
The Adverse Life Of Amy Tan

Amy Tan is a highly accomplished and talented novelist that has composed several best selling stories. Although the majority of her novels were fiction, she composed them of a mixture of anecdotes from her life to relate to everyday challenges faced by individuals. Therefore, allowing her readers to draw connections from their own lives to hers. She experienced a variety of adversities throughout her life that contributed greatly to her achievements. Whilst going through childhood, Tan encountered a vast amount of hardships personally, within her family, as well as an extensive struggle to find her identity. With a constant disconnect from her Chinese heritage, Tan struggled to accept her true self. This internal battle was one of the main motivating factors that led her on a journey as a story-teller. Despite the many challenges she faced, this brilliant-minded author was still able to persevere and accomplish numerous things, becoming an inspiration for many individuals.

Tan's family life was less than ideal, however, she used her hardships as motivation to create new novels and short stories. Each member of her family struggled with mental or physical illnesses (or both). Her grandmother, for example, committed suicide after facing a life-long challenge of depression. After the tragic deaths of her husband, daughter, and son, Tan's mother, Daisy, grappled with suicidal ideations and temptations. Tan tragically describes, "Her back to a wall, locked in a room with her mother pressing a blade to her neck, I said 'Do it', Tan said. But, Daisy Tan couldn't. Later, Tan said she learned her mother's family had a history of suicide"(qtd. in Bonham). Despite her predisposition for mental illness, her mother suffered from brain deterioration due to Alzheimer's Disease, eventually causing her to die a long and painful death. Nevertheless, Tan used her sorrowful grief of her mother as an inspiration to write *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. As previously mentioned, Tan was forced to cope with a significant amount of tragic losses. In addition to her mother's death, Tan lost her father and brother due to brain tumors. Tan stated, "My mother used to believe also that we were somehow fated to die, all of us, from brain tumors"(qtd. in Hansen). Throughout her adolescence, Tan developed a variety of painful symptoms. Expecting to find a brain tumor, similar to her other family members, she and her mother reluctantly sought professional advice. Surprisingly, she was diagnosed with Lyme Disease. This seemingly negative impact on her life encouraged her to write "The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings." From diagnoses to deaths, each tragedy acted as a motivating factor for the creation of several captivating novels.

Over the course of her life, Tan had a crisis of identity which contributed to the inspiration of her first novel as well as several stories that followed. While she inherited a Chinese background, she identified as an American. According to Edelma Huntley, the author of *A Critical Companion*, 'She lived the classic minority experience: at home, she was an uneasy Americanized teenager at odds with the expectations of her traditional Chinese parents; at school—where she frequently was the only Chinese student in her classes—she was the Asian outsider who looked different from everyone else in the predominantly white American world'(Huntley 2). As she faced an internal battle to find her true identity, Tan vehemently rejected her Chinese background, causing her to never really feel complete. At long last, once she turned thirty-five, Tan halfheartedly made the journey to China. However, Tan admitted, "As soon as my feet touched China, I became Chinese" (Tan 293). Once she finally experienced the culture, Tan was able to relinquish her preconceptions of what it meant to be

Chinese. At last, Tan accepted who she was made to be, she felt complete. Her exploration of her culture motivated the creation of the novel, "Rules of the Game", where she discussed the relationship between a Chinese family, specifically a mother and daughter. Similarly, "The Joy Luck Club" discusses the relationships between Chinese mothers and their American born daughters. The girls sought to comprehend their mother's lives and how it impacted who they became. In her short story, 'A Pair of Tickets', Tan describes a Chinese-American teenager's difficulty with accepting her Chinese culture. The theme of this story is finding one's identity and this directly relates to Tan's personal life. She used her struggle of finding her true identity to piece together 'A Pair of Tickets'. Another key factor within this short story is the significance of the character's Chinese names. In Chinese culture, it is common to draw deeper meaning from an individual's name, similar to that of the characters in this piece of writing. For instance, the main character, June May or Jing-Mei, translates to a pure, younger sister and her mother, Suyuan, translates to a long-cherished wish. The deeper meanings behind the characters names is important because it allows the reader to comprehend the difference between the Chinese culture and their value of family. Comparatively, Tan's mother also struggled with the acceptance of her Chinese background. It wasn't until her funeral that her daughter, Amy Tan, was made aware of her mother's Chinese name, which was given to her at birth. Since her daughter was unaware of her mother's real name, it can be inferred that Daisy Tan was also in denial of her heritage, similarly to her daughter. While each of her elaborate novels tell different stories and details of Tan's life, each one shares the commonality of discussing her Chinese culture.

While the story, 'The Joy Luck Club' by Amy Tan addresses specific relationships between Chinese mothers and their Chinese-American daughters and the unique lifestyles they live, it also discusses the many hardships Tan's mother, Daisy, and her grandmother endured. Among the generations, there were several similarities, appearing throughout this story. For instance, it addresses her grandmother's abusive relationship and suicide as well as her mother's abusive first husband and suicidal ideations. In her novel, 'The Joy Luck Club', Tan writes, '[t]he same happiness, the same sadness, the same good fortune, the same faults' (qtd. in Dong 27). Even Tan herself recognizes such commonalities between her grandmother, her mother, and herself. Luckily, it is believed that, unlike her mother and grandmother, Tan did not contemplate suicide or suffer in abusive relationships. However, although she did not personally experience these hardships, she was subjected to immense pain through her mother's life events. Her mother, Daisy, often shared tragic stories with her daughter to educate and inform her of why things are the way they are. After years of gaining knowledge about the lives of her mother and grandmother, she used this information to compose best-selling stories. Tan developed 'The Joy Luck Club' which describes a variety of challenges faced within her family regarding abuse and suicidal tendencies. The characters within this story are similar to that of other novels and short stories that this author wrote. The theme of this short story is the bond between a mother and daughter despite their various differences. Although this story is considered to be a fictional piece, Tan experienced an indescribable connection with her mother, despite their often differing opinions and views.

Tan had an especially difficult relationship with her mother which led to her creative expression of her experiences within many of her books. After the tragic deaths of her father and brother, Tan's bond with her mother faltered. Her mother, Daisy, believed that their family was cursed. This forced the children to constantly use caution when speaking to their mother. For instance, Tan states, 'Thereafter, my brother John and I, both in our teens, learned to hide our headaches and to curb ourselves from saying we were tired' (Tan). Tan and her brother often repressed

their emotions and even physical distress to protect their mother's beliefs. Eventually, this led Tan to resentment towards her mother. Despite her mother's overwhelming desire for her daughter to become a genius and pursue a career as a doctor or lawyer, she rebelled against her wishes. These unrealistic expectations of her daughter caused a strain on the relationship. This time in the author's life was partially highlighted in her short story, 'Two Kinds'. After Tan decided to follow her creative instincts, her relationship with her mother was as unstable as ever. Lan Dong, author of *Reading Amy Tan*, elaborates, 'When Amy changed her major to English and linguistics, the mother-daughter relationship worsened to the point that they completely stopped talking to each other for months'(Dong 5). For six months the relationship between Tan and her mother existed in pure silence. However, after careful consideration, they began to establish a new connection and become even closer than they were before. Although the mother and daughter faced hardships and challenges throughout their relationship, Daisy Tan held significant relevance to her daughter's writing. According to Tan, "When I was writing, it was so much for my mother and myself ... I wanted her to know what I thought about China and what I thought about growing up in this country"(qtd. in Heung). Amy Tan's mother was a vital source of inspiration and allowed her daughter to compose best-selling stories and encourage others to do the same.

To summarize, Chinese- American novelist, Amy Tan, secured a successful and accomplished life. Each generation who came before her faced a series of hardships and difficulties throughout their lives and that same trend continued in hers. Every member of Tan's family suffered from mental and/or physical illnesses. From depressive disorders to brain tumors to Alzheimer's Disease, her family was burdened with a variety of mental diseases. She was forced to cope with several losses of her closest friends and family. In addition to experiencing these tragedies, she was diagnosed with a life-altering disease. What's more, growing up, Tan denied her Chinese heritage, causing her to grapple with her identity for several years. While each part of her life could be taken as overwhelmingly negative, Tan was able to turn them into a positive. She used each devastation and challenge as a motivation to create stories that conveyed the various adversities that she faced. With this unique talent, this novelist accomplished great things and composed a wide array of best-selling stories. Tan can be considered an inspiration for individuals to illustrate how to make the best out of a challenging situation and become a stronger person.