

Thematic Unit for Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*

Mother/Daughter Relationships:

Wells, Rebecca. *Divine Secrets of the Ya-ya Sisterhood*. New York: Harper, 1997.

The primary theme that this fictional novel centers on is the complex relationship between mother and daughter. Throughout the novel, the daughter (Siddalee) must learn about her mother in order to repair the broken relationship between the two women. This novel places the primary conflict/theme of *The Joy Luck Club* in a different context.

Discovering Identity:

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.

In Hurston's revived novel, the reader watches Janie struggle to reconcile her differing perspectives and backgrounds to find out who she is and what she wants out of life. The novel is acclaimed as a pioneering book for discovering the female identity. The novel ties with *The Joy Luck Club* in the search for identity among young, minority females.

Young Female Adolescents:

Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia, Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. Ballantine Books, 1995.

This account, by psychologist Pipher, searches for answers for many of the problems that modern adolescent girls face. Finding the female identity is a central theme to this nonfiction series of studies.

Chinese American Literature:

Yung, Judy. *Unbound Voices: A Documentary History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*. California: University of California Press, 1999.

This book is a collection of essays, poems, stories, and letters from many Chinese American women who immigrated during the early 20th century. Since much of *The Joy Luck Club* is set in San Francisco, this collection provides a good non-fiction background on what women who lived there were actually experiencing.

Simonds, Nina, Swartz, Leslie, and So, Meilo. *Moonbeams, Dumplings & Dragon Boats: A Treasury of Chinese Holiday Tales, Activities & Recipes*. Gulliver Books, 2002.

Written for a younger audience, this colorful book depicts many aspects of Chinese culture, holidays, and customs. The book centers around several of the holidays that provide the setting for *The Joy Luck Club*. Along with descriptions and beautiful watercolors of the holidays, there are also tales to be read aloud, recipes, and Internet

resources to find out more. This book contains many pieces that would be useful as an introduction to the novel.

Story Structure:

Cisernos, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. Vintage Books, 1991.

This book has a similar structure to *The Joy Luck Club* in that it is a series of vignettes told from a minority perspective, combining together to form an overall story.

Brashares, Ann. *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. Delacorte Press, 2001.

This YA book is told from the perspective of four different narrators. The plot jumps around, describing each narrators' story in separate chapters throughout the novel.

A Little Extra Help:

Rozakis, Laurie N. *CliffsNotes on Tan's The Joy Luck Club*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994.

The CliffsNotes of the novel can help to connect the 8 entwining stories, as well as connecting each of them to overall themes.

