



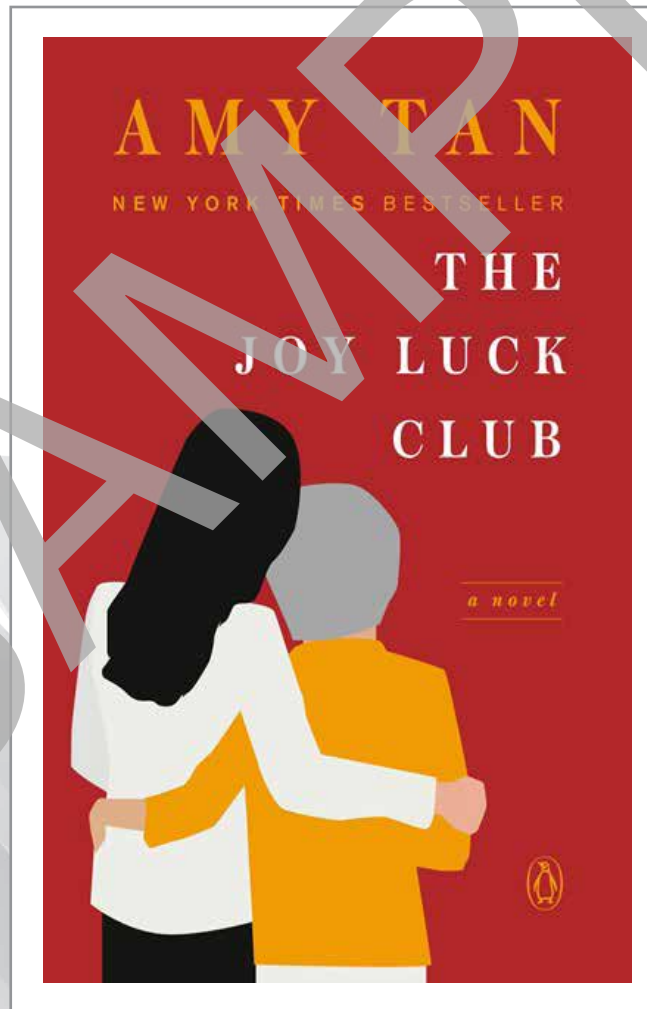
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# The Joy Luck Club

Amy Tan



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Joy Luck Club

Amy Tan

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Summary

*The Joy Luck Club* is actually a story collection—a four-part set of sixteen interlocking stories about four Chinese-American daughters and their four native-born mothers. The four older women are friends—members of the “Joy Luck Club”—a group of mah jong players that has been meeting in San Francisco since 1949. The tales, each told in the first-person, reveal the loving—but tension-fraught—relationships of mothers and daughters who grew up in different cultures.

## About the Author

Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California, in 1952 to John Tan (1914-1968) and Daisy Tan (1916-). She has a brother, a half-brother, and three half-sisters; another brother died at age 17, the year before the death of her father. She graduated from high school in Switzerland (Montreux, 1969) and went on to earn her B. A. and her master’s degree in Linguistics from San José State University.

She has worked at a variety of jobs, including: switchboard operator, A&W carhop, Round Table bartender and pizza maker, Language Development Consultant to programs for developmentally-disabled children, copywriter for a medical education newsletter, and freelance business writer specializing in telecommunications.

*The Joy Luck Club* was her first published book (1989) and has been made into a major motion picture (1994) in which she makes a cameo appearance. She has been married since 1974 to Lou DeMattei and currently lives in San Francisco with her husband, her cat, Sagwa, and her dog, Mr. Zo. They have no children.

Her contact address is that of her agent: Sandra Dijkstra, 1155 Camino del Mar, Del Mar, CA 92014.

Other books by Amy Tan:

*The Kitchen God’s Wife*

*The Hundred Secret Senses*

*The Moon Lady* and *The Chinese Siamese Cat*—children’s books

## Vocabulary Activities

(Note: Also see the reproducibles in the student packet for this title.)

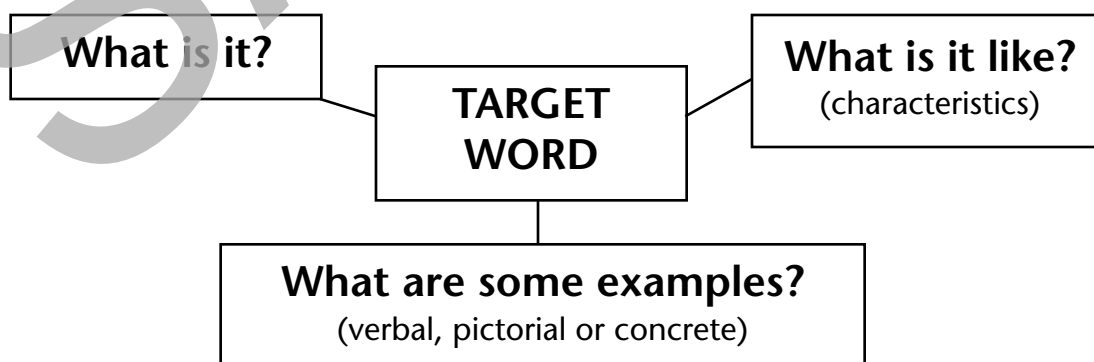
1. Introduce students to the vocabulary words found in this guide's vocabulary lists. Before students read a particular section of the book, pronounce the selected vocabulary words for that section. As students read the story, have them fill out a chart like the following. After reading the word in context, they should predict the definition and discuss the context clues they used to arrive at their guesses. Finally, they should jot down the dictionary definition that fits the way the word is used in the book.

Word	Page	Prediction	Dictionary Definition

2. As an alternative to Activity #1, have students keep a running list of words in the story that are unfamiliar to them. Instruct them to write down what they think each word means, from its context—and why. Then they should consult a dictionary and jot down the appropriate definition.

Word	Page	What I Think It Means	Clues I Used	Dictionary Definition

3. After students have read the novel, have them pick the ten words they believe it is most important to know in order to understand the book—and ask them to tell why.
4. Have students “map” selected words that fit into the following framework:



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## Lindo Jong: The Red Candle—pages 42-63

The third story is told by Lindo Jong (“Auntie Lin”)—apparently to her daughter, Waverly. Promised in marriage at age two to a bossy, self-centered boy, Lindo was taken from her family when she was twelve. For the next few years, she was treated as a servant; the wedding was held when she was sixteen. A servant was supposed to watch a candle during the night to make sure that it did not go out, but Lindo blew it out when the servant left the room. Unhappy in her marriage to Tyan-yu, Lindo came up with a plan for escaping from it. She convinced her mother-in-law, who was eager for a grandchild, that a dream had revealed to her that a pregnant servant was carrying Tyan-yu’s child. The family gave Lindo enough money to go to America.

### Vocabulary

cicadas 43

lacquer 49

auspicious 59

betrothed 44

prestige 49

imperial 62

compound 45

felicitous 52

pretense 49

palanquin 52

### Discussion Questions

1. What was the contrast between the marriage in the war movie and Lindo’s first marriage? (The soldier goes home and marries someone he will stay with forever; Lindo’s marriage didn’t last.) How and why did Lindo make a sacrifice for her family? (She agreed to an arranged marriage because it was expected of her.)
2. Why is this chapter called “The Red Candle”? (The candle was supposed to be kept lighted throughout the wedding night to ensure the marriage bond was unbreakable.) Why did Lindo blow out the candle? (She wanted the marriage to end.)
3. Why did Lindo’s family leave her with the Huangs years before the wedding? (A flood destroyed their land.) Who seemed most unhappy about the separation? (her mother)
4. How was Lindo treated by the Huangs? (harshly) Did she submit to them? (She did as told.) Do you think her family knew how she would be treated?
5. Why was Lindo unhappy even before her wedding? (She was treated like a servant.) What sort of little boy was her future husband? (spoiled, self-centered) What sort of husband was he? (immature, unloving) Why didn’t she run away? (She had nowhere to go.)
6. What sort of bad luck fell on Lindo’s wedding day and night? (Japanese were near; there was a thunderstorm.) Do you think Lindo would have been happier if the wedding had been better-attended? (It mattered little to her.)
7. How did Lindo and her husband get along? (eventually, like sister and brother) Why did her mother-in-law treat her so harshly? (She wanted a grandson.) Do you think everyone—including Lindo—would have been happier if she had borne a son?

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8. What was Lindo’s plan for getting out of her marriage? (She made up a dream that the ancestors were against the marriage and that a pregnant servant was bearing a royal son.) What does the plan show about the way her mind worked? (She understood her in-laws’ snobbishness.) What else might she have tried?
  9. Why does Lindo buy gold bracelets? (to remind herself of her own worth, her ability to think for herself) Why does she mention her daughter’s gold in the beginning of the story? (She thinks Waverly’s gold means nothing.)
  10. What does Lindo do every year on the Festival of Pure Brightness? (removes her bracelets) Why? (to commemorate the day she found her own thoughts) If you were asked to name a day when you “knew a genuine thought and followed where it went” what day would you say that was?

**Prediction:** What sort of marriage will Lindo end up in the second time around?

**Writing Idea:** Imagine that you are Lindo’s daughter, listening to the story of how she entered into her arranged marriage and then got out of it. Write the thoughts and questions that pass through your mind as you listen to her.

### **Ying-ying St. Clair: The Moon Lady—pages 64-88**

The fourth story is told by the fourth mother, Ying-ying St. Clair. She recalls the day in 1918 when she was a little girl, lost by the lake at the Moon Festival. She watched a performance by the Moon Lady and ran onto the stage to have her wish granted. She was horrified to discover that the lovely Moon Lady was actually a man; only recently has Ying-ying been able to remember what her wish was: to be found.

#### **Vocabulary**

acrid 65	pungent 65	amah 65	tassel 67
rickshaw 71	presumptuous 72	pavilion 73	gingko 73
canopy 74	askew 74	warily 74	brigands 78
penance 80	wantonness 81		

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. In this story and the last, we have seen that both Ying-ying and Lindo have some complaints about their daughters. How do their complaints compare? (They feel their daughters are thoughtless.)
2. Who was Amah? (family servant who raised Ying-ying) How did she and Ying-ying get along? (They were like mother and daughter; Amah loved the girl, who took her for granted.) Was Ying-ying closer to her than to her own mother? (yes)