



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

BY AMY TAN



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Feathers From a Thousand Li Away (introduction)**Research**

Objective: Breaking down language barriers and researching immigration

At the end of her introduction to *The Joy Luck Club*, Tan writes the following:

"This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and carries with it all my good intentions." And she waited, year after year, for the day she could tell her daughter this in perfect American English. (Pg. 17)

Throughout the novel, the language barrier between Chinese and English is a prevalent motif. In the next chapter, June will say: "These kinds of explanations made me feel my mother and I spoke two different languages, which we did. I talked to her in English, she answered back in Chinese." (Pgs. 33-34)

The mothers in the novel have been raised in a traditional Chinese environment. Having to flee their home country, the women have come to America to provide better lives for their daughters. However, because the girls are being raised away from their native country, they have become "Americanized" and often face difficulties understanding their mothers' desires for them.

Activity

America is known as the land of opportunity and many come here seeking the American Dream. Break into small groups. Choose a country that many people are emigrating from. Using the Internet or the library, research the reasons why people would be leaving their homeland and risking their lives and leaving their families in hopes of prosperity.

Be sure to include the following:

- What are the average working wages for lower, middle, and upper classes?
- What is the average education level and literacy rate?
- Is the country facing any type of distress due to politics, economics, or natural disasters? What effects are these issues having on the people?
- What types of jobs are emigrants getting in America? What wages are they earning? How does this wage compare to what they would make at home?
- What types of difficulties do they face once they come here?

After compiling the research, write a short paper on why emigrants are coming from your chosen country to the United States. Be sure to include the answers to the above questions in your paper. You may want to do an outline before starting. The paper should be at least two pages long.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Feathers From a Thousand Li Away Scar

Artistic Expressions

Objective: Exploring cultural differences in the family

Another common motif in Tan's novel is the issue of family respect. Throughout the novel, you will read of many instances where mothers and daughters have different views on this motif because of the culture in which they were raised. In Chinese culture, respect is automatic and permanent; in the U.S., it is seen as a quality that is earned and temporary.

An-mei's brother is told that he has "no *shou*, no respect for ancestors or family" by their aunt, and An-mei's mother is deemed a "ghost" for her disrespect. (Pgs. 42, 44) The family views her actions so strongly that her name is not to be spoken in the house. Because of the family's views about their mother's actions, An-mei and her brother are drilled with stories and reminders to obey the family's wishes. When An-mei's brother tries to defend his mother, Auntie assaults him and tells him that his mother "has become *ni*, a traitor to our ancestors." (Pg. 44)

Activity

An-mei's mother is seen as a traitor for having committed crimes against the family. Create a wanted poster for An-mei's mother.

Include the following:

- a picture—this can be hand-drawn, computer-generated, or created from clippings
- description of traits—eye color, height, weight, skin color, etc.
- a list of tattoos or other identifiable markings
- the accused crimes
- date of disappearance
- reward

You may choose to add to this list. Feel free to make up some of the traits, as Tan does not provide all of this information.

After you have made your wanted poster, write a short paragraph on whether or not you believe An-mei's mother has truly committed any crimes. Should she be ostracized from the family for her actions? Why or why not? What would be a suitable punishment for her actions? Is there a way for her to reconcile with the family?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Feathers From a Thousand Li Away
The Moon Lady

Writing

Objective: Changing the setting

Ying-Ying St. Clair describes summer in terms of human senses as she opens her story of *The Moon Lady*. She describes the way the heat and humidity affect the way she feels physically and the ways in which the smells affect her emotionally.

Activity

An excerpt has been taken from St. Clair's story. She is writing about the summer, but you need choose a different season. Fill in the blanks below to describe the way your season affects Ying-Ying's physical and emotional feelings. You may wish to look at a copy of the original text on page 68 to get a deeper sense of her experiences.

Earlier in the (season)_____, the servants had covered all the windows with
(noun)_____ to drive out the (temperature)_____. Every bed was covered with
a (noun)_____, our only bedding during the months of constant
(temperature)_____. And the (adj.)_____ bricks of the courtyard were crisscrossed with
(noun)_____ paths. (season)_____ had come, but without its
(adj.)_____ mornings and evenings. And so the (adj.)_____ (temperature)_____ still
remained in the shadows behind the curtains, (-ing verb)_____ the (adj.)_____ smells of my
chamber pot, (-ing verb)_____ into my pillow, (-ing verb)_____ the back of my neck and
(-ing verb)_____ up my cheeks, so that I awoke that morning with a (adj.)_____
(noun)_____.

Next, write a couple of sentences that explain why the season is so important to the setting. In what ways does changing a simple thing, such as a season, affect the entire mood of the setting?

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Twenty-six Malignant Gates Rules of the Game

Research/Creativity

Objective: Looking beyond prescription drugs

As Waverly Jong and her brothers journey through their neighborhood, an important aspect of Chinese tradition is revealed. Tan, through this short segment, describes a medicinal herb shop: "...watching old Li dole out onto a stiff sheet of white paper the right amount of insect shells, saffron-colored seeds, and pungent leaves for his ailing customers. It was said that he once cured a woman dying of an ancestral curse that had eluded the best of American doctors." (Pg. 90)

Activity

Many cultures around the world and members from our society prefer to use medicinal drugs instead of prescriptions to cure or treat a wide variety of ailments. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States does not regulate herbs and certain dietary supplements; therefore, many who take these medications do not know the actual risks. Since medicinal herbs are considered natural, many people do not know that they can experience side effects or that herbs and supplements can be harmful when taking certain prescription medications. Herbs and supplements, however, provide many remarkable benefits when used correctly; in fact, many are more beneficial than prescriptions.

Choose a natural herb or dietary supplement that is not FDA regulated. Using the library, Internet, or both, find out as much of the following information as you can:

- What are the primary uses of this herb or supplement?
- How is the product derived? (For example, does it come from a plant, animal, or mineral)
- What side effects does it have?
- How long has the product been in use and where did it originate?
- Who should not use it?
- Does it interact with any prescription drugs?
- Is there an FDA regulated prescription that is sold for the primary purposes of your chosen product? If so, list the pros and cons for the FDA-drug versus the one you chose.
- Where can this product be purchased?
- Approximately how many people use this item?

Next, using poster board or a sheet of newsprint, make an advertisement for your herb or supplement. Be sure to include a picture of the drug (this can be hand-drawn, computer-generated, or clipped from a magazine). Present your research findings in a manner that is easy to read and understand.

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Twenty-six Malignant Gates Half and Half

Research

Objective: Learning about a different religion

In the story *Half and Half*, Rose Hsu Jordan says that her mother has lost her faith in God. The leatherette Bible that she used to carry to the First Chinese Baptist Church every Sunday “wound up wedged under a too-short table leg.” (Pg. 116)

Activity

To many people, religion is an important component to daily life. It serves as a guide for how to live one's life and how to treat others. Perhaps religion is important to you and your family; perhaps it is not.

Using the library, the Internet, or both, research a religion that you know little about. You may choose to make a poster, a Power Point presentation, or a pamphlet to teach others what you have learned. Make your teaching tool colorful and informative. Be sure to include the following:

- the name of the religion
- titles of religious leaders
- basic beliefs
- religious texts employed
- origins of the religion (geographic regions and dates)
- symbols in worship
- names of important people in the history of the religion
- number of followers worldwide
- monotheistic or polytheistic
- holidays observed and traditions
- places of worship (types of services and how often)
- shrines, miracles, etc.

Name: _____

Date: _____

American Translation (introduction)**Research****Objective:** Learning about infertility

The mother in this story is worried that her daughter may not have “peach-blossom” luck if she does not rearrange the mirrors in her room. (Pg. 147) “Peach-blossom” luck is the mother’s code for fertility, since she discusses her grandchild’s birth next spring.

Activity

Infertility is a problem for both sexes throughout the world. Many factors can contribute to this problem. Scientists and researchers have come up with many new methods to help couples with fertility problems conceive.

Using the library, the Internet, or both, research the myths and facts about infertility. Make a list of at least three myths and three truths about infertility. Be sure to label each as myth or fact. For example, the mother in this story was afraid that the couple would not conceive a child because of the way the room was arranged. This would be characterized as a myth.

Name: _____

Date: _____

**American Translation
Rice Husband**

Research

Objective: Exploring missionary work

Lena recalls a film she was shown in Sunday school at Church. "This film will show you why you should give tithings to God, to do God's work," the teacher said. (Pg. 152) *Tithing* is the act of giving one-tenth of one's income to the Church. Missionaries in Indian and Africa were working with people who were suffering from various ailments that had swollen and disfigured their limbs. Some of the natives were also suffering from leprosy.

Activity

Missionaries are members of the church who are sent to areas to spread faith or perform work for the people. While missionary work is supposed to be beneficial for a group of people, the results have been mixed. Missionary work has been beneficial for many people, spreading literacy, giving comfort, encouraging monotheism, increasing the standard of living, etc. However, missionaries have also had detrimental effects on those whom they were trying to save. Diseases have been spread, wars have occurred, and ancient cultures have been lost in the process of trying to convert people.

In groups assigned by your teacher, and using the library, the Internet, or both, research the work of a group of missionaries. The group can be from any country and any time period. Prepare a five-minute oral presentation on the benefits or harm, or both, that the missionary group you have chosen has done. Some religions that practice or practiced missionary work:

- Catholic
- Baptist
- Mormon
- Modern Evangelical
- Jehovah's Witness
- Methodist
- Seventh day Adventist
- Quaker

Name: _____

Date: _____

**Queen Mother of the Western Skies
Magpies**

Creative Writing

Objective: Understanding character motivation

An-mei leaves the family she has known to start a new life with her mother. According to Chinese custom, her mother dishonored the family after remarrying to become the Fourth Wife of a merchant. Because she did this, the family disowned her and raised An-mei as their own and told her to forget about her mother.

After the death of Popo, An-mei leaves her family to go home with her mother. She recounts the seven-day journey she takes with her mother on the train and steamboat. Once they arrive, her mother gives her a new dress and shoes.

She says, “An-mei, now you are ready to start your new life. You will live in a new house. You will have a new father. Many sisters. Another little brother. Dresses and good things to eat. Do you think all this will be enough to be happy?” (Pg. 221-222)

As An-mei sees the extravagant new lifestyle she will be a part of, she decides that “there was no shame in my mother’s marrying Wu Tsing.” (Pg. 225)

Activity

Imagine that you are An-mei. Answer the following questions in a few sentences.

- Why did you decide to leave your family?
- How do you think your relationship with your aunt, uncle, and brother will be affected?
- How do you feel about your aunt, uncle, and brother now?
- What do you think of your new home and family?
- Do you really think this new life will make you happy?
- What traditions will you be upsetting by living with your mother?