



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Joy Luck Club

based on the book by

Amy Tan

Written by

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A great deal of information is available about Amy Tan's personal and professional lives. Perhaps this is because her writing is clearly so overlaid with biography and autobiography. It might also be because her stories have so touched the hearts of her readers. And it might be because her enormous literary popularity coincides with the tremendous growth of the internet as a means of instant communication. Information about her seems to have popped up daily on many different web sites.

A quick search of the internet, the local bookstore, or the neighborhood library should turn up much solid information about this most interesting Chinese American writer. What follows here is some basic information about the author and her work.

Amy Tan's first novel, **The Joy Luck Club**, originally to be titled **Wind and Water**, was published in 1989. Technically neither a novel nor a short story collection, **The Joy Luck Club** is instead a series of interrelated stories for and about mothers and their daughters. There are sixteen stories in all told in groups of four: six are told by mothers and the remaining ten are told by their daughters.

The order of the stories is interesting: The first group begins with one story told by a daughter followed by three told by mothers. All of the eight stories in the second and third groups are related by daughters. Then the fourth and final group reverses the order of the first group: the first three stories are told by mothers and the last story is told by a daughter.

Tan's language is very easy to understand. She speaks in a clear, direct voice that makes her story telling compelling. Although some of the stories seem fairly simplistic, some contain enough metaphor and allusion to require a second or possibly a third reading. And because all of them deal with deep, meaningful emotions and complicated psychological relationships, several are very moving.

**The Joy Luck Club** has been translated into many different languages. It was a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1989. It received the 1990 Bay Area Reviewers Award for Fiction. For months **The Joy Luck Club** was on **The New York Times** bestseller list, and the rights to the paperback edition were sold for over one million dollars. The book has also been made into a film for which Amy Tan helped to write the screen play.

Her second important work was **The Kitchen God's Wife**, published in 1991. Her most recent publication was **The Hundred Secret Senses** in 1996. She has also published two children's picture books, **The Moon Lady** and **The Chinese Siamese Cat**.

Amy Tan was born on February 19, 1952, in Oakland, California. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay area, moving frequently from one place to another as her father, a Baptist minister, accepted new ministries. After graduating from high school in Montreux, Switzerland, Tan attended a few different colleges. Ultimately she received a bachelor's degree from San Jose

State University in 1973 and was awarded a master's degree in linguistics from the same university in 1974.

For over twenty years, Tan has been married to Louis DeMattei. They have homes in the Presidio Heights section of San Francisco and in New York City.

Amy Tan's father was John Yueh-han, who worked for the U.S. Information Service prior to coming to the United States in the late 1940's. Educated as an electrical engineer and a minister, Tan's father was born in Wuhan, China.

Tan's mother, Daisy Ching (born Tu Ching) was married once before, in China, for twelve years, to a man who abused her. Daisy Ching had three other daughters and lost track of them after the Communists took over in China. Because it was then illegal for a woman to leave her husband, Daisy Ching spent some months in prison in China when her former marriage and circumstances were revealed.

Daisy Ching met John Yueh-han during the 1940's in China. He came to the United States ahead of his wife and worked diligently to have her join him in this country. Following her prison term, she immigrated to America in 1949.

The year 1967 was an incredibly difficult one for Amy Tan and her family. First her older brother, Peter, and then their father, was diagnosed with malignant brain tumors and died within six months of each other. That same year, Amy Tan's mother was also diagnosed with a brain tumor, but fortunately hers was benign.

Following the deaths of her husband and son, Daisy Ching saw fit to take her daughter and remaining son to Europe. While there, Amy and her brother attended school in Switzerland. Whereas Tan had always been the only non-Caucasian student in her schools in America, in Switzerland, she was one of a large group of children from other countries. She finished her high school studies in Europe.

Amy Tan's professional life is often said to have started when authorities closed her local library. At age eight Tan wrote an essay entitled, "What the Library Means to Me," which was published in **The Press Democrat** in Santa Rosa, California. The essay extolled the benefits of the public library system.

Although Tan worked at a variety of jobs, such as bartender, switchboard operator, pizza maker, and counselor for developmentally disabled children, her writing career really started when she began working as a business writer. At first she worked for different companies; then she became a free lance writer. Her biggest drawback as a free lance writer was that she took on so many projects that she often was working 60-80 hours a week just to keep ahead.

In 1985 she had a short story published in **Seventeen** magazine. The story was noticed by a book agent who asked her to write an outline for a book. That book was **The Joy Luck Club**, reportedly written by Tan in four months, and published by Putnam.

Amy Tan's mother and other female family members have been a great inspiration for Tan's writing. Through the years, though, Tan's rebelliousness and life choices often placed her at odds with her mother. Like many of the daughters in **The Joy Luck Club**, Amy Tan was a rebellious person who, in her youth, preferred not to be Chinese but to be entirely American.

It was not until she was thirty-five years old, visited China, and met her half-sisters there that Tan developed a real appreciation for her Chinese roots. During the intervening years, two of her half-sisters have relocated to the United States.

As Amy Tan matured, so did her relationship with her mother. Once when Daisy Ching was ill, she reportedly asked her daughter what she would remember of her mother. Amy Tan's dedication of **The Joy Luck Club** speaks simply but eloquently to that question:

*To my mother  
and the memory of her mother*

*You asked me once  
what I would remember.*

*This, and much more.*

Note: Much information is available about Amy Tan. One book that might be especially useful and enjoyable in middle and high school classrooms is one of the People To Know books: **Amy Tan Author of The Joy Luck Club**

by Barbara Kramer

Enslow Publishers, Inc., Springfield, N.J., 07081

## INTRODUCTION

This unit plan is designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, reasoning, and language skills as well as their imagination and sense of discovery. It meets these goals through a series of exercises, assignments, and activities related to **The Joy Luck Club** by Amy Tan. The plan includes twenty-five pre-planned daily lessons based on the book's sixteen stories as well as extra resource materials created to facilitate the teaching and learning of Tan's book.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to some information about China to establish a framework for their reading about Chinese mothers and daughters over a span of years. Be sure to explain the lesson's purpose to students and encourage them to keep the new information in mind as they read **The Joy Luck Club**.

Because the **reading assignments** are based on the individual stories in **The Joy Luck Club**, they vary in length from *Scar* with nineteen pages to *Magpies* with thirty-three. The average reading assignment comes out to nearly twenty pages. Given the general complexity of the stories, we believe that they must be read and discussed individually.

The **study questions**-both short answer and multiple choice-are fact based. Students can find the answers to the 144 questions right in the text. We advise using the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students and using the multiple choice version for occasional or regular quizzes. Answer keys are available for all of the questions. If your school has the appropriate machinery, you might like to make transparencies of your answer keys for use with an overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in their understanding of the stories. Along with each reading assignment, have students complete a two-part worksheet on words from the upcoming section of the text they are reading. There are 119 separate words.

Part I focuses on students' use of their general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are to write down what they think the words mean based on usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by asking students to match the words to their correct dictionary definitions. By the time students have finished a reading assignment and concurrently done the vocabulary work, they should have a thorough understanding of each of the words.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers to each of the short answer questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete extra discussion questions, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words studied.

In this unit plan, daily lessons twenty-one and twenty-two are devoted to **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response. They employ a variety of thinking skills and add to the students' understanding of **The Joy Luck Club**. These questions may be used as either individual or group activities, but group work will better aid the students. Using the information they have acquired so far through individual work and class discussions, students can get together to further examine the text and to brainstorm ideas relating to the book's ideas, themes, and characters.

There is also opportunity for students to gain experience in **oral presentations** in reading, in role playing, and in acting like one of the characters. An Oral Reading Evaluation form is provided for evaluating the reading.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit plan. The first is to express personal opinions: students have an opportunity to think about and to present their personal views of some family relationships. This assignment helps students to think about the kind of intricate relationships presented in **The Joy Luck Club**. The second assignment is to inform: students are encouraged to think about a game they enjoy playing, like several of the characters play mahjong in the book. Students need to think through the game they choose and to inform others how to play it. The third assignment gives students a chance to write to persuade: writing from the standpoint of one of the "aunties" in the book, students try to persuade one of the daughters to take a different view of her own mother. The students learn to think about how to present one of the mothers favorably and have their attention drawn to Amy Tan's technique of presenting characters in a variety of different lights and from a variety of different points of view.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction assignment**. Students are required to read a piece of nonfiction related in some way to **The Joy Luck Club**. After reading their nonfiction pieces, students fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinion. Students are given a wide range of possible topics for the nonfiction assignment and should be encouraged to write on something of particular interest to them.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. You are given a choice of activities or games to use. All serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit tests** give you an opportunity to test students' acquired knowledge using short answer questions, multiple choice, vocabulary, and essay. For your convenience, two tests are available for short answer and two for multiple choice. An advanced test is also available should you choose to use it. Answers are provided for all questions on the short answer, multiple choice, and vocabulary tests. Approaches to answers are suggested even for the essay tests.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **extra activities packet** gives suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. A list of **bulletin board ideas** gives you suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** which might enhance the unit or serve as a substitution for an exercise that you might feel is less appropriate for your class.

**Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in your classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.



## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *The Joy Luck Club*

1. Through reading Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, students will gain a better understanding of some important ideas presented in the book, such as Chinese customs and superstitions, learn some difficulties and joys associated with mother/daughter relationships, see how the generation gap can sometimes make communication between people difficult, to understand the four mothers and four daughters better through a series of sixteen stories told from various points of view .
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will have the opportunity to express their personal opinions on the aforementioned themes.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Joy Luck Club*.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas  
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
  - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - d. To encourage logical thinking
  - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *The Joy Luck Club*

Date Assigned	RA #	Reading Assignment (Chapters)	Completion Date
	1	The Joy Luck Club Scar	
	2	The Red Candle	
	3	The Moon Lady	
	4	Rules of the Game The Voice from the Wall	
	5	Half and Half	
	6	Two Kinds	
	7	Rice Husband	
	8	Four Directions	
	9	Without Wood	
	10	Best Quality	
	11	Magpies	
	12	Waiting Between the Trees Double Face	
	13	A Pair of Tickets	

UNIT OUTLINE - *The Joy Luck Club*

<b>1</b> Introduction	<b>2</b> PVR RA#1  PVR RA#2	<b>3</b> ?s RA 1&2  PVR RA#3	<b>4</b> ?s RA 3 Writing Assignment #1  PVR RA#4	<b>5</b> ? RA #4  PVR RA#5
<b>6</b> ?s RA 5  PVR RA#6	<b>7</b> ?s RA 6  Nonfiction Assignment	<b>8</b> Writing Assignment #2  PVR RA#7	<b>9</b> ?s RA 7  Role Play  PVR RA#8	<b>10</b> ?s RA 8  PVR RA#9
<b>11</b> ?s RA 9  Chess	<b>12</b>   PVR RA#10	<b>13</b> ?s RA 10  PVR RA#11	<b>14</b> ?s RA 11  Nonfiction  PVR RA#12	<b>15</b> ?s RA #12  Character Study  PVR RA#13
<b>16</b> ?s RA13  Writing Assignment #3	<b>17</b>   Vocabulary Review	<b>18</b>   Discussion Preparation	<b>19</b>   Discussion	<b>20</b>   Unit Review
<b>20</b>   Unit Test				

Key: P = Preview Study Questions    V = Vocabulary Work    R = Read

## LESSON ONE

### Objective

To introduce **The Joy Luck Club** unit by giving students background information about China

### Activity

One good way to introduce this unit is to have someone who is of Chinese heritage or someone who has visited China come and talk with your class about their own personal experiences. Photos, souvenirs, slides, videos, etc. would certainly add interest to the presentation.

If no one who has been to China is available, then check with a local travel agency to see if anyone there knows enough about China to make a presentation to your class. Any brochures, travel films, maps or other visual aids would be good additions to the agent's presentation.

It would probably be helpful to the presenter to have some information ahead of time about The Joy Luck Club. You might try pulling just a few incidents out of the book for the presenter.

Finally, if there is no one who can give a "live" presentation to your class, check out one of many different available videos about China. Look for ones that have information about Chinese history and culture as well as information about China today.

Have the presentation or show the film. Allow ample time for students' questions and some discussion. If you have a presenter, it might be nice to also serve Chinese tea and perhaps some fortune cookies if these kinds of activities are allowed in your school. If you have a presenter, be sure to have your students write a thank-you note to the presenter.

## LESSON TWO

### Objectives

1. To distribute the books and other materials students will need for this unit
2. To preview the study questions, do the vocabulary worksheets and read Reading Assignments 1 and 2

### Activity #1

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should preview the study guide questions before each reading assignment to get a feeling for important events and ideas in that section. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *The Joy Luck Club*

### PROMPT

The Joy Luck Club is essentially the story of four mothers and four daughters and their lives and relationships. Your assignment is to stop and think about your relationship with your own mother, stepmother, grandmother or other motherly-type person in your life and to write a composition in which you describe your relationship with that person.

### PREWRITING

Think about this person and your relationship with her. Write down three words that describe your relationship. Under each word, give several examples of ways it is shown in your relationship. For example, if you say your relationship with this person is “close,” you should tell some things you do together that show your close relationship - every Saturday you go shopping together; you share your personal thoughts with her, you try to do extra things for her to help out. The idea is to give specific examples for each word you choose.

### DRAFTING

Write an introductory paragraph telling who the person is you are writing about. Tell a little about her and lead up to stating a sentence describing your relationship with that person, including all three of the descriptive words you chose in the pre-writing section above.

In the body of your composition, write one paragraph about each of the three words you chose. Within each paragraph, give the specific examples of things that show or exemplify that quality or description.

Write a concluding paragraph with your final thoughts or wishes for the future regarding your relationship with your person.

### PEER CONFERENCE/REVISING

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.