

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Joy Luck Club

by Amy Tan

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The Joy Luck Club

Chapter One

Jing-Mei Woo: *The Joy Luck Club*

1. Suyuan finds the city of Kweilin more beautiful than she had anticipated. Relate a time you looked forward to an event or to visiting a place, and it turned out better than you expected.
2. Kweilin becomes overcrowded as thousands of people from various countries and religions enter the city to escape the Japanese. Consider the different reasons why many people immigrated to America during the late nineteenth century. Write a paragraph comparing the hopes and fears of American immigrants and the refugees in Kweilin.
3. As the people of Kweilin hide in caves during bombing raids, they are surrounded by fear of the bombs outside and the caves collapsing inside. Write a diary entry about a time that you were afraid of something beyond your control. How did you deal with your fear?
4. The Joy Luck Club began as way for the women to escape the despair of war by bringing some happiness to their lives. Explain an effective method you, a friend, or someone you know, uses to cheer up when feeling sad.
5. Create a list of as many countries as you know about in which wars are going on today. What does this tell you anything about human nature? Do you believe war is ever justifiable?
6. When the Hsu family travels to China, their relatives demand expensive gifts. By the time the Hsus leave, they find “themselves depleted of some nine thousand dollars’ worth of goodwill.” Relate an incident from a book, movie, or real life in which a trusted person takes advantage of someone.

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Chapter Two

An-Mei Hsu: *Scar*

7. An-mei's mother brings shame to her family, so they call her a ghost and refuse to talk about her. Describe a character from a book or movie who is shunned by family or friends. What are the circumstances? Do you feel that character is treated fairly?
8. An-mei learns advice for life through stories and mystical tales. Write about a childhood story or fable that taught you a valuable lesson that you still retain today.
9. Popo receives the greatest sign of respect, flesh soup, from her daughter. This display of respect teaches An-mei the value of deep love for a mother. Explain to a classmate who has a troubled relationship with a parent that love for one's parent is essential for growth and happiness.

Chapter Three

Lindo Jong: *The Red Candle*

10. Lindo is betrothed to Tyan-yu from the age of two, which is a common custom in her village. Write a newspaper article giving your opinion of the pros and cons of betrothed marriages. Be sure to give your article a title.
11. Although many cities allow men to choose their wives, Lindo's village adheres to the old-fashioned tradition of matchmaking. Write about a custom upheld today in your family or community. What is your opinion of change versus tradition?
12. Living with the Huangs, Lindo is treated like a servant. When reprimanded by Huang Taitai, Lindo says, "I was also boiling with anger, but I said nothing, remembering my promise to my parents to be an obedient wife." Describe a time you, or someone you know, made a promise to do something, but did not really want to do it. Was the promise kept?

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13. Marrying Tyan-yu causes the servant girl to become a very religious person. Relate an incident from the media or a movie that created a complete change in someone. Do you think you would react the same way?

Chapter Four

Ying-Ying St. Clair: *The Moon Lady*

14. As we have read, boys and girls are taught to behave differently in Chinese culture. Make a list of at least ten ways you see boys and girls treated differently in home, school, and society in America. Organize the list from the worst differences to the least.
15. Ying-ying takes Amah for granted, and sees her as “a blessing you appreciate and love only when it is no longer there.” Create a diary entry discussing someone or something you feel you have taken for granted.
16. Separated from her family and lost, Ying-ying feels fear and excitement. Describe a time in your life when you felt two conflicting feelings at the same time. Write about this time to your imaginary grandchild.
17. After being found, Ying-ying says, “I never believed my family found the same girl.” Explain what you think she means by this statement.

Chapter Five

Waverly Jong: *Rules of the Game*

18. Waverly learns from her mother how to win respect from others through “the art of invisible strength.” Explain the statement to a friend who cannot follow what it means.
19. Waverly discovers she has a natural talent for playing chess. Think about a talent or skill you possess. Write a congratulatory letter to yourself about your talent, as if the letter came from someone else.

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20. A series of chess tournaments triumphs makes Waverly a national chess champion, and she is acclaimed as a child prodigy. If you received national fame, do you think your personality would change? How would you act differently towards your friends?
21. A large argument ensues between Waverly and her mother. Mrs. Jong is proud of her daughter and shows her off, but Waverly is embarrassed. Continue the conversation with a friend about your opinion of whether Waverly should be upset at her mother.

Friend: I don't blame Waverly for being upset with her mother.

You: If my mother...

Chapter Six

Lena St. Clair: *The Voice from the Wall*

22. Lena's mother accuses Americans of being infatuated with violence. Do you agree with this thought? Do you see much violence on television or in the media? Write an editorial for your school paper taking one point of view about violence.
23. As a child, Lena is told scary stories to make her stay out of the basement. Eventually, the stories make her paranoid. Write a letter to Mrs. St. Clair telling her whether or not you agree with her way of teaching caution to her child. Explain how you, as a parent, would teach your child to avoid dangerous areas.
24. Write a paragraph about the scariest story you ever heard, or the scariest experience you had as a child.

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25. Lena's parents have trouble communicating because they speak different languages. Describe a time you had to communicate with someone who didn't speak your language. Was it frustrating? If you have never had that experience, write about how you think it would feel to try communicating with a foreign speaker.
26. Unhappy at home, Lena finds comfort in the thought that the "girl next door had a more unhappy life." What is your opinion about Lena's source of comfort? Write her a letter explaining how you feel.

Chapter Seven

Rose Hsu Jordan: *Half and Half*

27. Rose and Ted face challenges because they are from two different cultures. Despite family warnings, they get married. Make a list of three advantages and three disadvantages of a mixed marriage.
28. Mrs. Jordan insults Rose with a discussion of minorities and standards. Have you or someone you know ever experienced discrimination because of your age, gender, or race? Write a letter to the person who was prejudiced toward you explaining your feelings.
29. Rose encourages Ted to make all the decisions in the marriage. As a result, she loses her individuality. Pretend you are Rose's friend. Write a letter to her explaining why submitting completely to Ted is a poor decision. How will it hurt her, and how will it hurt the marriage?
30. The beach the Hsu family visits is described as "a terrible place, full of wet shadows that chilled us and invisible specks that flew into our eyes and made it hard for us to see." Write a paragraph about either your best or worst experience with nature.