

## Close Reading Essay: Amy Tan's "Two Kinds"

**Due date:** Thursday, September 19 by 11:59pm. (Please use the link that will be provided in that day's content area.)

**Required minimum length:** 500 words. (Yes, 497 is OK. No, 470 is not.)

Amy Tan's "Two Kinds" is a **short story** taken from her 1989 novel *The Joy Luck Club*. While the story and the book are presented as fiction, there are many parallels between the character Jing-mei and Tan in real life, and between the mother in the story and Tan's mother in real life.

For this assignment, you will write an essay that offers a close reading of this story and analyzes several aspects. You may choose address any one or several of the following questions in your essay, or you can come up with some of your own:

- How does the contentious relationship between Jing-mei and her mother contribute to Jing-mei's sense of identity?
- Is their relationship complicated by the fact that Jing-mei's mother is an immigrant? Why or why not?
- Do you think they ever reached an understanding or truce in their relationship?
- How do the characters change and grow throughout the story?
- Why does Jing-mei stop playing the piano, and why does she play it again after her mother passes away?
- Why does Tan bring up the twin baby girls in this story?
- Why is the story called "Two Kinds"? Jing-mei's mother talks about two kinds of daughters, but are their two kinds of anything else in the story?
- What is the significance of the titles of the two pieces of piano music?
- What bigger meanings can we take from Tan's story? If we agree that reading stories, especially personal accounts, can increase empathy, how does this story in particular make us more empathetic?

**You will earn an A and all 100 points for this assignment if you:**

- Write an appropriate introduction with a thesis statement and a strong conclusion.
- Intelligently address and analyze some of the story's key aspects in the essay in a clear and understandable manner.
- Use specific evidence from the text to illustrate your points.
- Use well-structured paragraphs.
- Use proper grammar, mechanics, and word choice.
- Proofread for content and clarity.
- Follow MLA formatting.

No citations are required for this paper, though if you do refer to any sources, you will need to cite them appropriately.

*If you have any questions or concerns about this assignment, please get in touch with me. Sooner is always better than later! I am happy to discuss ideas, look over outlines, and read early drafts. (Please give me a 24-hour turnaround time on drafts.) I encourage you to utilize USC Sumter's tutoring center if you are able to do so and want some good feedback on an early draft.*