

Half and half

Literature



Write a characterization of Rose Hsu, showing how her past as a young girl, her interactions with her mother and her marriage and life with her husband Ted have all influenced the woman she has become. Then discuss what Rose finally learns about herself and about how to approach life. Half and Half, by Amy Tan, traces the life and experiences of Rose Hsu Jordan, a Chinese woman who migrated to America along with her family consisting of her parents and six siblings. She has a troubled past, having lost her smallest brother, Bing, to an accident in which he drowned in the sea. She was the only one in her family to actually see her brother fall off the ridge, and was helpless and couldn't save him. After the accident, she also witnessed her mother's desperation to have her son back, and her undying faith in the Almighty. As the years progressed, she lived with the trauma, but the incident left an indelible mark on her personality. She married an American, Ted, who she was in love with, but couldn't sustain the marriage due to her personality flaws. The narrative opens with Rose telling her mother about her divorce with her husband Ted. At this point in the article, she comes across as an undecided and despondent person, having submitted herself to accept the tyrannies of fate, and having lost the confidence to map out her own destiny. It is a well known fact that the early experiences of one's life eventually end up shaping his/her individuality and spirit. Rose's case is no different and the various incidents she goes through in the process of growing up are the reasons for constructing her psyche in a particular manner. As mentioned earlier, we learn that Rose had a younger brother Bing, the youngest of all her siblings, who drowned in the sea when he was four years of age. While the whole family was engrossed in the stuff they were doing and couldn't notice Bing, Rose actually saw him going towards <https://assignbuster.com/half-and-half/>

the edge of the reef and falling off. However, she couldn't muster enough courage or presence of mind to save her brother, and this has left a deep scar in her heart. It is clear from the story that no one in the family blamed her, but from her thoughts one can gather that she still considers herself to be responsible for Bing's death. This tragedy makes Rose think that she is irresponsible and unable to handle people, or difficult situations. Further, when she accompanies her mother the next day in order to find Bing's body, she is left shocked and amazed by her mother's leap of faith. Her mother, in a state of delusion, hopes to bring her son back by praying to God and pleasing the demons. Although sure that her mother's trials would bear no fruit, Rose is left bitter after seeing her mother's condition, and this incident greatly reduces her faith in God, and makes her believe that things are beyond her control and she can do nothing to change them. She can't believe her mother for being so foolish as to think she could use faith to change fate (Tan 510). However, even after this mishap, her mother doesn't lose hope and Rose knows that when she will tell her about the divorce, her mother will say, "then you must save it" (Tan 20). This strength of character, even after being defeated is visible in Rose also; as although dejected, she is never desolate. As far as Rose's marriage is concerned, she was married to Ted, an American whom she falls in love with when she is in college. They marry against the will of their parents and live in a separate house, with Ted being the decision maker. She is always dependent on him for the smallest of decisions, and thus ends up losing all sense of judgment. The trouble in paradise crops up when Ted is sued for malpractice, and becomes defensive and cautious. He starts feeling the burden of being the sole decision maker in the house, and when he shares the burden with Rose, she is unable to

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handle it, being totally out of sorts. The main reason behind this being that she has always grown up thinking that she can't take the right decisions, and even if she does, she will be unable to change the course of things to come. Her brother's death makes her believe that maybe it was fate all along, that faith was just an illusion that you're in control (Tan 180). After having gone through all these varied instances in her life, Rose finally accepts that most of the misfortunes in her life took form because she let it happen (Tan 530). She was aware of the impending disasters and still did nothing to prevent them, playing a slave in the hands of fate, thus demeaning faith. She comes out to be a person who is rather submissive to fate, but also knows that fate is shaped half by expectation, half by inattention (Tan 530); meaning that people do have the ability to alter their fate to some extent, if they take the right steps. Moreover, having witnessed a fair share of tragedies, she also knows that faith is the best bet of a dejected man. When all is lost and mind loses confidence, a person just lets things happen, and although in such a way he leaves it up to fate, he is also simultaneously taking a big leap of faith, hoping that all will be well again. Thus, Rose Hsu ends up living her life as a wise woman who respects fate, and knows the importance of faith in turning tides.