicious of other cultures and races. For instance, she is doubtful of her own son-in-law who is of Irish origin. There sinks into deeper suspicion to learn that her grandchild has opted with all conviction to uphold American values.

Due to her distrust of other cultures this woman finds it very difficult to believe the American way of disciplining. This conviction and distrust make her apply measures when nurturing her grandchild Sophie. Conflict emerges between the elderly woman and her own daughter later due to their choices of cultures. This conflict is evident when the main character's daughter learns that grandmother has been caning Sophie her daughter. Due to this misunderstanding in ways of upbringing she sends her mother away. Things get even worse when their relation and contact is not as it used to be. She directs Sophie not have any close contact with grandmother and also asks her never to pay her visit in her new abode. In this book, the author clearly depicts that sense of not belonging solely is in our perception. And it is this approach that matters to decide on the eventful life thereafter.

In this story, the audience is served with an immigrant Chinese grandmother. The author uses the protagonist in the narration to paint the varied differences in gaps of socialization, ethnicity gaps, age gaps, gaps in family interactions. The woman defines herself to be "fierce." Her identity changed since the times she lost her husband. She was also a committed woman who

alongside her husband successfully managed a bistro. She claims her own daughter is vicious as well through her undertaking. This quality is linked to her daughters' career in the bank where she is the bank's vice president. She is a determined woman because she harbors the thought of being the custodian of her grand child. This is evident in her struggle to instill her way of upbringing in the little innocent child of mixed cultures.

The immigrant woman disapproves of her son-in-law for the reason that he as well as his brothers is unemployed despite their American origin by birth and ethnicity. Gish Jen depicts the narrators' belief and conviction that considers the world to have turned upside down. Her belief fights the notion that her son-in-law is sitting idle at home yet considers himself devalued in case he babysits his own child. In her culture, it would be acceptable that her daughter take the responsibility to raise her child. The elderly woman also contemplates on reasons why her in law should not be a man. His dependency on others leading to support is an eye sore to her and her culture.

Things come out of hand when Sophie hides from her grand mother due to social challenges affecting her parents. Her parents notice her hiding in a foxhole in the field and misunderstand that to be a safety from her grandmother. To Sophie's parents, this definitely amounts to child molestation and is reason enough for grandmother to be sent away.

Needs and wants conflict in *Who is Irish* at the time the elderly woman's daughter is torn between sentiments of want to send her mother away and the need to keep her due social pressure of a depressed jobless husband and

a daughter who needs an extra hand and attention. On the other hand she has nobody to share her predicaments with. The narrative concludes with an interweaving of relations when the mother to John is residing with the immigrant woman. Irrespective of her earlier strained relations with the son to this woman, she finds her admirable and worthy of trust. The role of grandmother appears motivational as she plays the role of keeping this other woman.

Conclusion

This account carries generational divergence that is complicated by cultural difference. It portrays significantly on this strains in modern-day American life. The modern day world is made up of inter-marriage and other social relationship challenges that many societies face today. Another thing haunting the society today is the economic hardship for working mothers. Besides, family needs and time is also a major issue affecting career women and the society as a whole. Relationships in the family setting are strained, while aging and in-law disagreement, child care, and children's reactions are common and rife. In this book the unbiased author Gish Jen, in grandmother's voice, develops all the inclusive themes with humor and great literary skill. As it ends the audience is caught suspended on whether the resorts are the intended solutions.

Reference

The New Yorker Publisher Conde Nast Edition February 5, 1972

Alternate Source Who's Irish: Stories Alternate Publisher Knopf

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