The Rules of the Game
From the Joy Luck Club

By: Amy Tan
Published in 2005

Presentation By: Param Talwalkar, Medha Palnati, Maddie Dupre, and Veronika Alinskas
About the Author

❖ Amy Tan was born in Oakland, CA in 1952
❖ She had 2 brothers, a mother, and father
❖ Her family belonged to a social group called the Joy Luck Club
❖ At age 15, both her older brother and father died of brain tumors
  ➢ her mother moved with Amy and her younger brother to Switzerland
❖ Received her Master’s degree in English and linguistics
❖ Her short stories explore mother-daughter relationships
❖ Became a language development specialist for a program that serves children with developmental disabilities
❖ She wrote the libretto for the opera, The Bonesetter’s Daughter

https://www.amytan.net/
Tan’s writings are based on mother-daughter relationships. She began writing about this topic from her mother’s previous marriages. Her mother had 1 son (that died at birth) and 2 other daughters. She was forced to leave her children in Shanghai, and go to America.

Her Short Stories include:

❖ “The Joy Club”
❖ “The Kitchen God’s Wife”
❖ “The Hundred Secret Senses”
❖ “The Bonesetter’s Daughter”
❖ “Saving Fish from Drowning”
❖ “Rules for Virgins”
❖ “The Valley of Amazement”
Setting

❖ Where: Waverly Place - Chinatown
➢ San Francisco, CA
➢ Two bedroom flat, above Chinese bakery
➢ Gave us a sense of a typical Chinese home

❖ When: 1950’s
➢ Lets us know what forms of communication were
➢ Helps us understand social norms

❖ Social Milieu: Lower Middle Class
➢ Shows that Mei Mei arose from a rather poor family to become a chess champion
➢ Tells us the work it took to put food on the table
Character Introduction

❖ Waverly Jong (Mei Mei)
  ➢ Seven years old
  ➢ Young, curious girl with lots of potential
  ➢ Rises to become a chess champion
  ❖ Mrs. Jong (Mei Mei’s mother)
  ➢ Old, tidy, wise woman
  ➢ Struggles with English
  ➢ Proud of her daughter
❖ Vincent and Winston (Mei Mei’s brothers)
  ➢ Typical teenagers
  ➢ Become jealous of Mei Mei’s skills and achievements
❖ Lauo Po
  ➢ Mysterious, old man who teaches Mei Mei tactics of chess
Character Types

❖ Waverly Jong (Mei Mei)
  ➢ Round and Dynamic Character
  ➢ Indirectly Characterized
    ■ actions, home life, speech, thoughts, and opinions

❖ Mrs. Jong (Mei Mei’s mother)
  ➢ Round and Dynamic Character
  ➢ Indirectly Characterized
    ■ home life, speech, physical appearance

❖ Vincent and Winston (Mei Mei’s brothers)
  ➢ Flat, Static, and Directly Characterized

❖ Lauo Po
  ➢ Flat, Static, and Directly Characterized
Summary

❖ Waverly Jong (Mei Mei), the protagonist, lives with her two older brothers, her mother, and father in San Francisco’s Chinatown.
❖ After Mei Mei’s brother, Vincent, brings home a chess set that her received as a christmas present from church, Mei Mei becomes interested in the game.
❖ After her brothers lost interest in playing with their winning sister, Mei Mei found herself playing chess at the park with Lauo Po, a chess master who coaches her and teaches her the tactics of chess.
❖ Waverly goes on to win, first local, then national tournaments and becomes a widely renowned champion.
❖ However she becomes frustrated when her mother shows her off and gets into a fight with her. This results in Mei Mei running away.
❖ Though Mei Mei comes back home it is not in our knowledge whether she resolves the problems with her mother or not.
Exposition:
Waverly Jong, or Mei Mei, lives in Waverly Place in San Francisco's Chinatown. She and her mother, father and two brothers share a two bedroom flat above a Chinese bakery.

Inciting Incident:
Vincent, one of Mei Mei's older brothers, brings home a chess set that he received as his Christmas gift from church.

Rising Action:
Mei Mei, curious, wants to learn chess and picks it up very quickly. After playing games with her brothers, she ventures to the park where she meets and old man named Lau Po, who teaches her the tactics of chess. Mei Mei plays at many local tournaments and discovers her talent for the game. Her mother is at first unsatisfied with her daughters playing, but as she understands the game, she becomes more and more proud. Gradually, her tournaments get further and further away from home. A local florist and headstone engraver decide to sponsor her at nationals, and that is where Mei Mei plays next.

Conflict: Mei Mei vs Mother

Climax:
Proud of her daughter, Mei Mei's mother brags about her at the market and Mei Mei is embarrassed. Mei Mei then yells at her mother and after a fight she decides to resign this game of chess and runaway from home.

Falling Action:
Mei Mei returns home, but her mother is still angry with her. She ponders her next move.
Point-of-View

- first person, limited omniscient
- only reveals thoughts/emotions of the narrator (Waverly Jong)
- does not show how other characters may actually be feeling/thinking
- only shows Waverly’s interpretation of characters’ personalities/emotions
Technique

❖ Uses symbolism+Foreshadowing
❖ The strategies of a chess game can symbolise Waverly’s life
❖ Her mom neglects her at the end of the story was predictable based on clues in the beginning when she warns Waverly not to play chess and to throw it away
One symbol in *The Rules of the Game* was the chess set that Waverly’s brother received for Christmas. The chess set symbolizes Waverly’s and her mother’s relationship because her mother doesn’t think playing chess would impact Waverly. It also symbolizes the conflicts between Waverly and her inner self and Waverly and mother.
Theme: The Art of Invisible Strength Can Help Us Through Struggles

❖ invisible strength is mental, not physical
❖ strategy for winning arguments, respect from others, & chess games
❖ Waverly Jong (“MeiMei”) learns that appearing strong/unwavering is useful in many situations
❖ do not show weakness to opponent, do not reveal the “why” of your move in chess games (or in life)
❖ convince yourself that you are strong
❖ make good decisions, have a level head
Story Rating

❖ We would give it 3 stars
❖ Had a decent plot- Good idea of having a young girl beat people much older than her
❖ Bad ending - Ended abruptly and left the reader a bit confused- What is going to happen to Waverly now?
Works Cited


