

This guide was prepared using the Fawcett edition, © 1989. Other editions may differ.

SYNOPSIS

Section 1: Feathers From A Thousand Li Away

Chap. 1: Jing-mei Woo: *The Joy Luck Club*: After her mother's death, Jing-mei "June" Woo replaces her mother, Suyuan Woo, at the mah jong table of the Joy Luck Club, a group of California women her mother organized in 1949. As refugees of World War II, the Woos fled Japanese invaders. During four days on the road, she lost her twin babies in Kweilin. From Auntie Ying, June learns that her mother intended to look for them. The three older players give June \$1,200 to reunite the family.

Chap. 2: An-mei Hsu: *Scar*: Grandmother Popo scorns An-mei's mother, who dishonored her family by becoming the third wife of Wu Tsing. At age four, An-mei burns herself on hot soup and determines to survive to find her mother. When An-mei is nine, her mother returns and slices a piece of her arm to cook in soup meant to heal Popo.

Chap. 3: Lindo Jong: *The Red Candle*: A feudal betrothal links Lindo Jong at age two to Tyan-yu, her future husband. At twelve, she lives with the Huangs, her future in-laws. Four years later, as the Japanese threaten China, Lindo marries Tyan-yu, even though she doubts his maturity. Because he refuses to consummate the marriage, Lindo sleeps on the sofa. Her mother-in-law strips her of jewelry to balance the elements. To extricate herself from the Huang family, Lindo pretends to dream about her ancestors prophesying doom for Tyan-yu. She predicts that he will father a child with a servant who has imperial blood. The Huangs are delighted to mate their son with the servant. In exchange for a divorce, Lindo receives a ticket to Peking and money for passage to America.

Chap. 4: Ying-ying St. Clair: *The Moon Lady*: In 1918, four-year-old Ying-ying attends the Moon Festival and observes boys constricting the throat of a bird so it cannot swallow. As a woman guts and scales the fish, Ying-ying moves too close and gets blood on her clothing. When the moon rises, she tumbles into the water and is rescued by brigands. The peasants deposit her on the dock, where she interrupts the Moon Lady's masque. After the Moon Lady promises to grant a wish, Ying-ying rushes forward and realizes the lady is really a man. When her parents locate her, Ying-ying feels different from the child who fell into the water.

Section 2: The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates

Chap. 5: Waverly Jong: *Rules of the Game*: At a Christmas party at the First Chinese Baptist Church, Waverly and her brothers Vincent and Winston await as Santa Claus distributes used toys. She receives Lifesavers, and admires her brother's chess set. She masters the game, wins a national championship, and is featured in *Life* magazine. She becomes arrogant and rude to her mother by leaving home

without explanation. Lindo retaliates by serving dinner to everyone else and leaving a fish skeleton for Waverly, who suffers bad dreams and misgivings.

Chap. 6: Lena St. Clair: *The Voice from the Wall*: Lena recalls how her English-Irish father rescued Gu Ying-ying and changed her immigration papers to read Betty St. Clair, a displaced person and war bride. The family moves to California and settles in an Italian neighborhood, where people yell and threaten each other. When Lena is ten, her mother goes insane. Clifford fails to recognize the seriousness of his wife's mental state. Lena, who speaks both Chinese and English, realizes that her mother, who is pregnant, is mentally ill. Amid screams and curses in the night, Lena grows restive. Her mother gives birth to an anencephalic son who dies at birth.

Chap. 7: Rose Hsu Jordan: *Half and Half*: One of seven children, Rose contemplates how to explain her divorce to her mother. While working toward a liberal arts degree, Rose meets Ted Jordan, a pre-med student who becomes a dermatologist. He introduces Rose to his mother, who disapproves of interracial relationships. The couple marry and move to Ashbury Heights. Ted loses a lawsuit pressed by a patient he accidentally maimed. He blames Rose for being weak and demands a divorce. The trauma forces Rose to relive the drowning of her brother Bing at a family beach outing. She blames herself that Bing fell into the ocean. Rose's mother loses her faith in God and tries to locate Bing's body. Returning home empty-handed, she records "Bing Hsu" in the Bible.

Chap. 8: Jing-Mei Woo: *Two Kinds*: June's mother, who abandoned twin girls when she left China, tries to turn her American daughter into a great pianist. At a talent show, Waverly taunts June for humiliating her parents by playing terribly. June wishes that she had died like her mother's abandoned twins. Years later, Suyuan offers her the piano and insists that she has talent. After Suyuan's sudden death, June has the piano tuned and plays Schumann's "Pleading Child" and a companion piece, "Perfectly Contented." She realizes that the pieces are two halves of the same song.

Section 3: American Translation

Chap. 9: Lena St. Clair: *Rice Husband*: Lena, an Asian studies major, recalls her mother's ability to predict the future. Lena and her husband Harold remodel a barn into an upscale showplace. She helps him start a restaurant design firm, works as project coordinator, and gives him ideas, yet receives little credit and a low salary. As a basis for a good marriage, they balance duties and finances, but the arrangement becomes tedious. When Ying-ying visits, Harold and Lena quarrel over dividing expenditures for personal items. In Ying-ying's room, they hear a fancy marble table collapse.

Chap. 10: Waverly Jong: *Four Directions*: Waverly and her friend Marlene discuss Waverly's hesitation to tell her mother that she intends to marry Rich Shields. As Waverly

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

anticipates, Lindo fails to appreciate Waverly's lavish lifestyle and ostentatious fur coat. Waverly recalls her mother taking credit for the chess championship and retaliating by refusing to play. Later, she cannot recoup her former position as chess genius. To trick Lindo, Waverly dines at Suyuan's house. When Lindo learns that Rich loved Suyuan's cooking, she insists that Waverly bring a "friend" to dinner. He makes the classic gaffes and suggests that Lindo add soy sauce to her steamed pork and vegetables. As he leaves, he mispronounces the names of the host and hostess. Later, Lindo locates her daughter's weak spots and outmaneuvers her logic. Waverly and Rich decide to marry in the fall and consider taking Lindo with them on a Chinese honeymoon.

Chap. 11: Rose Hsu Jordan: *Without Wood*: Lena encourages Rose not to allow the divorce from Ted to debilitate her. Rose invites him to come for the divorce papers, which arrive with a check for \$10,000 clipped to them. She surprises him by insisting on keeping the house.

Chap. 12: Jing-Mei Woo: *Best Quality*: June helps her mother select eleven crabs for the Jongs on Chinese New Year. When the platter passes around the table, Suyuan refuses to eat a substandard crab. June tries to embarrass Waverly by needling her for payment for ad copy she wrote a month earlier for Waverly's company. Waverly claims that the work was inferior. Later, as June and Suyuan discuss Waverly's intense rivalry, Suyuan reminds her that she chose a defective crab at the market, a sign that she does not demand quality. Suyuan gives June a jade necklace and insists, "This is your life's importance." June keeps it for its symbolic value.

Section 4: Queen Mother of the Western Skies

Chap. 13: An-mei Hsu: *Magpies*: After the death of Grandmother Popo, An-mei accompanies her mother to Tientsin to the home of her husband, Wu Tsing. An-mei enjoys the comforts of her new home. Two weeks later, Wu Tsing takes a fourth concubine. One night, An-mei must leave her mother's bed so Wu Tsing can enter. An-mei learns how the second wife stole An-mei's little brother Syauidi. The maid, Yan Chang, tells An-mei how the second wife schemed to get her mother into Wu Tsing's bed. An-mei's mother commits suicide with an overdose of opium during the New Year celebration, a time when all debts must be paid. Wu Tsing, fearful of her ghost, takes An-mei and Syauidi to rear as though they were children of the first wife.

Chap. 14: Ying-Ying St. Clair: *Waiting Between the Trees*: Ying-ying visits Lena and stays in the oddly constructed guest room. Ying-ying recalls a first husband and his adulteries. Out of spite, Ying-ying aborted her infant boy. On her own after leaving her mother-in-law's house, Ying-ying marries Clifford St. Clair and moves to the United States. Ying-ying believes that she has lost spirit and doomed her daughter's marriage.

Chap. 15: Lindo Jong: *Double Face*: Waverly wants to take a second honeymoon in China. Lindo knows that natives will instantly recognize American traits because Chinese-American children never learn obedience, suppression of feelings, perseverance, and recognition of self-worth. At Mr. Rory's salon, Waverly patronizes Lindo as the hairdresser considers a makeover to conceal her mother's Chinese qualities. Lindo recalls how she met and married Tin Jong following one month's courtship.

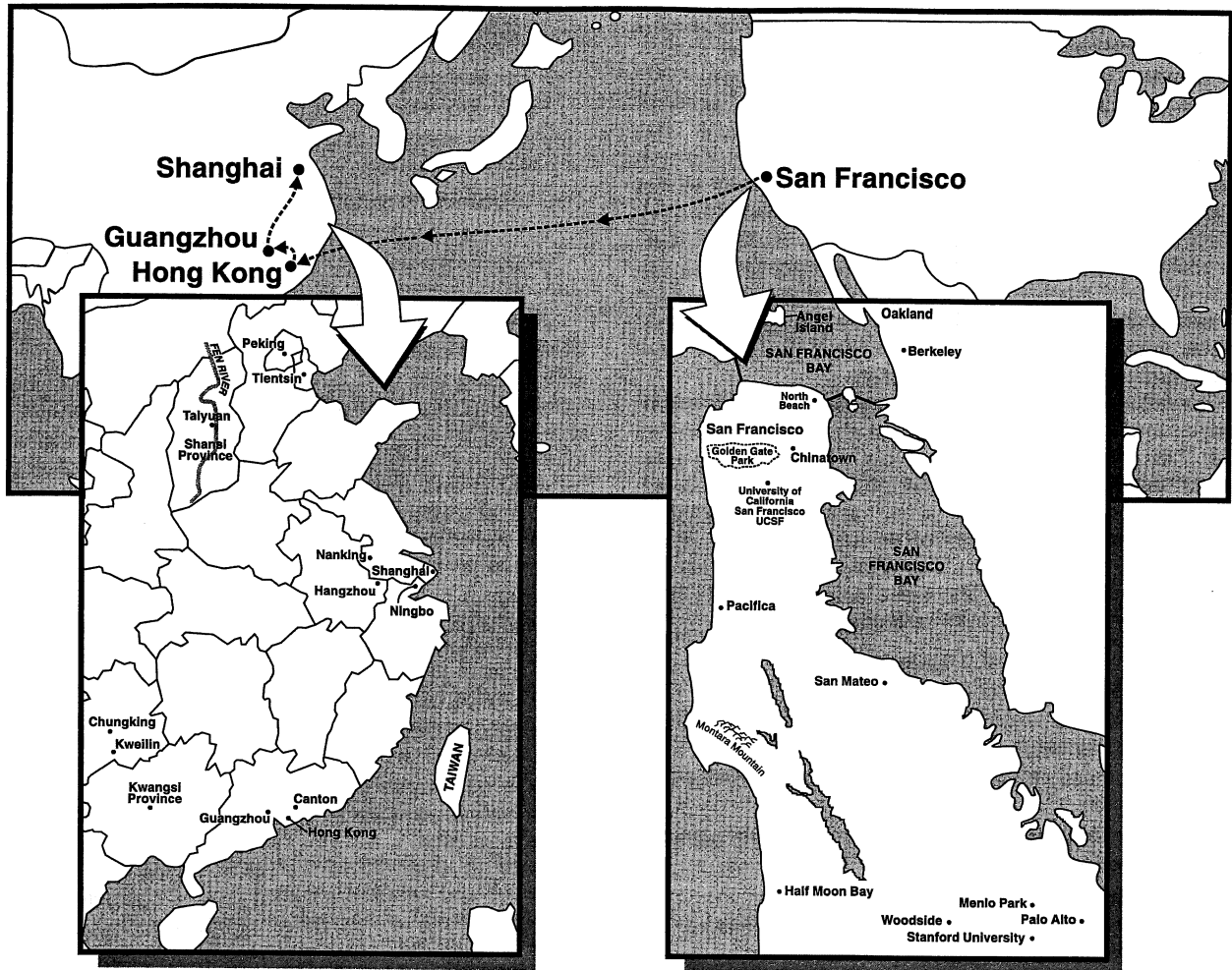
Chap. 16: Jing-Mei Woo: *A Pair of Tickets*: June travels to

China with her 72-year-old father, Canning Woo. They visit Kweilin for a reunion with the missing twins—Chwun Yu Wang and Chwun Hwa Wang. June and her father discuss how Suyuan gave up her babies because she was ill with dysentery and fleeing the Japanese. When Wang Fuchi, their father, died, Suyuan meets Canning Woo and, in 1949, moves to California. After her death, Lindo completes the search. June recognizes the girls immediately by their resemblance to their mother.

TIME LINE

- 1911** Revolutionaries throw the Manchus out of China.
- 1914** An-mei Hsu and Ying-ying St. Clair are born.
- ca. 1917** Canning Woo is born.
- 1918** Lindo Jong is born.
An-mei is burned on hot soup.
Ying-ying falls off a boat during a Chinese New Year celebration.
- 1920** Lindo is pledged to marry Huang Tyan-yu.
- 1923** Chinese Communists join the Kuomintang.
Grandmother Popo dies; An-mei's mother, who ran away to marry Wu Tsing, arrives to reclaim her daughter and take her to Tientsin.
- 1925** Chiang Kai-shek heads the Kuomintang.
- ca. 1926** Lindo meets her future husband for the first time.
- ca. 1930** Lindo Jong goes to live with the Huangs, her in-laws.
- 1932** Ying-ying leaves the Huangs' house and settles in Shanghai with her second cousin's family.
- 1934** The Long March begins.
The Japanese invade Shansi province.
Lindo Jong becomes the wife of Tyan-yu.
- 1937** The Japanese overrun Shanghai.
July 7 Japan attacks Peking.
November Japanese forces commit atrocities in Nanking.
- 1938** Japan controls north and central China.
- 1941** **Dec. 7** Japanese bombers attack Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
- 1942** Chennault leads his Flying Tigers into China's war against Japan.
Clifford St. Clair begins courting Ying-ying after her first husband's death.
- 1944** Japan launches a major offensive.
Suyuan flees Kweilin and abandons her twin infant girls. Her first husband is killed.
- 1945** Suyuan and Canning Woo search for the twins.
August The U. S. breaks Japan's hold on China; Japan surrenders.
- 1946** Communist leaders under Mao Tse-tung fight for control of China.
Ying-ying marries Clifford St. Clair.
- 1947** The Woos leave for Hong Kong.
- 1949** In January, Communist forces capture Peking.
China becomes the People's Republic of China.
Suyuan launches the Joy Luck Club.
The Woos move to the United States.
- 1951** June May Woo and Waverly Jong are born.
- 1952** Mei Han dies, leaving the twins in the care of Mei Ching, their adoptive mother.
- 1958** Waverly learns to play chess.
- 1960** Waverly becomes national chess champion.
- 1961** The St. Clairs move to an Italian neighborhood in San Francisco. Ying-ying gives birth to a stillborn

THE JOY LUCK CLUB



son.

Waverly stops playing chess.

1965 Waverly is defeated in a come-back tournament and abandons chess a second time.

1969 Waverly elopes with Marvin Chen.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A native of Oakland, California, Amy Tan has become a literary sensation amid a boom in multicultural and feminist literature. The middle child between two brothers, she was born February 19, 1952, to John Tan, an electrical engineer and minister, and Daisy Tu Ching Tan, a vocational nurse and hospital technician. Growing up in an immigrant family in San Francisco, Tan reports feeling out of place as though "I went down the wrong chute and ended up in a Chinese family." She and her strong-willed mother argued and suffered long periods of silence, which began to ease after Daisy's visit to China in 1978.

In her mid-teens, the deaths of her older brother and father from brain tumors caused Tan to rebel. To combat family dysfunction, Daisy took Amy and her younger brother to Montreux, Switzerland, where she graduated from high school. She enrolled at Linfield College, in McMinnville, Oregon, earning tuition with scholarships and a job at a pizzeria.

From pre-med, Tan changed to an English major. After

completing an M.A. in linguistics from San Jose State, she launched a doctorate at Berkeley in 1974, the year she married Lou DeMattei, a tax attorney. For five years, she was language consultant to programs for handicapped children, then spent three years writing, editing, and publishing her own journal, *Emergency Room Reports*. During this period, she learned that her mother, who had been married before emigrating from China, had borne three daughters, Amy's half-sisters.

Since 1983, Tan has freelanced, first as a technical writer, then novelist as a therapeutic escape from 90-hour work weeks. Beginning with short fiction at the Squaw Valley Community of Writers workshop, she followed feminist mentor Molly Giles's example to become a full-time writer. In four years, Tan produced two bestselling feminist novels, *The Joy Luck Club* and its more ambitious sequel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, a children's book, *The Moon Lady*, and *The Year of No Flood*, historical fiction set during the Boxer Rebellion, which is as yet unpublished. In 1995, she produced another bestselling novel, *The Hundred Secret Senses*. Short pieces appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, *McCall's*, *Threepenny Review*, and *Seventeen* as well as two anthologies, *State of the Language* and *Best American Essays*, 1991.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

CRITIC'S CORNER

As an antidote to emotional ills, Amy Tan turned to psychiatry, but found greater solace in writing. In a six-year period, she achieved a significant position in both feminist and multi-cultural literature, although she rejects the arbitrary labels of writer of women's fiction or Chinese-American novelist. Her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, grew out of a short story. A successful re-creation of oral storytelling, it remained on the bestseller list for nine months, earned a Commonwealth Club award, Bay Area Book Reviewers prize, and ALA best book for young adult award as well as nominations for National Book Critics Circle's best novel and for the *Los Angeles Times* best book of 1989. In 1993, Wayne Wang directed the cinema version, which was co-scripted by Amy Tan and Ron Bass, Oscar-winning author of *Rain Man*.

The Kitchen God's Wife, which duplicates the confessional style and situations of *The Joy Luck Club*, focuses on Daisy Tan, who lives outside San Jose, California, and who profited from the emotional release of expressing her story. The novel became an instant *cause célèbre* among Asian Americans by drawing attention to a racial group often neglected in popular fiction. *The Kitchen God's Wife* has reaped a nomination for a Bay Area Book Reviewers award and selection as *Booklist's* 1991 editor's choice.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To define oral tradition
2. To describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects of a failed marriage
3. To characterize lifestyles in China in the first half of the 20th century
4. To acknowledge the importance of achievement, autonomy, and self-esteem
5. To describe the gap between generations
6. To describe the role of superstition in Chinese culture
7. To contrast male and female roles in the novel
8. To explain important historical events, particularly Japan's invasion of China and the establishment of a Communist state
9. To discuss the value of marrying well as opposed to marrying for love
10. To narrate examples of parental, sexual, compassionate, and filial love
11. To study the conventions of courting, mourning, worshipping, and celebrating
12. To evaluate the title

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To outline growth and independence in Waverly, June, Lena, and Rose
2. To characterize the function of the Joy Luck Club
3. To account for the abandonment of Suyuan's infant girls
4. To contrast political and emotional war in the plot
5. To typify An-mei, Ying-ying, Suyuan, and Lindo as mothers
6. To note the coping mechanisms that help women tolerate feudal marriages
7. To account for June taking the eastern corner of the mah-jong table
8. To assess the purpose of suicide before the New Year celebration

9. To describe Tan's dependence on rhetorical devices, such as humor, aphorism, dialogue, pidgin English, digression, pun, and irony
10. To reweave in family order the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the plot
11. To list ways in which daughters mirror the character flaws of their mothers
12. To account for family strengths

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Amy Tan's writing, present the following terms and applications:

climax the height of an action, a crisis or turning point from which all behaviors or attitudes are permanently altered and nothing can ever be what it once was. June's understanding of her mother reaches its peak after she realizes the dire situation her mother faced during the Sino-Japanese War and her anguish over leaving twin infant girls for a stranger to find and raise. Facing a meeting with two girls who never knew their mother, June must resurrect her own memories to summarize for them their mother's love for them, her will to survive, and her ceaseless efforts to locate the girls.

motif a pattern or predictable arrangement of elements to express an abstract theme in a story, as found in the overlapping stories of parents and children. The concept of motherhood and the repeated images of mothers squabbling with daughters, particularly the enmity between Waverly, Rose, Lena, and June and their mothers, suggests natural difficulties that all parents face as well as the additional toll that immigration to America takes on women reared in the feudal Chinese tradition.

novel an extended work of prose fiction that is carefully controlled and features a varied cast of characters, clearly defined setting, an historical or social milieu, sustained action, a complicated plot, and usually one or more subplots. The elements in the definition of novel suit *The Joy Luck Club*, even though the narration divides actions into episodes that read like groups of short stories. Tan links themes and character reactions to the controlling images of mother and daughter and the impetus for the Joy Luck Club. By novel's end, it is clear that interconnected lives in four families produce an extended series of dramas that reveal the hardships of Chinese-American family life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The settings in *The Joy Luck Club* move between two continents, from Asia to North America and back. The stark war-torn landscapes of China and Japanese bombers threatening life contrast the emotion-torn inner landscapes of affluent families in California. Tan's emphasis on place allows readers to experience the hard decisions of Chinese women living in feudal Chinese households and submitting to humiliating marriages. In the United States, the women's daughters appear to profit from leisure, plenty, and opportunity to learn music, writing, cooking, decorating, and chess, yet, the second generation suffers parallel self-doubts and errors in judgment that doomed their mothers.

Peers in Tan's fiction live unusually disparate lives. Lindo Yong at age 12 takes up residence in a comfortable home where a traditional marriage to an immature husband and life with a vicious mother-in-law negate all the comforts her marriage promised. In contrast, Ying-ying attends a Moon Festi-

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

val with the naive expectations of a small girl and is jolted into reality by the boys' cruelty to a bird and by a close-up view of the Moon Lady, who is actually a man dressed as a woman. Within An-mei's story, her terror and pain after the burn from hot soup gives place to a new home, where lavish furnishings and servants assure comfort. Ironically, the intense misery of her svelte, chic mother precipitates shame, self-deprecation, and suicide from an overdose of opium, which ends the torment of low status and manipulation by the second wife. The unhappy marital situation parallels Lena St. Clair's modern house built on an unstable marriage and modern notions of architecture and decorating. Like the wobbly marble table, the marriage collapses from its initial faulty foundation.

The final segment, "A Pair of Tickets," is the novel's most compelling contrast in settings. At her home in California, June prepares to travel with her aged father on her first trip to China. Before she departs, Canning Woo corrects misconceptions about June's mother, who fled Japanese invaders with two infants. On a road crowded with refugees, Suyuan had no choice but to settle the babies at the roadside, to leave her mother and jewelry to pay for the infants' care, and to continue toward food and treatment for dysentery, which threatened her life. The episode concludes in the terminal, where June encounters the girls, now grown and grieving for their mother. The emotional reunion of sisters born on opposite sides of the Pacific overrides the crush of tourist traffic to focus on the three sisters searching for resemblance to their mother.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about Chinese Americans, motherhood, Chinese history and customs, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Books

- Lori M. Carlson, *American Eyes: New Asian-American Short Stories for Young Adults*
Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*
William Daley, *Chinese Americans*
William Dudley, ed., *Asian Americans (Opposing Viewpoints)*
Peggy Ferrera, *China (Cultures of the World)*
Maria Hong, ed., *Growing Up Asian American*
Bobbie Kalman, *China: The Culture, China: The Land, and China: The People*
Adeline Yen Mah, *Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter*
Carol Saline, *Mothers and Daughters*
Time-Life Eds., *Ancient China, China's Buried Kingdom, and Chinese Myth: Land of the Dragon*
Laurence Yep, *American Dragons: Twenty-five Asian American Voices*

Computer Software

- American Journey: The Asian-American Experience* (Primary Source Media)
Qin: The Tomb of the Middle Kingdom (Time-Warner)
War in the Pacific (FlagTower)

Internet

- "Biracial American Portraits,"
<www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/secret/portraits/3.html>
"Chinatown Walking Tour,"
<www.consumer-information.org/sftraveltour4.asp>

"Chinese-American Women in American Culture,"
<www.ics.uci.edu/~tdo/ea/chinese.html>

"Chinese History Timeline," <www-chaos.umd.edu/history/time_line.html>

"Chronology of the Japanese Invasion of Asia, 1894-1945,"
<www.edu.cn/history/www.arts.cuhk.hk/NanjingMassacre/NMchron.html>

"Crisis, Grief, and Healing," <www.webhealing.com>

"DISCovering Multicultural America,"
<galenet.gale.com:8888>

"Racially Mixed People in America,"
<www.sagepub.uk/books/details/b003595.html>

"Second Sino-Japanese War and Lugouqiao Incident, 1937,"
<www.hkabc.net/~phichan/jap6.htm>

Yu, May, "Just Me,"
<wrt.syr.edu/wrt/pub/intertext/111/you.html>

Videos

- China: Dynasties of Power (Lost Civilizations)* (Time-Life)
Chinatown: Immigrants in America (Video Out)
Chinese Americans (Multicultural Peoples of North America) (Chelsea House)
Farewell to Manzanar (Movies Unlimited)
The Good Earth
The Joy Luck Club

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* should include these aspects:

Themes

- war
- feudal marriage
- flight
- survival
- emigration
- family
- conflict
- misunderstandings
- failure
- loss
- friendship
- collaboration
- coming to knowledge
- reunion

Motifs

- rebelling against patriarchal marriage and family life
- asserting self-control over fear and doubt
- saying farewell to a native culture
- establishing lines of communication between cultures and generations
- righting old wrongs and resolving old griefs

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Section, chapter, and page numbers are provided so that you can reread the passage from which the item is taken.

1. The man who was my husband brought me and our two babies to Kweilin because he thought we would be safe. He was an officer with the Kuomintang, and after he put us down in a small room in a two-story house, he went off to the northwest, to Chungking. (Section 1, Chap. 1, p. 8)
(Suyuan's wartime crisis arises because her husband, a

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

- member of China's main political party, had to depart, leaving her and the twin girls behind in an unprotected residence that proved vulnerable to the Japanese invaders.)
2. In other cities already, a man could choose his own wife, with his parents' permission of course. But we were cut off from this type of new thought. (Section 1, Chap. 3, p. 45)
(Tan's irony is obvious in the minuscule liberalization of marriage customs in the city, where men chose their own wives only if their parents approved. This tiny reprieve from feudal marriage does nothing to assist women, who have no choice under either system.)
 3. In those days, you didn't do RSVP. It was not polite not to come. (Section 1, Chap. 3, p. 52)
*(Chinese customs concerning formal invitations lack the American use of the abbreviation for the French phrase *Repondez s'il vous plait* [Reply if you please] to indicate a need to know whether a guest will attend. In early twentieth-century China, hosts assumed everyone would attend because custom compelled each to appear.)*
 4. In 1918, the year that I was four, the Moon Festival arrived during an autumn in Wushi that was unusually hot, terribly hot. (Section 1, Chap. 4, p. 65)
(The Moon Festival, a mid-autumn celebration, falls on the 15th of the 8th lunar month. It is one of the most important traditional events for the Chinese. Its festivities include legends, family reunions, moon cakes, moon poems and songs, and romance. Lovers meet, watch the full moon, and toast their happiness.)
 5. We lived on Waverly Place, in a warm, clean, two-bedroom flat that sat above a small Chinese bakery specializing in steamed pastries and dim sum. (Section 2, Chap. 1, p. 90)
(The Chinese bakery downstairs sells small servings of steamed or fried dumplings, rice balls, and slivers of cooked chicken.)
 6. She stayed there for three weeks, until they could process her papers and determine whether she was a War Bride, a Displaced Person, a Student, or the wife of a Chinese-American citizen. (Section 2, Chap. 2, p. 107)
(The impersonal immigration service categorizes people according to the circumstances of their arrival on United States shores. Ying-ying's creative husband makes up information to help her through the tangle of red tape. June comments wittily, "My father proudly named her in her immigration papers: Betty St. Clair, crossing out her given name of Gu Ying-ying. And then he put down the wrong birth year, 1916 instead of 1914. So, with the sweep of a pen, my mother lost her name and became a Dragon instead of a Tiger." The last phrase means that he changes the annual animal sign under which she was born.)
 7. We didn't immediately pick the right kind of prodigy. At first my mother thought I could be a Chinese Shirley Temple. (Section 2, Chap. 4, p. 141)
(In the 1930s, cinema starlet Shirley Temple set the example of the darling of film. She was a coddled pacesetter who had her own house on a back lot in Hollywood. Talented in song, dance, acting, and repartee, she won the hearts of American moviegoers with her saucy wit and optimism. Girls born in the late 1920s and

early 1930s were influenced to imitate Shirley Temple and to study dance and music to assure them a chance at Hollywood stardom.)

8. I told him how he should do more avant-garde thematic restaurant design, to differentiate himself from the other firms. (Section 3, Chap. 1, p. 172)
(Lena advises her husband, Harold Livotny, to seek the heights of modernity in restaurant decor to set himself apart from others. Harold selfishly develops her innovative ideas, profits from them, but offers her only a small share of the praise and reward.)
9. "Rich said it was the best Chinese food he has ever tasted," I wrote. "And the next day, my mother called me, to invite me to a belated birthday dinner for my father. My brother Vincent was bringing his girlfriend, Lisa Lum. I could bring a friend, too. (Section 3, Chap. 2, p. 195)
(Tan's delicious ironies develop the protracted manipulation that enables daughters and mothers to carry on a lengthy war on which neither side wins. Waverly's assault at Lindo's vanity produces the social occasion she needs to introduce Rich, her fiance, to the family.)
10. That's the way Chinese mothers show they love their children, not through hugs and kisses but with stern offerings of steamed dumplings, duck's gizzards, and crab. (Section 3, Chap. 4, p. 227)
(June analyzes the indirect testament of love in her mother's choice of ingredients for a seafood dinner. Having grown up American, June recognizes that Chinese mothers lack the hands-on fondness of native-born Americans as demonstrations of love in preference to Chinese-style displays of cooking wizardry.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the novel.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Describe Suyuan's difficulty rearing a third daughter.
(Suyuan Woo maintains high standards for Jing-Mei, who is called June. Without explaining the circumstances of her abandonment of the twin girls born in China, Suyuan insists that June become a child prodigy. From television films of Shirley Temple, Suyuan takes June to beauty training school to get sausage curls and gives her the impression that she "would soon become perfect." June's inner voice warns that the makeovers threaten the real person, who may disappear for good.
At the kitchen table, Suyuan stuffs June with facts as though she could force-feed her mind. She recites trivia from magazines and makes her learn countries, states, and capitals. June stands on her head, tries to guess a certain playing card in the stack, and predicts temperatures in world cities. The harder Suyuan presses, the more determined June becomes to be herself. The struggle confuses and mystifies June, who has no inkling of her mother's sense of failure and betrayal of her two abandoned babies.
Into the heart of the novel, the tug of war continues between Suyuan and June. A performance on The Ed Sullivan Show inspires Suyuan to have June trained in music. Suyuan stresses that competence is a simple

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

matter of trying harder. Although she works as a domestic, Suyuan finds the money to reach her dream. After she books lessons with Mr. Chong and acquires a piano for practice, June wails, "Why don't you like me the way I am? I'm not a genius! I can't play the piano." The contretemps ends with Suyuan muttering in Chinese, "So ungrateful.")

2. How does Suyuan's Chinese New Year dinner bring out a long-standing rivalry between June and Waverly?

(At the celebration dinner of a holiday that ends the old and begins the new, Suyuan serves crab she meticulously selected from a dealer in Chinatown. June, who writes copy at a small ad agency, assists in the preparation for guests. Lindo and Tin Jong arrive with their children Vincent and Waverly. June and her mother observe Waverly selecting the best crabs from the platter for herself, her daughter, and her husband. June and Suyuan eat the last two crabs. June deliberately selects the lesser of the two, which is missing a leg.

The argument that mars the dinner arises from a compliment. Waverly lures June into the session of put-downs by admiring her haircut, then belittling "that guy on Howard Street," a gay hairdresser, in favor of the toney "Mr. Rory." June reacts to the sneaky insult, just as she recoils from Waverly's rude replies to tax questions. Intent on embarrassing Waverly, June announces that Price Waterhouse has not paid for ad copy and is thirty days late responding to the invoice. Canning Woo intervenes, but is too late to halt the confrontation.

June pursues the implication that Price Waterhouse is lax about paying bills and that Waverly ducks calls. Waverly, the former chess champ, lets June dig herself in deep, then quietly replies that the ad copy was substandard. The accusation appears to bear an element of truth. When June gets defensive about her work, Waverly continues to shy away from arguing, giving the impression that she is just being kind to June. At the right moment, Waverly concludes, "It's just not . . . sophisticated. I'm sure what you write for your other clients is wonderful. But we're a big firm." When Suyuan chimes in that a person can't learn style, June is doubly humiliated by Waverly and her own mother.)

3. Relate the ambition myth to the first section, "Feathers from a Thousand Li Away."

(Tan sets up a pattern of prefacing sections with folklore. The first four chapters follow a story of an old woman who buys a swan that is too beautiful to eat. The woman's ambitions apply to her daughter, whom she intends to be above snobbery and who will "speak only perfect American English." Immigration law denies the woman her treasured bird, but leaves her a swan feather to remember it by. The tedium of filling out forms makes the old woman forget her ambition. The dissolution of the old woman's hopes takes the form of a generation gap between herself and her American-born daughter.

The story suits the four initial stories of the four mother-daughter relationships that form the story. Just like the old woman, the graceful, fragile cultural memories that Chinese mothers bring from the old country fail to live up to their promise. In bitter reflection, the mothers realize that daughters brought up in the United States lack the background to understand the hardships

they survived to make the crossing. The end of the bittersweet story leaves the mothers with their symbolic swan feathers and no one to appreciate them.)

4. Explain how June's first night in the club turns into a self-revelatory assignment.

(After Suyuan Woo dies, June Woo becomes the first Chinese-American to play mah jong with the native-born Chinese women whom Suyuan formed in 1949. She replaces her mother only two months after Suyuan's sudden death from cerebral aneurysm, a silent killer that surprises and saddens the Woo family. The purpose of the club is solace for women who "had unspeakable tragedies they had left behind in China." Suyuan's personal tragedy becomes an after-dinner litany, which she darkens with each repetition while raveling yarn from ski sweaters her relatives sent from Vancouver. The act suggests a woman intent on making useful a useless garment.

At age thirty-six, June contrasts the other three players and their husbands, all in their sixties and seventies. The memory of Suyuan brings tears to June's eyes. The three players' brisk business concerning stock investment gives place to a buffet of Chinese take-out, then mah jong, with June in the east chair, "where things begin." After Ying-ying introduces the subject of the lost babies in China, she presents June \$1,200 and the assignment to go to Shanghai to fulfill Suyuan's wish to visit the girls.)

5. How does Rose complete her divorce?

(Rose, a shy, self-effacing woman, is ambivalent about taking her mother's advice. She announces that she and Ted are getting a divorce and seeks the aid of a psychiatrist. Her friend Lena advises that she get everything she can from Ted. After he sends divorce papers and an attached check for ten thousand dollars, Rose is stunned to see proof that her marriage is actually ending. In her mother's words, she was born without wood, a Chinese explanation of Rose's inability to think for herself.

The check becomes visible proof of a faulty mating. Rose concludes that "ten thousand dollars was nothing to him" and, by extension, "I was nothing to him." As she begins to see herself living without Ted, she pulls in impressions of her surroundings in their house—the sunny breakfast room, a south view from the parlor, and Ted's herb and flower garden, now run to weeds. She ruefully admits, "When a husband stops paying attention to the garden, he's thinking of pulling up roots." Still unable to act for herself, she reschedules an appointment with her psychiatrist and refuses to see her mother. A brisk phone call from Ted jars Rose from depression. He complains that she no longer answers the phone and hasn't cashed the check or signed and returned the divorce papers. Businesslike, he informs her he wants the papers completed and he wants to end their relationship by reclaiming the house so he can remarry. By the time he appears after work, Rose has reframed her self-image. With considerable aplomb, she announces, "I'm staying here." The power of the words feeds her wounded ego and renews her energy.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. What clues to interpretation does Tan give in the section and chapter headings?

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

(Tan opens her novel with a section about past lives in China. Drawing on the opening ambition story, she assembles the first four chapters under "Feathers from a Thousand Li Away." The wisps of memory from the mothers, identified as distant feathers, are the events that shaped their lives and influenced their motherhood, as defined by An-mei's scar from hot soup, the red candle that prophesies Lindo's failed marriage, the moon lady whom Ying-ying realizes is really a man, and the Joy Luck Club, Suyuan's New World compensation for harsh times in the old country. More complex is the introduction of unruly daughters and troubled mother/daughter relationships. Under the heading "The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates," Tan again refers to oral lore, a morality tale about a girl who maligns and disobeys her mother, who adamantly instructs her from a book of consequences written in Chinese. The daughters live out their own trials by ignoring the rules of the game, coping with an insane mother, allowing a little brother to drown, and foiling a mother's attempt to turn an ordinary daughter into a musical prodigy.)

Midway in the novel, Tan refers to behaviors as "American Translation," the difficult passage of power from mothers to grown daughters who begin to learn from their own mistakes and faulty judgment. Lena marries Harold Livotny, who devalues her; Waverly tries to make a success of a second marriage; June recognizes that she devalues herself. The interpretive story that explains the author's point of view is a mirror trick that reflects the mother's future happiness as a grandmother. The multiple disappointments and misjudgments come full circle in the final story of "Queen Mother of the Western Skies," the ebullient female spirit reborn in a giggling granddaughter. The nameless child prefigures June Woo's arrival in Shanghai to meet her long-lost twin sisters, Chwun Yu and Chwun Hwa. All three girls reflect their debt to their mother)

7. What strengths does Tan stress in the eight women who form the primary cast of characters?

(The interweaving of four sets of mothers and daughters provides Tan's fiction with a satisfying statement about womanly strengths. The four mothers live well in California, but never divest themselves of the miseries of their youth in China. An-mei copes with the suicide of her beautiful mother, who shamed herself by becoming a concubine and losing control of her son; Lindo marries an imbecilic boy-man to whom she was betrothed in infancy; Ying-ying also married inadvisedly and worked as a shop girl before finding Clifford St. Clair, a patient suitor who waits four years to marry her; the most pathetic of the four, Suyuan, was forced to make the best choice possible for her twin infants during a flight from war and sickness. The four mothers produce four daughters, each blessed with better choices and healthier, more promising lives.)

The crux of Tan's four pairs is the influence of the mothers during personal crises of their children. Three daughters—Waverly, Lena, and Rose—face crumbling marriages. June, the first to lose her mother, has no husband at all. In the maturing years, each girl makes peace with her mother and gains some strength to compensate for innate weaknesses. The subconscious nature of

these transfers emerges in June's belief that she doesn't know enough about Suyuan to relate to the twin daughters. Tan implies that the face-to-face relationship of mother and daughter overrides conscious awareness and presses into the fiber of their character the traits that become their mothers' legacy.)

8. What does the gift of \$1,200 do for June?

(The surprise gift of travel money and information about two grown sisters in Shanghai alters the pairing on which the plot moves and grows. Stymied forever from knowing her mother, June is the first to experience the death of a parent and the first to replace her mother at the Joy Luck Club mah jong table. As though seizing her mother's place and fate, June is hesitant to travel to China for the first time and to carry the burden of introducing the twins to the mother they will never meet.)

The alteration in June's thinking occurs late in the story, in the final hours before her departure for the airport. Canning Woo gently conveys the horror that Suyuan lived as her body fought dysentery and her mind struggled with the meager choices for the twins, whom she carried in a sling down a road crowded with refugees. Through the night, June wrestles with a new perspective on her mother and arrives at the airport exhausted. As the plane lifts off, June asks herself, "How can I describe to them in my broken Chinese about our mother's life? Where should I begin?"

To Tan, June's questions become everywoman's attempt to summarize and characterize the inherited and learned traits from their mothers. The mystic reunion of strangers reduces them to babbling childhood and brings out the only word suitable to their first moments together: "Mama, Mama," we all murmur, as if she is among us." As though gazing in a mirror, June acknowledges, "I also see what part of me is Chinese." As though laughing at a private joke, she adds, "It is so obvious.")

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Account for Amy Tan's decision to write this novel.

(Dedicated to Amy Tan's mother, Daisy Tan, this first novel is a blend of character testimonials forming a double square—four mothers and four daughters. The overall effect of multiple overlays represents *feng shui*, the Chinese term for balance or harmony, an outgrowth of years of misunderstandings, family power struggles, and discounted and hurt feelings. As the Chinese-American generation takes its place in California society, ties with the old world shift and blur, but the underlying character traits remain alive, fed by memories passed on from mother to daughter. The novel opens with the epigraph, "You asked me once what I would remember." The line implies that Amy Tan is using fiction as a method of remembering her own maturing years and the difficulties her mother faced in rearing a hip, wise-mouthed Chinese-American rebel. Tan closes the novel on a silent trio of daughters watching a Polaroid picture materialize before them. As a unit, the three look like Suyuan in their delight at seeing a fractured family take shape on a small square of paper.)

10. How does illusion influence the novel?

(The contrast of reality and illusion influences each of the mother/daughter pairs. At age four, Ying-ying loses her innocence on a magic festival night when she press-

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

es close to the Moon Lady to make a wish and realizes that the Moon Lady is not only flesh and blood, but is not even female. The significance of the Moon Lady echoes through the other mothers' memories: An-mei learns from bitter experience that a widow may not find the honor and love she enjoyed in a first marriage; Lindo recognizes the flaws in feudal marriage after she honors a family betrothal and weds a silly, willful boy; Suyuan, the least fortunate of the four, realizes that the best intentions to safeguard a family have little effect on a nation torn by war.

Illusions and reality form the continued trials for the four daughters. Lena marries well, but lives in misery in a house her husband Harold has remodeled from a barn. The illusion of chic, upscale living crumbles during Ying-ying's visit as abruptly as the marble table gives way with a crash in the guest room. Waverly, the willful girl genius, toys with her reputation as a chess champion, then learns that giving up her skill to spite her mother turns inward and robs Waverly of the ability to perform in public. The illusion of power remains strong in Waverly and influences her relationship with the hapless June, whom she debases for writing inadequate ad copy for Waverly's firm, Price Waterhouse. For Rose, the illusion of a suitable marriage gives way when Ted, her unfaithful husband, tires of Rose's accommodating personality. Only in self-willed strength does Rose learn to be a whole person.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Compose the text of a television documentary on Chinese-American families who arrived in California after World War II and rebuilt their lives in an unfamiliar culture.
12. Suggest a memorial to honor Suyuan Woo and her difficult choice to abandon her infants, for example, a mother's day out program in Chinatown or a home for abandoned infants.
13. Read William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*. Compare Sophie's wartime choices with those of Suyuan. Determine how the convergent horrors of World War II condemn both to a life of regret.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Create a bulletin board contrasting these settings: Wu Tsing's three-storied home, Grandmother Popo's dining room where An-mei is burned on hot soup, Lindo's quarters with the Huang family, the dock where the Moon Lady performs, the Christmas party at the First Chinese Baptist Church, the hospital room where Ying-ying gives birth to a stillborn son, the cave where the Muslim couple raise the twins, Mr. Rory's salon, and a tournament match won by Waverly, Bing's fall from the reef, the piano recital, Harold's architectural firm, Lindo asleep on her sofa, adjoining rooms in the hotel, Suyuan's hospital room, the airport meeting of June and her twin sisters, and Lena's room opposite the screaming Italians.
2. Using desktop publishing or other media, design a business card for Rose or a jade necklace, an obituary for Bing, a welcome sign for Canning Woo, a map of significant tourist sites in China, a placard naming Mr. Rory's prices, a chart of figures describing emigration from

China to other parts of the world during the 1940s, visitation rules for a California maternity ward, and a newspaper headline and article on Waverly's chess championship or the piano recital.

3. Draw a book jacket or poster stressing a colorful scene from the novel, such as watching fireworks as the duck catches fish, searching for Bing's body, purchasing crabs for the New Year feast, departing from Grandmother Popo's house by train, the first meeting of the Joy Luck Club, Ying-ying's job as a shopgirl, and Christmas at the First Chinese Baptist Church.

Cinema

1. View the films *The Color Purple*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Scarlett*, *The House of the Spirits*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Farewell to Manzanar*, and *Places in the Heart*. Discuss why women like Rose, Waverly, June, and Lena and female characters from the films demand opportunities to actualize talents and aspirations and to make their own mistakes.
2. Determine how a film director would create setting, atmosphere, mood, tone, theme, and characters for the war scenes. Name current actors who would play the parts. List scenes requiring special effects, particularly bombardment and flight of terrified refugees from Kweilin.

Drama and Speech

1. Write several conversations which are only implied, such as June's description of Suyuan to her twin sisters. Act out your dialogue for an audio or video taping.
2. Draw a storyboard or cartoon cells for a movie version of *The Joy Luck Club*. Show the Moon Lady's performance, departure from China, arrival at a comfortable Chinese hotel, the bombing of Chungking, and An-mei's mother's boarding of a steamer. Make a list of appropriate lighting, costumes, background, music, and properties.
3. Role-play the arrival of June and Canning Woo in China. Stress the difference between Canning Woo's reunion with his aunt and June's discovery of two sisters.

Education and Music

1. Describe in a short speech the difficulties in learning English as a second language. Cite examples of confusion, especially the attempt of bakery workers to comprehend sayings to be placed in fortune cookies.
2. List the traits of a successful chess player, particularly logic and strategy. Name other games that teach these traits. Contrast the traits of a successful pianist.

History and Social Studies

1. With a group, list and explain important historical and cultural terms such as Tao, displaced person, teahouse, pagoda, kowtow, and mah-jong.
2. Compose a first person account of life in China during the bombing of Kweilin and Chungking. Explain why a sick mother would abandon infants at a roadside. Account for Suyuan's attempts to locate her children. Discuss why Amy Tan's fiction is a fitting tribute to the privations and courage of women who survived World War II.
3. Discuss with a group the necessity for mutual respect in American-style marriage and family life. Explain how Ted and Harold violate basic principles that undergird a

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

healthy marriage. Contrast the courtship methods of Tyan-yu, Clifford St. Clair, Tin Jong, Rich Shields, and Wu Tsing. How do these potential husbands manipulate power, privilege, and prestige over their wives?

- Using incidents from the book, determine how refugees and other victims of war cope with rootlessness, money problems, medical emergencies, community unrest, uncertainty, rumor, separation from family, danger, abandonment, and deaths of loved ones.
- Compose an extended definition of family. Determine the difference between family relations among the Woos, Hsus, St. Clairs, and Jongs and the support system provided by the Joy Luck Club to all four nuclear families. How does Wu Tsing's family fail to fit the paradigm?
- Explain briefly the psychological and economic advantage of the Joy Luck Club. Why is it well named? Why do the women discuss investments? What social strengths does it offer its members? How does Suyuan's death alter the generational structure?
- Lead a debate concerning prenuptial agreements. How can such an arrangement both strengthen and undermine a relationship? In what ways do prenuptial agreements reflect similar motives in feudal marriages?
- Compile current census figures concerning immigrants to the United States. Highlight a map with graphs and data indicating what parts of the nation contain the highest concentrations of Asian Americans. Note the contributions of Asian Americans to the arts, sciences, government, medicine, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing.

Language Arts

- Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character, such as Rich Shields, Vincent, or Yan Chang.
- Compose an informal essay on the dangers of manipulative behavior. Why do characters often suffer from dishonest or deceptive behavior?
- Describe aloud the change that takes place in mother-daughter relationships as the Chinese-American daughters react to old world regulations and expectations. Account for the author's lack of concern with the role of the father in establishing behaviors for their daughters.
- Contrast the types of affection and acceptance offered to the abandoned twin daughters, An-mei's mother, Canning Woo, Wu Tsing's first and fourth concubines, Shoshana, members of the First Chinese Baptist Church, war brides, Syaui, Tyan-yu's wife, Grandmother Popo, Rich Shields, and survivors of Suyuan Woo. Discuss with a small group what unloved or outcaste characters do to earn the respect and affection of others.
- Create a list of images from the novel that appeal to the five senses, such as "If you grabbed the pancake too soon, you would burn your fingers on the hot, wet dough."
- Listen to recordings of famous woman-to-woman scenes in literature, for example Clara's acceptance of her daughter's lover in *The House of the Spirits*, Juliet's marriage arrangements in *Romeo and Juliet*, Maya's acceptance of discipline from both grandmother and mother in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Laura's attempts to express fear and individuality to Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*, Frankie Addams's arguments with

Bernice in *The Member of the Wedding*, Hester's scolding of Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*, and Tacey's insistence on a more dignified name in *Jubilee*.

- Organize a discussion of oral tradition. Explain why writers and historians value war stories, aphorisms, idioms, superstitions, customs, celebrations, nature lore, gossip, melodrama, folk songs, and myths as indicators of human themes. Cite examples of folkways from your area either in the past or present.
- Draw a family tree for the Jongs, Hsus, St. Clairs, and Woos. Label each with as many dates as you can deduce from information about births, marriages, and deaths. Use genealogy software if possible.

Psychology and Mental Health

- Compose a short speech in which you describe how Chinese-American girls learn to empathize with their mothers' privations in feudal marriages and during World War II. Explain how abandonment, denigration, gossip, physical abuse, longing, spite, loss of children, war, betrayal, and isolation affect human relationships.
- Explain to a small group how survival techniques help women like An-mei, Lindo, Ying-ying, and Suyuan face the deaths and abortions of children, family disunity, public humiliation, feudal marriage, powerlessness, fears for their American children, bilingualism, and disappointment. Discuss why other characters, such as Wu Tsing, Popo, Harold, Ted, Shoshana, and Tyan-yu, fail to earn the reader's admiration.
- Apply three Greek terms to the novel: *philos* or belonging to or acceptance by a group or family, *eros* or passion, and *agape* or unconditional love and acceptance. Discuss how failure to achieve any of these three states produces tension and despair, as demonstrated by Tyan-yu's interest in the servant girl, Clifford St. Clair's interest in Ying-ying, Suyuan's longing for her twin daughters, and June's acceptance at the east corner of the mah-jong table.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Make Venn diagrams of opposite personalities in the novel. Stress mismatched husbands and wives, childhood rivals, social enemies, and mothers who misunderstand their daughters.
- Make an oral report on the importance of self-esteem. Discuss ways in which Suyuan copes with child abandonment, An-mei's mother tolerates the loss of Syaui, Rich embarrasses himself before Tin and Lindo, June takes the eastern corner at the Joy Luck Club, Rose compensates her mother for the death of Bing, and Waverly belittles June's ad copy.
- Divide the class into small groups to summarize in outline form the background elements of the story, particularly China's war with Japan, feudal marriage, Buddhism, Taoism, the Kuomintang, mass emigration from China to America, war brides, Sun Yat-sen, Chinese New Year, Chinese astrology, and post-World War II treatment of displaced persons.
- Compose a character sketch emphasizing the relationship between sex roles and self-esteem in Yan Chang, Wu Tsing's second wife, Grandmother Popo, Betty St. Clair, Suyuan's twins, and Waverly as winner of the national chess championship. Discuss differences

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

between Chinese daughters and women of the upper classes, working women, outcasts, mothers-in-law, young wives, and servants and concubines.

5. Make a time line of the rise of multicultural writers in the latter portion of the 20th century.
6. Explain in a theme how the author characterizes moments of despair, gaiety, self-evaluation, romance, fear, distrust, loneliness, determination, confession, grief, defiance, exuberance, logic, guilt, and insecurity. List scenes in which these emotions motivate direct action, such as the gift of the jade necklace, An-mei's mother's carefully plotted suicide, Ying-ying's fall into the water, An-mei's burn, the matchmaker's role in Lindo's wedding, June's anticipation of a meeting with her sisters, or An-mei's departure from her mother's bed to that of Yan Chang.
7. Discuss your response toward the strain on Clifford St. Clair's household after the death of his infant son. Explain why Ying-ying searches for balance by moving furniture. Characterize Lena's role as interpreter for her mother and friend to Teresa Sorci.
8. Draw a character web representing the interconnectedness between strong female characters. Include the four main pairs of mothers and daughters as well as Canning's aunt, the twins, Yan Chang, Wu Tsing's second wife, Marlene, Shoshana, Grandmother Popo, Huang Taitai, and the Moon Lady.
9. Compose a short segment in which you become a peripheral character in the novel. Consider taking the role of shopkeeper, member of the First Chinese Baptist Church congregation, nurse at the hospital where refugees are treated for dysentery, attendant to Wu Tsing's first wife, immigration authority, seller of fresh crabs, client in June's office, pilot of commercial flights from China to Hawaii and California, and police officer investigating the drowning of Bing Hsu.
10. Read aloud other descriptions of Asian family and community life, such as John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of mother-daughter understanding arising from years of difficulties and hurt feelings.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate how Chinese-American children differ from native-born Chinese parents.
3. Compose a scene in which June introduces her sisters to her California friends.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each, including Ying-ying's vanity, Waverly's arrogance, Harold's pickiness, Lindo's connivance, Ted's disloyalty, and Popo's hard-heartedness.
5. Account for the popularity of a novel about a minority people and culture.

OTHER WORKS BY AMY TAN

The Chinese Siamese Cat (1994)
The Hundred Secret Senses (1995)
The Kitchen God's Wife (1991)

The Moon Lady (1992)

RELATED READING

Isabel Allende, *The House of the Spirits*
Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth*
Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*
Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*
Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes*
Ben Fong-Torres, *Rice Room*
Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster*
Robert Harling, *Steel Magnolias*
Beth Henley, *Crimes of the Heart*
John Hersey, *Hiroshima*
James Houston and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar*
Ji-Li Jiang, *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
Gus Lee, *China Boy*
Sylvia Lopez-Medina, *Cantora*
Larry McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove*
Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
Marsha Norman, *'night Mother*
O.E. Rolvaag, *Giants in the Earth*
Victor Villasenor, *Rain of Gold*
Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*
Laurence Yep, *Child of the Owl*, *Dragonwings*, and *The Star Fisher*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Amy Tan," <www.mountmedia.de/verlage/bertlgrp/wlg96/autor04.html>
"Amy Tan Argues Against Ethnic Literary Label," <kwaziwai.cc.columbia.edu/cu/record/record2004.19.html>
Baker, John F., "Fresh Voices, New Audiences," *Publishers Weekly*, Aug. 9, 1993, pp. 32-34.
Benjamin, Susan J., "Recommended Fiction of the 1980s: The Joy Luck Club," *English Journal*, October 1990, p. 82.
Chambers, Veronica, "Surprised by Joy," *Premiere*, October 1993, pp. 80-84.
Chua, C. L., "Review," *Magill's Literary Annual*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Salem Press, 1992.
Contemporary Authors. Volume 136. Detroit: Gale, 1993.
Current Biography. Volume 53. February 1992, p. 55.
Do, Thuan Thi, "Chinese-American Women in American Culture," <www.ics.uci.edu/~tdo/ea/chinese.html>, 1992.
Feldman, Gayle, "Spring's Five Fictional Encounters of the Chinese American Kind," *Publishers Weekly*, Feb. 8, 1991, pp. 25-27.
"A Fiery Mother-Daughter Relationship," *USA Today*, Oct. 5, 1993, p. D12.
Gates, David, "The Joy Luck Club," *Newsweek*, April 17, 1989, p. 68.
"Ghost Writer," <www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/12.14.95/tan-9550.html>
Goodavage, Maria, "The Joy Luck Club Is Born from Her Life of Hardship," *USA Today*, Oct. 5, 1993, p. 12D.
"Hall of Arts: Amy Tan," <www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tan0bio-1>
Hansen, Janet, et al, "Selected from 'The Joy Luck Club,'" *Library Journal*, Sept. 1, 1992, p. 142.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

TEACHER'S NOTES

- Haskell, Molly, "Movie of the Month: 'The Joy Luck Club,'" *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1993, 54.
- Hubbard, Kim, "The Joy Luck Club Has Brought Writer Amy Tan a Bit of Both," *People Weekly*, April 10, 1989, p. 149.
- Iyer, Pico, "Review," *Time*, June 3, 1991, p. 67.
- Jokinen, Anniina, "Anniina's Amy Tan Page,"
<www.luminarium.org/contemporary/amytan>, 1998.
- "Joy Luck Club' Home Page,"
<www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~sbowen/314fall/novels/>.
- Law-Yone, Wendy, "Review," *Washington Post Book World*, June 16, 1991, pp. 1-2.
- Liu, Ping, "Chinese-American Women in the United States,"
<www.ics.uci.edu/~tdo/ea/chineseWomen.html>, 1997.
- Marbella, Jean, "Amy Tan: Luck But Not Joy," *Baltimore Sun*, June 30, 1991, n. p.
- Maslin, Janet, "Intimate Generational Lessons, Available to All," *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1993, p. C15.
- Mathews, Laura, "Books: 'Joy Luck Club,'" *Glamour*, September 1992, p. 226.
- Maynard, Joyce, "The Joy Luck Club," *Mademoiselle*, July 1989, p. 70.
- Merina, Anita, "Joy, Luck, and Literature," *NEA Today*, October 1991.
- . "Meet Amy Tan," *NEA Today*, October 1991, p. 9.
- Needham, Nancy R., "By Their First Lines You Shall Know Them," *NEA Today*, May 1993, p. 27.
- "The Salon Interview: Amy Tan,"
<www.salon1999.com/12nov1995/feature/tan.htm>
- Schleier, Curt, "The Joy Luck Lady,"
<detnews.com/menu/stories/23098.htm>
- Seipp, Elizabeth Ann, "Amy Tan's 'The Language of Discretion,'" <www.wsu.edu:8080/~garnsey/oralreports/Tan.html>, 1995.
- Shapiro, Laura, "From China, with Love," *Newsweek*, June 24, 1991, pp. 63-64.
- Simpson, Janice C., "Fresh Voices Above the Noisy Din," *Time*, June 3, 1991, pp. 66-67.
- "Tan Welcomes the Unusual,"
<www.pub.umich.edu/daily/1995/12-05-95/Arts/amytan.html>.
- Tavernise, Pete, "Mother Tradition and Sacred Systems in 'The Joy Luck Club,'" <www.duke.edu/~ptavern/Pete.Tan.html>
- Taylor, Joan Chatfield, "Cosmo Talks to Amy Tan," *Cosmopolitan*, November 1989, pp. 178-180.
- "Voices from the Gap: Amy Tan,"
<www-engl.cla.umn.edu/lkd/vfg/Authors/AmyTan>.
- Young, Pamela, "Mother with a Past," *Maclean's*, July 15, 1991, p. 47.
- Zinsser, John, "Audio Reviews—*The Kitchen God's Wife* Written and Read by Amy Tan," *Publishers Weekly*, June 7, 1991, p. 44.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

VOCABULARY TEST

Fill in each blank in the sentences that follow with an appropriate synonym for the boldfaced word from the list below. Place your answer in the blank provided. You will have answers left over when you finish:

amah	Caucasian	curio	hampers	renovated
anorexic	cerebral aneurysm	endgame	lament	pomegranate
apathetic	cluster	ethnicity	lethargy	shelling
balm	concessions	façade	paranoid	stucco
benefactors	consulate	fissures	penance	vehemence
blisters	coordination	flung	posed	wantonness

1. The doctor said she died of a **brain hemorrhage** _____.
2. Like most of the other Chinese children who played in the back alleys of restaurants and **souvenir** _____ shops, I didn't think we were poor.
3. Maybe I'm being **suspicious** _____, being a mother, but you just can't be too safe these days.
4. Let's go to the **embassy** _____ and ask for papers for your brother.
5. "What's that stinky smell?" I asked my **nanny** _____, who always managed to appear next to my bed the instant I was awake.
6. Mama was telling my aunt and the old ladies how to mix various herbs and insects to produce a **salve** _____.
7. The servants were seated in a **group** _____ at the front, heating water for tea, **opening** _____ roasted ginkgo nuts, and emptying out **containers** _____ of food for a noon-day meal of cold dishes.
8. "My fate and my **atonement** _____," she began to **regret** _____, pulling her long fingers through her hair.
9. "**Thrown** _____ from this earth by my own **lust** _____!" she cried just as her husband dashed back home.
10. A **white** _____ man with a big camera once **arranged** _____ me and my playmates in front of the restaurant.
11. My mother graciously thanked the unknown **donor** _____, saying, "Too good. Cost too much."
12. My parents made many **sacrifices** _____ to allow me to practice.
13. It had a **modified** _____ **front** _____, a recent layer of white **plaster** _____ topped with connected rows of metal fire-escape ladders.
14. Their faces were covered with every kind of misery I could imagine: pits and **pustules** _____, cracks and bumps, and **gaps** _____ that I was sure erupted with the same **intensity** _____ as snails writhing in a bed of salt.
15. Problems this year were first noticed when the boy developed motor **adjustment** _____ problems and mental **languor** _____ which increased until he fell into a coma.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Fill-In (30 points)

Supply a term to complete each of the following statements. Choose your answers from the list that follows. Place them in the blanks provided at left. You will have answers left over when you finish.

barn	George	landlady	Popo	Ted
Canning	Harold	Lindo	restaurant	Teresa
chessboard	inner tube	Mei-mei	ring	\$1,200
Clifford	jaguar	Mr. Chong	Rose	twin
crab	Joy Luck Club	Mr. Rory	Schumann	Yan Chang

1. June must relate Suyuan's death to her _____ daughters.
2. The four mah jong players ignore disapproval of the frivolity of the _____ during hard times in China.
3. Waves shred the _____ that Rose tosses to locate her brother.
4. For four years, _____ courts Ying-ying.
5. _____ poses beside his aunt and other relatives as June snaps a Polaroid picture.
6. Santa Claus brings Life Savers for Waverly and a _____ for Vincent and Winston.
7. The two pieces by _____ seem like halves of the same song.
8. An-Mei observes how the boy places a _____ on the duck's neck to keep it from swallowing.
9. The members of the club award June _____ to complete her mother's greatest wish.
10. Lindo is embarrassed to be scrutinized at _____'s salon.
11. _____ lacks Lena's inventive ideas for restaurant decor and theme menus.
12. An-Mei's mother cooks a piece of her flesh in soup for Grandmother _____.
13. An-mei must leave her bed and sleep with _____ when Wu Tsing interrupts.
14. Lindo makes up a nightmare about _____ to terrify her mother-in-law.
15. Ying-ying doubts that a renovated _____ is a suitable residence for her daughter.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- ___ 1. At the First Chinese Baptist Church, Lena receives Lifesavers from Santa Claus.
- ___ 2. Ying-ying's amah saves her from the fall into the water.
- ___ 3. Waverly contends that Price Waterhouse is reluctant to pay June for inferior ad copy.
- ___ 4. Suyuan contends that Waverly moves sideways like a crab.
- ___ 5. At the hospital, Clifford depends on his daughter to translate his wife's wishes.
- ___ 6. Ying-ying aborts a child to spite her adulterous husband.
- ___ 7. Grandmother Popo relents and lets An-mei visit her mother.
- ___ 8. Shoshana is not happy with her mother's intent to marry Rich.
- ___ 9. Winston and Vincent help search the reef for Bing's body.
- ___ 10. George presides over the Joy Luck Club.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name or place from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| ___ 1. area from which refugees flee | A. Suyuan |
| ___ 2. cross-dresser | B. Kweilin |
| ___ 3. Ying-ying's new name | C. church |
| ___ 4. reviled landlady | D. Arnold |
| ___ 5. dermatologist | E. Harold |
| ___ 6. keeper of a refrigerator list | F. Ted |
| ___ 7. dies of measles | G. San Francisco |
| ___ 8. city where Ying-ying's apartment is being rewired | H. Moon Lady |
| ___ 9. deaf piano teacher | I. Mr. Chong |
| ___ 10. place where Hsus, Jongs, St. Clairs, and Woos meet | J. Betty |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Waverly develops enough courage to defy her mother.
2. Describe feudal marriage customs in China.
3. Discuss evidence that Suyuan did her best to be a good mother.
4. Compare events that show both the wealth and squalor of China.
5. Account for the rivalry between Waverly and June.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match the following quotations with names of speakers from the list below.

- | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|-----------|
| A. Yan Chang | C. Rose | E. June | G. Canning | I. George |
| B. June | D. Huang Taitai | F. Mrs. Jordan | H. Lindo | J. Suyuan |

- _____ 1. I think it's nice that you and Ted are having such a lot of fun together. So I hope you won't misunderstand what I have to say.
- _____ 2. What a shame! No one to greet you! Second wife, the others, gone to Peking to visit her relatives.
- _____ 3. He slept in his bed, I slept on my sofa.
- _____ 4. So we decided to hold parties and pretend each week had become the new year.
- _____ 5. Hello . . . My name is Jing-mei.
- _____ 6. Suyuan didn't tell me she was trying all these years to find her daughters.
- _____ 7. If you refuse to sleep with my son, I refuse to feed you or clothe you.
- _____ 8. We bought a hundred shares of Smith International at seven.
- _____ 9. I was a copy editor. I worked for a small ad agency.
- _____ 10. My older sisters had dated only Chinese boys from church before getting married.

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Explain how it is significant in the lives of the novel's characters.

1. What gift does Suyuan give her daughter?
2. How does Teresa reenter her apartment?
3. Where does Bing follow his father?
4. How does Suyuan carry the twins from Kweilin?
5. Which of Wu Tsing's concubines commits suicide?
6. What job does Waverly hold at Price Waterhouse?
7. What item of furniture breaks during Ying-ying's visit?
8. Who hesitates to tell Lindo about Rich?
9. What disaster does the matchmaker commit?
10. Who tells June about Suyuan's painful choice to abandon the twins?
11. To whom does First Wife implore for a healthy child?
12. Whose first husband dies in the war?
13. What kills An-mei's mother?
14. Who invests in Subaru?
15. Who translates Ying-ying's comments about her stillborn son?

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

1. Ted's loss of (his job, citizenship, a malpractice lawsuit, interest in his wife's career) leads to divorce.
2. Waverly tricks Lindo by (dining with Suyuan, killing the tenants' cat, refusing to play the Schumann piece on the piano, traveling to China on a second honeymoon).
3. Rich embarrasses himself by (drinking wine, rejecting duck gizzards, allowing his wife to suggest restaurant designs, laughing at freckles).
4. Ted obviously intends to (adopt Shoshana, restore the garden, buy a house with marbleized walls, drive the Jaguar to Ying-ying's house).
5. The arrangement at Waverly's house indicates that (Rich is messy, she makes enough money to splurge on a fur coat, a man lives with her, the Joy Luck Club is celebrating Chinese New Year).
6. June accepts (a Polaroid camera, money from the twins, a crab that has lost a leg, the east position).
7. The journey to Tientsin (takes seven days, requires a wheelbarrow, separates Ying-ying from Clifford, reunites Canning with his great-aunt and her family).
8. An-mei's mother expects to receive (the Moon Lady's granting of a wish, a house of her own, Grandmother Popo's inheritance, relief from the flood that endangers her family).
9. Lindo declares that (Waverly should take her time in developing ad copy, the lost girl fell into the water, the servant girl has imperial connections, she met Tin at a dysentery ward in the hospital).
10. The bakers of fortune cookies (do not understand the sayings, lose their jobs because they burn their hands, prefer to work for the telephone company, leave after Japan overruns Kweilin).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare Suyuan's strengths with those of Wu Tsing's second wife, Grandmother Popo, Teresa, and Yan Chang.
2. Discuss why Chinese immigrants must adapt to hard times.
3. Discuss the pairing of joy and luck.
4. Contrast a failed feudal marriage with Rose's divorce.
5. Summarize the relationship of each mother-daughter pair.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. cerebral aneurysm | 9. Flung, wantonness |
| 2. curio | 10. Caucasian, posed |
| 3. paranoid | 11. benefactor |
| 4. consulate | 12. concessions |
| 5. amah | 13. renovated, façade, stucco |
| 6. balm | 14. fissures, blisters, |
| 7. cluster, shelling, hampers | vehemence |
| 8. penance, lament | 15. coordination, lethargy |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Sentence Completion (30 points)

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. twin | 6. chessboard | 11. Harold |
| 2. Joy Luck Club | 7. Schumann | 12. Popo |
| 3. inner tube | 8. ring | 13. Yan Chang |
| 4. Clifford | 9. \$1,200 | 14. ancestors |
| 5. Canning | 10. Mr. Rory | 15. barn |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. E |
| 2. H | 7. D |
| 3. J | 8. G |
| 4. A | 9. I |
| 5. F | 10. C |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. G |
| 2. A | 7. D |
| 3. H | 8. I |
| 4. J | 9. E |
| 5. B | 10. C |

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. jade pendant | 9. lets the candle go out |
| 2. fire escape | 10. Canning |
| 3. reef | 11. Buddha |
| 4. sling | 12. Suyuan |
| 5. third | 13. opium |
| 6. tax attorney | 14. Joy Luck Club |
| 7. table | 15. Lena |
| 8. Waverly | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. a malpractice lawsuit
2. dining with Suyuan
3. drinking wine
4. restore the garden
5. a man lives with her
6. the east position
7. takes seven days
8. a house of her own
9. servant has imperial connections
10. do not understand the sayings

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

TEACHER'S NOTES



THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY

PERMA-BOUND BOOKS • 617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
E-mail: books@perma-bound.com

PERMA-BOUND CANADA • Box 517, Station A • Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811
E-mail: perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca

VISIT OUR WEB SITE: <http://www.perma-bound.com>