

# The joy luck club



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The Joy Luck Club “ The elements were from my mother’s own vision of organic chemistry. Each person is made of five elements, she told me. Too much fire and you had a bad temper. That was like my father, whom my mother always criticized for his cigarette habit and who always shouted back that she should keep her thoughts to herself. I think he now feels guilty that he didn’t let my mother speak her mind. Too little wood and bent to quickly to listen to other people’s ideas, unable to stand on your own. This was like my Auntie An-Mei. Too much water and you flowed in too many directions,, like myself, for having started half a degree in biology, then half a degree in art, and then finishing neither when I went off to work for a small ad agency as a secretary, later becoming a copywriter. I used to dismiss her criticisms as just more for her Chinese superstitions, beliefs that conveniently fit the circumstances, in my twenties, while taking Introduction to Psychology; I tried to tell her why she shouldn’t criticize so much, why it didn’t lead to a healthy learning environment. ” “ The Joy Luck Club” by Amy Tan was four stories about four Asian-American women and their families. These women where all independent and adapting to their life in the United States of America. The excerpt was from the first section of the book, “ Feathers from a Thousand Li Away, ” where a daughter loses her mother and is mourning her loss. Tan has an interesting way of making the characters seem believable. Amy Tan uses different language to dynamically portray the background of the characters. In dialog, Tan ignores grammar and proper sentence structure keying in on her own writing style. For example, on page 19, “‘It’s no showoff’ she said the two soups were almost the same. ” Re-wording the grammar in the line highlights the mother’s heavy Chinese accent. Disregarding proper grammar is Tan’s way for giving the mother’s

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characters a sense of reality. June is the main character/narrator; her mother is very superstitious which is noticeable in the last paragraph of the excerpt.

“ I used to dismiss her criticisms as just more for her Chinese superstitions, beliefs that conveniently fit the circumstances, in my twenties, while taking Introduction to Psychology; I tried to tell her why she shouldn't criticize so much, why it didn't lead to a healthy learning environment. ” Her mother's superstitions were effecting the way she was or in this case, wasn't able to function, saying, “ It didn't lead to a healthy learning environment. ” Tan is showing a flaw with June's mother, which adds to the reality of the character.

Asian-American culture classically shows the people of this background to have ties to the original stories or thoughts of Chinese people, such as the five elements. In the excerpt, the elements are brought up. The elements of nature are a big influence in Asian culture; it helps to hold the balance of things. Three of the five elements are explained with the main character's experiences. Fire is the first element that is brought up. Fire represents destruction and uncontrollable in the Asian-American culture. The author tells the reader “ if you have too much fire, then you have a bad temper. ” As an example of having too much fire is how her parents would constantly fight, about small things such as cigarettes etc. Wood represents nature and trees, its thought that trees can adapt to their surrounding (grow around obstacles). June's mother said, “ If you had too much, you bent too quickly to listen to other people's ideas, unable to stand on your own. ” This could show that she wants her daughter to be as independent as she was. It was also a description of Mei's aunt, who always conformed to people's whim. In a way, it seems as if her mother didn't want her to take anyone else's advice or plans, too only make her own. The water elements is thought to be relaxed

and at ease. Water ‘ flowed in too many directions,’ which can represent someone “ stretching himself or herself too thin. ” June proved to do that in the third paragraph where she describes not being able to complete the college degrees that she had started. Amy Tan uses different length sentences to create a rhythm. Some of her sentences are telegraphic, which means having five words or less. “ They should encourage me instead, ” is an example from page 31 where June wished her family would encourage her more, instead of putting her down. Some of her sentences are long and wordy, such as the last paragraph of the excerpt, which is all one sentence. The elements in the excerpt are all metaphors by Tan, by using the metaphors; it makes it easier for the reader to understand the meaning behind element. Each of these elements was further explained by June giving reasoning that applied to her in her life. Tan describing how much June speaks of her mother developing her daughter’s character. June always speaks for her mom but never shows any resentment towards her although it seems that her mother is holding her back. There were also expectations of her once her mother died. For example, her father expected and wanted her to take her mother’s position at the Joy Luck Club. June had goals of her own, such as going to college to get a degree, but still couldn’t finish any of the degrees (possibly because of her mother). Tan describes in great detail, the life of the daughter through her mothers eyes. Her mother contributed a large amount of her growth. Some actions seemed harsh, but left a strong imprint on Mei. No matter what her mother did, Mei always showed respect, as shown through Asian culture.