

Contemporary Literature

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Good morning. So, today we are going to start Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, novel which she wrote in 1989 and Amy Tan was born in 1952. She is of Asian American descent, is most successful famous and popular writers of this particular trend of Asian American fiction in America. So, along with Gish Jen and several others, she is at the forefront of Chinese American novelists. Now, what are the key words in this particular novel? We have been talking a lot about Asian American writing as a category. So, these are the issues that we have been talking about.

So, the key words in today's talk are identities and identities you will realize in Asian American fiction and particularly in *The Joy Luck Club* are extremely complex, unstable and ever shifting. Now, what do you understand by this complex, unstable and ever shifting? It is difficult to define. They are not simple. They just can the protagonist, the characters in the novel cannot assert that they are Chinese.

You know they have hyphenated identity. So, this is a term that you should be familiar with hyphenated identity. They are Asian Americans and as we have been talking about all of these along even in Asian Americans, you have different categories. So, it is not a homogeneous construct. It is not a homogeneous identity you have they are Chinese Americans. So, as we were talking about identities are complex. They are unstable. They are ever shifting. We cannot categorize them definitely if they are going to remain the same forever because part of them is Chinese and part of them American.

So, identity in Asian American fiction is an important construct. So, it is one of the most significant aspects that you should be looking at complex identities which are complex, unstable and ever shifting. Now, identity is a very diffuse, very complex phenomenon and there is lot of theory of it. So, we will be looking at identities in detail. We have also seen a novel like *The Remains of the Day* where again we have talked about complexities, the instability of identities.

in the same way we can look at it, but however, this is set in more contemporary times.

This particular novel is set in more contemporary times although the narrative keeps shifting between time and places. American dream, this is I would say one of the most significant aspect of Asian American writing because American dream, what is American dream? What is an American dream? It means that anyone has a fair chance or an equal and just chance of becoming successful in America. America is seen as a land which provides equal and just and fair opportunities to become successful, to become educated and most importantly to get rich and American dream is at the core. It is at the forefront of most Asian writings.

when we see how easily the Asian Americans had assimilated themselves, we were talking about if you remember nativization and assimilation aspects of Asian American writings. This is the reason because they all come attracted by the great American dream. Generation gap, this is the third important feature which is again a very common trait in all Asian American writings. It is mostly about parents and children, grandparents and grand daughters. So, this is the third important feature.

Mothers and daughters, sons and fathers, the conflict is always highlighted. So, most Asian American fiction and writings particularly so, the Joy Luck Club are a study or readings in the generation gap. One important aspect which was when the Joy Luck Club was first published, was first published was its structure, the non-linear narration of the Joy Luck Club. The novel was much praised for this and what do you understand by non-linear narration? It means complete opposite of linear construction. Now, linear construction as we all know, it has a beginning, it has a middle, it has an end.

So, the Joy Luck Club is a very postmodernist kind of writing because of the technique that it employs, the non-linear narrative technique. So, I have to some of you, I have suggested that you read Gerard Janet's book on narrative. So, that is an important document for you to understand that how narrative could be linear or non-linear and both kinds of narrations or narratives have their own pleasures. The pleasures, the primary pleasure of reading the Joy Luck Club can be derived from its non-linear narrative techniques. So, the narrative shifts back and forth, time and spaces.

So, sometimes it is in China and they are talking about the war or even about the times before the war and sometimes the narrative jumps to America, like a contemporary Chinatown. So, that brings us to the setting of the novel, which is Chinatown in America, San Francisco. You know this that Chinatown is situated in San Francisco. So, San Francisco is the setting of this particular novel and which is interesting because most Chinese, especially of that generation when Amy Tan's characters were growing up, they were settled in Chinatown in San Francisco. So, now, perhaps the Asian Americans or especially the Chinese Americans have spread to other parts of America, but there was a

time when San Francisco was the hub.

Therefore, this name Chinatown exclusive territory, which belong to the Chinese people, the immigrant people. And then, of course, you have and if you have non-linear narration, then heteroglossia cannot be too far away. So, heteroglossia as given by, a term given by who? We have been doing this. Who wrote the dialogic imagination? Good.

Mikhail Bakhtin. We have been talking about Bakhtin several times. So, the terms that Bakhtin talks about, heteroglossia, polyphony, dialogic. So, again, he talks about the dialogic extremely important postmodernist tropes. Now, why do you think that we call this the narrative in the Joy Luck Club as heteroglossic, polyphonic and dialogic? Why do we call it? Because there are many tongues, many voices, many tongues, many words and by whom? Many voices, many words, tongues, many words by whom? So, it is not just a single point narration. We have seen that as opposed to monologue.

So, it is not a monologue that means, the entire novel is seen through one particular point of view, very subjective and nothing else. You know, no one else is important. Here, it is a story, the Joy Luck Club, which was published in 1989 written by Amy Tan. It is a story of relationship between mothers and daughters. So, when we talk about generation gap and generation gap between mothers and daughters and no less than four daughters and four mothers, four daughters and four and each one has a story of her own.

Therefore, the term heteroglossia and polyphony, therefore, it makes the novel extremely interesting because when the daughter says something, when she, when we come to a point, a plot point in the Joy Luck Club, where we get the daughter's point of view or a daughter's point of view because there are four daughters. So, we have four daughters, four mothers. So, when we read the daughter's point of view, immediately next later we have the mother's point of view. So, that means, that when we were talking about the instability of narration. So, however, it also adds to the pleasure of reading because you have many voices, multiple perspectives on the same event.

Multiple perspectives on what? On the construct of American dream. What is it being an American? What is it being a Chinese in America? What is identity? The mothers, of course, they are the first generational Americans in a Chinese Americans. So, therefore, they identify or they identify a lot with their native land, that is, China and interestingly, when I was talking about the, you know, because the identity itself is so complex, unstable and ever shifting. So, it is not, they are not just Asian Americans, they are Chinese Americans and even among Chinese Americans there are conflicts. So, I come from Hong Kong, she comes from Taiwan, other one comes from Beijing.

So, there is hierarchy and class structure or power politics. Even among Chinese Americans, so this is very important because at one point, one mother says that you see, I am like this, she explains herself to her daughter that I am like this because I come from a place called Taihuan. Now, what is Taihuan? She says that I come and we are the direct descendants of Sun Yut Sun, you know, a major, a very prominent leader, a ruler in China and we come from Taihuan. So, winning is in our blood, that is what the mother tells the daughter. She says, mother says that you may think that you are American born because daughters are first generation Americans, mothers are, sorry, daughters are second generation Americans.

So, they identify more with the American culture. So, that is the point of conflict and generational gap. So, coming back to this point, I come from the dynasty of Sun Yut Sun, I come from Taihuan. What is Taihuan? Anyone who is familiar with Taihuan or part of China? And the daughter says, I understand because now I know Taiwan is ruling. You know, the reference is that of course, I know because everything is made in Taiwan, even you know, there was a point in America when every product, you know, whether they were games or electronic items or you know, even leather products, they were like, they were made in China, particularly in Taiwan.

I am sure you have heard of this, made in Taiwan. So, she is, the daughter says, I understand what you are saying because even in America, now we have everything made in Taiwan and mother says that you foolish girl, you do not even know the difference between Taiwan and Taihuan. I mean, Taiwan and Taiwan, Taiwan is not in China and the daughter is taken up by, she says, I never knew it. So, a girl, a Chinese girl, all those are second generation Chinese girls, but she does not know the geography or the topography of her own land. So, this is the disconnect, the disjunction between the first and the second generation.

So, mother prides herself about coming from Taiwan, a place which no one has heard of. Taiwan is a popular place, the daughter knows about it, but the mother says, no, they know, I mean, I have nothing to do with Taiwan. In fact, I look down upon Taiwan. So, this is when we were talking about the complex, unstable, ever shifting identities, heteroglossic, polyphonic and dialogic because it tells a story from multiple points of view. It gives, Amy Tan gives us multiple perspectives on the mother daughter relationship, the generational gap.

So, this is at the core of the novel. Just a back story, we were talking of Frank Chin and Aaeiiiiiii! anthology of Chinese writing, where I was telling you that it, how important it was for editors and scholars like Frank Chin to establish the masculine aspects of the Chinese culture and literature, remember, because it earlier it was felt that the whites

have portrayed or represented the Asian Americans, especially the Japanese and the Chinese as small yellow people, little yellow people, that is how they were referred to as and who have, who are soft and emasculated characters. Frank Chin and his ilk, they called for a more masculine kind of writing and they brought a, they compiled anthologies after anthologies of Chinese writings, where the Chinese masculine was at the forefront. Now, Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* was a response to a very popular book or novel by Louis Shu, *Eat a Bowl of Soup*, which is in the tradition of foregrounding the Chinese hard core masculinity and the *Joy Luck Club*, you will hardly find any sympathetic male character here. It is an out and out women's novel, a very feminist document.

People read the *Joy Luck Club* as a kind of a feminist novel. So, plenty of research, you know, scholarly papers and PhD dissertations are written on Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* as a very important addition to the corpora of feminist writing. So, this was a response to and if you remember, I was also saying in our last class that how people like Frank Chin, they condemned people like Amy Tan for, you know, making the Chinese masculinity take a back seat because all men in the *Joy Luck Club*, they exist in the background. They are never foregrounded, they are not important, all decisions are taken by women and even when men, their husbands feel that they are in control, how women can manipulate men that is there. So, perhaps that was not taken very well by scholars like Frank Chin who felt that again people like Amy Tan, they are selling out to the west by again restating or reinforcing the earlier held belief that Chinese men are not strong enough, they cannot dominate or control, they are not heroic enough for the women to admire them.

All men here, they are extremely, you know, weak and women have the power to manipulate them and they are the decision makers. Now, let us talk about the structure of the *Joy Luck Club*. You have the books, the novel in front of you of course. So, you will find that there are four sections in the novel. So, we are talking about the structure, there are four sections in the novel and each chapter in those sections is narrated by a female character.

When we are talking about the multiple perspectives here, so we have seven female perspectives. At the beginning of the novel, one mother is dead. See, I am talking about four mothers and four daughters, then how come there are only seven perspectives because one mother is already dead by the time the novel begins. So, you have Jing Mei Wu. Jing Mei Wu, you can look, although there are no heroines here, all women are given equal part, but Jing Mei Wu's story occurs twice.

So, you can say that relatively speaking, she is given a larger part in the novel. Her

mother is dead, so she speaks for her mother as well. She is the one who tells us. Again, she becomes an unreliable narrator. Remember, we have been talking about because she is now talking from her memory.

This is not a first hand experience that we get from Jing Mei Wu. Mother is already dead. What she tells us, may be, you know, once her mother told her and then memory is always ever shifting, ever unreliable. So, what we learn about her mother is through Jing Mei Wu's point of view and which may have certain gaps. So, gaps are again an integral part of the Joy Luck Club, which is again a very important postmodernist trope.

I am sure that some of you know what are the postmodernist traits. We will be doing that. Gopika, can you tell me what is gap in narration as a postmodernist technique? Just help me out. Reader is supposed to supply the information. Some very important integral parts have been left out.

We just are not told. You have done No Country for Old Men, have you? Did someone do a presentation in our class? Yes, yeah, No Country for Old Men. Let me, you know, digress a bit. A novel by Cormac McCarthy, which was also made into a very successful film in 2007. Now, the conflict is between the two, the one of this psychopath killer Anton Chigurh, remember? And then, you have this Llewelyn Moss, the man who is running away with a bag full of money and Anton Chigurh is on the trail, on his trail. Now, throughout you, you know, the chase gets more and more exciting and you feel that Llewelyn Moss is a typical western hero and he, he, there will, there is going to be a final showdown between the hero and the anti-hero as played by Anton Chigurh.

Now, the climax builds up to, I mean, the novelist or the plot builds up to that kind of climax, where we feel that now finally, we are going to have a showdown. The two will come face to face. I mean, that is what we are generally told, that is what we usually see in all works of art, but Cormac McCarthy very cunningly denies us that pleasure. We come to a point where we see Llewelyn Moss' dead body. What happened? How did he die? And we are never told that Anton Chigurh actually came and shot him dead.

Nobody ever tells him. We just see the sheriff's character, the sheriff bell. He comes on the scene and he finds Llewelyn Moss' dead body lying over there next to the swimming pool, where he, he is hiding in a hotel close to the Mexican border. He is trying to escape there, but then who killed, who actually killed Llewelyn Moss? We are never told. There is a gap. It is left up to the reader to infer whether he actually had a showdown with Anton Chigurh, whether there was another gang of criminals who were, that was also chasing Llewelyn Moss.

We do not know that. So, that is, that constitutes a gap. So, that is what we understand. So, the Joy Luck Club is filled with many such things and gap is a very important feature of the postmodernist fiction. So, No Country for Old Men is just an example.

I just thought of it. I thought it is a novel, which is familiar to most of you, at least the story. So, the four sections. Now, let us come back to the four sections. If you, if you would just go to the contents page, the first page, take a look at it.

Four sections. So, first section is called Feathers from a Thousand Llewey, Feathers from a Thousand Llewey. So, lee is a Chinese term, which means, it is a unit of measurement, 0.5 kilometers. So, Feathers from a Thousand Llewey. So, this is, this section is told from the mother's point of view.

The next section is, so every section has four stories. Then, next chapter, next section, sorry, is the 26 malignant gates. So, this is told from the daughter's point of view. Then, another section is called American translation, where language becomes very important. You know, mother's English is after all not so good and the daughter's is with an American accent.

So, there is a gap there also. You know, mothers and daughters, they cannot follow each other because of this gap or the breakdown in communication. So, several breakdowns in communication and language becomes one of the important reason for that. And the last section is called Queen Mother of the Western Skies. This is again told from the mother's point of view. So, two sections, four stories each, two sections are told from mother's point of view, two from the daughters.

Very interestingly, each section begins with an epigraph. Now, tell me what is an epigraph? Vinesha, any idea what could be an epigraph? Good, very nice. So, epigraph is a very short, very brief introduction to what is going to fall. So, each chapter begins with an epigraph and each epigraph is like a parable. Now, what is a parable? Jesus begins, you know, most of his stories have in the Bible, you have parables.

So, what are those parables? Good, yeah, so stories with a moral. So, each story begins, each section begins with an epigraph and all epigraphs are structured like a parable. So, it is not like whether some specific mother is talking to a specific daughter, no such thing. It is a very general, very universal kind of a story that we find in these epigraphs and all very moral, which you can find, it could, it can apply to any mother and daughter in any part of the world. So, whether you come from the, from Andhra or you come from Tamil Nadu or you come from Kerala, it does not matter.

It is true for all mothers and daughters. For example, the 26 malignant gates, I was talking, this is a story from the section from the daughter's point of view. So, the young daughter, a teenage daughter, she is just learning to ride a bicycle. The mother says, you restrict yourself to the compound of the house, do not go outside because once daughters leave the gates, there is trouble. So, this is something so common. I am sure most of our mothers have told us this at some point or the other.

So, do not leave the compound gates, do not leave, do not go beyond this compound wall as long as you know. It becomes, the compound wall becomes like an autonomy for everything, which is safe and haven, a safe haven and you know, where you, you know, you can be protected. So, the girl refuses to listen. She says, I do not want to restrict myself to, I am learning to write so well.

I am not going to restrict myself just to this compound. She goes out and as mother has been saying, the moment she goes on the road, there is a small minor accident. She trips and she falls, hurts herself very badly. So, that is an epigraph. So, then what is the moral now? We must listen to our mothers.

Mothers know best. Not many of us would agree, but then this is the story. This is the major theme of the Joy Luck Club. The daughters may think that they have had more exposure, they have had more experience. Mothers are just, you know, first generation American women, you know, Chinese American women who never had much of an education, who never had very successful lives, but at the end mothers know best. The first story is also very interesting, that Feathers from a Thousand Lees Away.

It again tells you a story where a woman who is boarding a ship and she is coming to America. She is coming to America. I will just read some, if you do not have the section, do not worry. I will just read you certain section from the epigraph.

The old woman remembered a song she had bought many years ago in Shanghai. This bird, who boasted the market vendor, was once a duck that stretched its neck in hopes of becoming a goose and now look, it is too beautiful to eat. Then, the woman and the song sailed across an ocean many thousands of lee wide, stretching their necks towards America. So, a similarity between the bird and the woman, both of them stretching and what could this kind of stretching mean? What does it symbolize? Horizons. Horizons, yeah, to transcend or to cross that particular boundary, which somehow, you know, nature has bestowed on them, but they are, they want to stretch themselves out.

They want to reach out to better condition, living conditions. On her journey, she cooed to the song, in America, I will have a daughter just like me, but over there nobody will

say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband's belch. So, perhaps sentences like these could have infuriated Frank Chin that in China, that means, you are trying to tell the readers that in China a woman's worth is measured by how, you know, the loudness of her husband's belch, the kind of rice that you cook or your expertise in cooking and dressing and making, you know, keeping the house, but in America you can have an identity of your own. Over there, nobody will look down on her because I will make her speak only perfect American English. So, language becomes so important and over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow. So, she will be having so many riches that there would not be any sorrows in whereas, in our China women are taught from a very young age that you are a woman, you are a girl, you are supposed to suffer, you are supposed to, but as you know this happens in many other cultures as well.

Women should, they should remain quiet, they should suffer. There is dignity in suffering, but not in America. She will know my meaning because I will give her this swan, a creature that became more than what was hoped for. So, this bird, an ordinary bird, spreads its neck and turn into a beautiful swan, but what happens when she arrived in the new country, this America, the immigration officials pulled her swan away from her. So, the only, you know, that is the only belonging she had with her. It is not like telling, that it is not a story of any of these mothers, it is a parable.

It happens to most immigrant women because and why is the swan pulled away from her? Leaving the woman, fluttering her arms and left only with one swan feather and that becomes a part of her memories. That is what she is left with. So, she always keeps the feather with her because the feather symbolizes China. That is where I come from.

That is her identity and then she had to fill out so many forms. She forgot why she had come and what she had left behind. So, that is immigration. You have to sign several forms, you have to fill up several forms and then in all the, and she did not have the language and her only one cherished position is snatched away from her and whatever she hoped she had for, you know, a wonderful, beautiful life in America, they are just taken away at the immigration point itself. Now, the woman was old. So, fast forward and she had a daughter who grew up speaking only English and swallowing more Coca Cola than sorrow.

So, the idea is that my daughter, I am going to raise a perfect daughter who would speak perfect English. So, yes, the daughter now speaks perfect English. I am going to, my daughter would be full of so many things that she does not have to swallow sorrow, but now my daughter is full of Coca Cola. What does it mean? What does Coca Cola symbolize? American culture.

So, total disjunction with her mother culture, mother's culture. For a long time now, the woman had wanted to give her daughter the single sawn feather and tell her 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. That means the mother could never achieve that level of English. The daughter now speaks another kind of English. So, the gap is there. So, perhaps she wanted through that feather, she wanted to transfer or transmit her cultural values that no matter how important or how big you become in America, you are still of Chinese origin, but the daughter has no time or no inclination for becoming a Chinese and the mother could never communicate because she wants to say something very profound, very poetic to her daughter, but the daughter does not know Chinese and mother's English is not that good.

So, how would she say a sentence like this in a language that could be understood by both? Any questions here? Anything, any comment you want to make at this point? All fathers have taken and all husbands and all boyfriends take a big back seat in this novel. So, one major criticism by the so called masculine writers was that where are the fathers here? The fathers are not important and what is a very interesting is that in some of the stories, the mothers leave behind an abusive Chinese husband and immigrate to America and remarry and then have these daughters. So, the disconnect between that culture and this culture. So, just you know, eschewing of that particular life and all Chinese husbands are depicted as abusive, exploitative and highly domineering, extremely chauvinistic. So, perhaps even though the second generation, when the daughters start growing up and they have now American boyfriends and American husbands, so they are also not very important.

In fact, one of the daughters, she marries an American man and he is so petty, you know, they keep separate accounts. So, it comes to such a bad situation, you know, point that the mother, you know, the Chinese mother, when she comes to this daughter's house and she finds that they maintain an accounts register in this house, who spends how much on what things. So, there is a, you know, there is a very, all the expenses, expenditures are demarcated. So, Rose will spend so much on cat food, for example, and husband, what is his name, he will spend so much on flowers, on bird's gifts, he will spend, on anniversaries and all, she will spend. So, the mother says that what is this, what kind of life is this and that is an American husband, not even a Chinese.

So, men, whatever their race or whatever their cultural background, they are not, what to say, they are not portrayed very flattering. Any question? Yes, yes, in the magpie story.

One of them is an American. Yes, that is a mother. Yes, yes, mother who becomes a

third wife. So, there is, there is, the second wife is the more, you know, manipulative wife, the first wife is always masculine. If you have read the magpie's story in the Joy Luck Club, so it is the mother's story, the mother who is still in China. And so, in fact, it is not the mother's story, it is the mother's mother's story.

it is the grandmother's story. So, that is what we were talking about earlier. It is not just about mothers and daughters, but even grandmothers are invoked, referred to. So, the woman who becomes the concubine, she is the grandmother of this particular American girl. So, the, and then, she sacrifices herself for the sake of her daughter who comes to America and then, she has this, the so called second generation American daughter. Yes If you remember, then apart from, of course, it is a story about one of the themes is generation gap, of course, but then, it is also at one point becomes a differentiation between two classes.

So, one class represented by mothers and second class represented by daughters. Now, what do we understand by classes, social classes? So, the daughters have progressed so much by way of education, by way of, you know, acquiring status and position in the American society that soon it looks like as if, you know, mothers do not belong to the same social class. And it is very well brought about in chapter where one of the daughters, Waverly, she takes her mother to a beauty parlor and also to an exclusive restaurant. Now, you know, exclusive restaurant, they do not come cheap. They are not like your regular restaurant where you can eat a lot at a very, you know, competitive prices does not happen like that. So, the mother looks at the menu card and she looks at the list of items and the prices and she is offended.

She says that why spend so much and when the soup is eventually brought, she starts criticizing. She says the portion is not enough like a typical mother, it is not enough for this much portion. You are asking for so much money. She tells it to the waiter and then she says it is not even hot.

In China, the way I make food, you know, soup is supposed to be boiling hot. This is lukewarm. I ask for a hot bowl of soup if that does not come. So, the waiter is, you know, quite amused that what kind of people have come to the restaurant and the daughter is extremely embarrassed in her, in the mother's company. And when the icing on the cake is that when the daughter gives a very, you know, generous tip to the waiter as is the custom, you know, you are supposed to leave a sizable amount of tip. So, the mother very loudly says that, you know, the service was not good enough and he does not deserve this kind of tip.

So, that brings about the social and class differences also in India. So, it is the gap is not

by way of, you know, the first generation, second generation. It is not just about the kind of gap with the, may have in their moral values or you know, that in terms of their attitudes toward life, but then also the way that, you know, mothers are actually skimmed for a living. They had struggled, was extremely, very frugal kind of life. Even in beautiful, that beautiful as yesterday is mentioned, how the mother bargains with the vegetables, the salad or the broth, and then she comes to the super markets in America and she is so shocked how her daughter just splashes money without looking at the prices.

Yes, but for the mother, it is always, you know, the cost of the things is very important. You are, so and also there is another interesting incident which happens in a beauty parlor. So, the daughter comes with a very smart and very hip kind of a hair haircut and she says that, you know, this is the trend and the mother is again shocked. She says that, you know, it is like that asymmetrical kind of haircut and she says, see on one side it looks too long, on other side it is not even even and you paid so much of money and the daughter says that, see this is the trend, this is the session and the mother says, no, I could have given you a better haircut, spending so much of money, go get a refund. So, again, I mean, through such small things, the gap between mothers and daughters are, you know, are brought about. Another incident and when Waverly, she has divorced her American husband, now she is dating another American person.

Waverly is extremely successful. She is the daughter of Linda Yong. Now, Waverly's background is that at one point she was a very successful chess player. She was almost like this story will get in the, in American translation part. So, what is it called? I will tell you the title of this story is called four directions. Waverly Yong's story in four directions where she, she becomes almost like a child prodigy. She at 8, 7 or 8, she becomes an extremely successful chess player and she, the interesting thing is that in the same family, she has two brothers as well.

So, the brothers have to take now a back seat. They are sidelined by the mother, by the doting mother that you see, my, my daughter Waverly at age 8, she is becoming a national chess champion. She can defeat whites who are, you know, white kids, boys who are 14 or 15 years old. She is that smart and then as you know, as is typical with most mothers, she starts showing off her daughter. So, whenever they go out in the Chinatown for a stroll or for vegetable shopping or for any other errands, the mother shows off her daughter to errand.

You know, this is my daughter Waverly. She wins all the tournaments. I am so tired. I mean, this is part of Chinese culture that you have to highlight the achievements of your family and whereas, at the same time, you have to also say that, you know, it is not such

a big deal, you know, that sense of showing modesty. So, she says, you know, my daughter keeps on winning, you know, she is so lucky. She never says that she is talented and Waverly being an American, you know, what is American, being an American, it is like individuality.

You have to assert your individualism. So, all your achievements are your own. So, heavens and luck and fate, all these things are Chinese. These things have nothing to do with talent and Waverly says, I was talented. I was one of those who was born with an innate talent in playing chess. So, mother says that, you know, they know such thing as talent.

It is luck and I give her one particular set of lucky charms and I keep telling her that attack from all fronts. So, four directions, therefore, the title of the play. So, that daughter says that it does not happen like that in chess. You cannot attack from all and mother keeps telling her, you know, she tells all her friends that I tell my daughter, you know, ride your horses on all your enemies. That is the way to win and Waverly says, how stupid this is, you know, this kind of advice just would not work in real chess, but she starts resenting her mother to an extent that she stops playing chess altogether. So, there was a time when it was said about her that she is going to be the first ever woman world champion in chess and her picture had appeared on the cover of Time magazine along with Bobby Fischer, the great chess champion that she is going to be the next implication is that she is going to be the next Bobby Fischer who was the then ruling world chess champion.

But as we were talking about generation gap, conflicts between mothers and daughters is so important in this. She starts hating her mother for taking the credit for her success and she says that no, just to spite my mother, I am going to stop playing chess and she does that. The mother is deeply hurt, very extremely wounded, but then she stops talking to her daughter just that and when the daughter realizes that there are very important tournaments coming up and she has a very good chance of winning, she tells her mother I am going to play again. The mother says you have not been practicing, you want to win and that happens, it comes out to be true. The daughter goes, she plays again, but she never wins again.

So, she just leaves and that remains, that hurt remains with her for the rest of her life. So, there is also a moral here, there is also a message here, what is it that you know many a time we misunderstand our parents. We do not understand what they are trying, even if it is for our own good, we do not accept that and years later and such is the human mind that we keep on accumulating those hurts and wounds for decades and then it all comes back, may be when we least expect it, may be when we are in thirties or

forties or even later and then it is time for the parents to die, then we realize that whatever they did, even in whatever way they did because that is the only way they understand, that is the only way they express themselves, they do not know anything else. So, if they are perhaps they are rude, they are blunt, but still they are parents and they had our good at their hearts, but this realization to most of us comes very late. So, that is also one of the theme of the Joy Luck Club. Any question? So, what is the take away from this first lecture on the Joy Luck Club? One is that it is a story about identities, it is also a story about the great American dream, it is an extremely integral part of it, which we are going to discuss at length in our next class and then generation gap and generation gap not just between Chinese mothers, but between mothers and daughters set in an American culture.

That is very important because it is an Asian American reading and then of course, we have also seen a diad of nativist and assimilationist construct. If you remember that assimilation in American culture is an integral part of all Asian American writing. So, in the characters of the daughters, you will find that they are extremely assimilationist, whereas in mothers, you have still that struggle between the home land, the native land. So, there is conflict is between native land and the desire to assimilate themselves with the host culture. So, we will continue this in the next class. We will begin with two kinds. Thank you so much. .