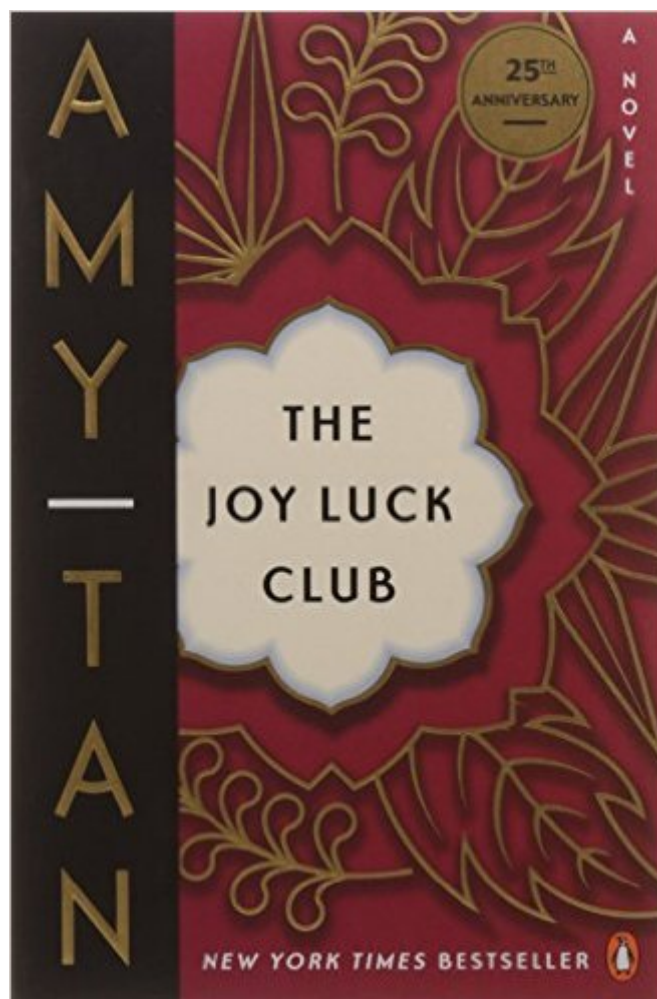


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# The Joy Luck Club: A Novel



## Synopsis

For readers of Amy Tan's bestselling novel, *The Valley of Amazement*, revisit her classic tale of mothers and daughters. Four mothers, four daughters, four families whose histories shift with the four winds depending on who's "saying" the stories. In 1949 four Chinese women, recent immigrants to San Francisco, begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk. United in shared unspeakable loss and hope, they call themselves the Joy Luck Club. Rather than sink into tragedy, they choose to gather to raise their spirits and money. "To despair was to wish back for something already lost. Or to prolong what was already unbearable." Forty years later the stories and history continue. With wit and sensitivity, Amy Tan examines the sometimes painful, often tender, and always deep connection between mothers and daughters. As each woman reveals her secrets, trying to unravel the truth about her life, the strings become more tangled, more entwined. Mothers boast or despair over daughters, and daughters roll their eyes even as they feel the inextricable tightening of their matriarchal ties. Tan is an astute storyteller, enticing readers to immerse themselves into these lives of complexity and mystery.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

THE JOY LUCK CLUB, a novel by Amy Tan, tells of the intricate relationships between two strong-willed generations, four tough, intelligent American women and their equally tenacious Chinese daughters. The four families are connected through the Joy Luck Club, a mah jong group that meets each week. After its founding member passes away, her daughter is asked to take her place at the table and the stories begin. Each of the eight women narrates two stories from her own

point of view except for the deceased whose daughter tells her stories for her. The mothers relate stories about their lives in China, and the daughters tell of the trials that they face growing up as first-generation Chinese-Americans. The women that Tan has crafted are well developed and extraordinarily believable. She shows the strong and weak sides to all eight of her main characters. Her men however, are flat and are there simply as supporting characters. This is to be expected since this is essentially a book about mother-daughter relationships and how women bond. Therefore, it is my assumption that this book is aimed, for the most part, at the female reader. Tan's literary style is truly novel. The way this woman writes can't be compared to anything that I have read in recent years. The novel that I feel comes closest to mirroring Tan's subject matter is *THE GOOD EARTH* by Pearl S. Buck. As I was reading, I found myself continually drawing parallels between the two. Therefore, if you found Buck's novel enjoyable, Tan's will be a pleasure as well. At face value, I feel that Tan wrote sixteen incredibly interesting stories. It is the undercurrent that runs throughout the novel, however, that makes it a classic.

I read this book in Multi-Cultural Literature class. I think that Amy Tan is a truly gifted writer with a unique way of opening our imaginations to her world. This novel has 8 main characters. It's about 4 Chinese women who came to America and how they have to change their ways. The other 4 Chinese women are their daughters born in America. Each chapter is one of the characters point of view and their life story.

Ying Ying St. Clair: After being left by her first husband, marries her second husband who is an American.

Lena St. Clair: She is the daughter of Ying Ying. She is having marital problems with her husband Harold. Who wants to be treated equal. They have their own money and they split it down the middle.

Linda Jong: At a young age was in an arranged marriage, she later makes up a story that her in laws ancestors would be angry if she bore her husband's child.

Waverly Jong: She is named after the street in which she lived in. She became a champion at chess, and realizing that it isn't so fun anymore.

An-Mei Hsu: She was raised by her Grandmother because her mother, although was alive was considered a "ghost" because she remarried after her first husband died. She has to decide whether she wants to leave with her mother after her Grandmother's death, or stay with her aunt and her brother.

Rose Hsu Jordan: She is dealing with her husband's divorce. She is fighting to keep the house that they both had lived in.

Suyuan Woo: She was the one who started 'The Joy Luck Club'. She decided to have 4 women gather around once a week, and eat a big feast, and laugh and talk about good times all through the night.

Jing Mei Woo: After her mother's death, she must go to China and meet with her long-lost twin sisters.

Amy Tan's novel of many voices has become required reading in high school and college contemporary literature courses - and for good reason. Its intimate look at Chinese immigrants and their children opens up a wealth of questions about cultural acclimation in a country dominated by another race. Set in San Francisco and China, the novel begins with Jing-Mei ("June"), who has been asked by her father to take her recently deceased mother's place in the Joy Luck Club, ostensibly a mah jong gathering of her mother's closest friends, but also an investment club, symbolizing the merging of the two cultures. June agrees, although she doesn't feel she makes an adequate substitute for a woman who seemed so unlike her. When her "aunties" urge June to tell her sisters, women she has never met and who were left at the side of a road in China, about her mother's life, they are troubled when she confesses that she did not know her mother except as a mother. She sees that they fear that their own daughters might not know about them, and so she impulsively promises to find her mother's long lost children and tell them about their mother. In this way, the novel sets up its structure of interrelated stories. Although the stories of June and her mother Suyuan frame the others, those of An-Mei, Rose, Lindo, Waverly, Ying-ying, and Lena are no less important. These women and their daughters form a complicated quilt of what it means to be a Chinese-American, whether born in China or in the United States, and they highlight the difficulties of bridging two cultures. The choices each woman makes are always difficult and often heart-breaking. Students might want to explore the difference in attitude between the Chinese women and their American daughters.

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