

Summer Reading and Assignments - College Prep. American Lit.

2017 Summer Assignments

Stillman Valley High School

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Welcome to College Prep. American Lit.! As a student in this course, you will engage in careful reading and analysis of major literary works from the beginning of our country to the present. The first couple of weeks will be devoted to the study and discussion of your summer reading assignment. Because these tasks will take some time, do not procrastinate and wait until the week before school starts to begin reading and completing your assignments. In order to start the year off positive and productive, you must complete the assignments to the best of your ability. Your work should always reflect careful reading and insight.

Please note that summer assignments are due the first class session.

Required Texts:

“**Mother Tongue**” by Amy Tan

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

On Writing Well by William Zinsser

Also available on-line

- <http://www.brynmawr.edu/math/people/anmyers/ESem/on-writing-well.pdf>
- <https://lanekenworthy.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/soci109-zinsser2006-onwritingwell.pdf>

Assignment #1 Pre-Reading for the Novel

- 1) Read the reflective essay “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan to understand the struggle a writer may have in creating a true sense of identity.
- 2) Answer the eight questions about the essay in complete sentences.

Assignment #2 Read The Joy Luck Club

Assignment #3 Characterization

Characterization is the way an author develops a character, or reveals who characters are and what they are like.

Direct Characterization – The writer makes direct statements about a character.

Indirect Characterization - The writer gives clues and depends on the reader to draw conclusions (infer) about the character’s traits. Indirect characterization includes what the character says, does, thinks, feels, and what other people say or think about the character, including said character’s actions and words.

Directions: For one of the following three mother/daughter pairs in the novel (Suyuan/Jing-Mei, An-mei/Rose, Ying-ying/Lena)(**do not use Lindo/Waverly**), list three direct characterization quotes and seven indirect characterization quotes presented in the novel followed by the page number for indicating where each quote can be found in the text. For each of the direct characterization quotes (write down just the verbatim clauses and/or phrases), clarify what character trait is revealed by the author's description. For each of the indirect characterization clauses and/or phrases written verbatim from the text, explain the inferred character trait that is revealed. The provided worksheets can be used to organize your work, or you can originally create a format that meet the direction requirements.

This assignment will be what you use to write an **in class essay** utilizing MLA formatting that completely answers an essential question related to the novel. You will need these examples from the novel to serve as support for your analysis.

Assignment #4 Reading Vocabulary from *The Joy Luck Club*

Choose at least twenty-five words that were challenging or unfamiliar to you. Write the unfamiliar/challenging word and page number where the word be found within the text. Use a dictionary to define the word based on the way it is used in the book. Do not use a word to define itself.

Assignment #5 *On Writing Well*

This book focuses on the stylistic elements of nonfiction writing essential for effective communication. As an anchor book for all students planning on attending college, this book will allow a greater understanding of the terminology and approach towards analyzing nonfiction literature found on the SAT and expected in academic writing.

Read the first seven chapters of *On Writing Well* (pages 2-45).

For each chapter : 4 sentences

- 1) In a sentence, identify/summarize two main points the Zinsser is making.
- 2) Create an original poor/bad sentence demonstrating a problem Zinsser has identified/summarized in the chapter.
- 3) Create a corrected/better sentence applying one of Zinsser's main points you have identified/summarized from the chapter.
- 4) Explain why your corrected sentence is better.

Mother:

Revealed	Quote & Page Number	What Character Trait Is
Direct Characterization		
1		
2		
3		
Indirect Characterization		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Daughter

Revealed	Quote & Page Number	What Character Trait Is
Direct Characterization		
1		
2		
3		
Indirect Characterization		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Mother Tongue

by Amy Tan

I am not a scholar of English or literature. I cannot give you much more than personal opinions on the English language and its variations in this country or others.

I am a writer. And by that definition, I am someone who has always loved language. I am fascinated by language in daily life. I spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of language -- the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth. Language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all -- all the Englishes I grew up with.

Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I do use. I was giving a talk to a large group of people, the same talk I had already given to half a dozen other groups. The nature of the talk was about my writing, my life, and my book, *The Joy Luck Club*. The talk was going along well enough, until I remembered one major difference that made the whole talk sound wrong. My mother was in the room. And it was perhaps the first time she had heard me give a lengthy speech, using the kind of English I have never used with her. I was saying things like, "The intersection of memory upon imagination" and "There is an aspect of my fiction that relates to thus-and-thus"--a speech filled with carefully wrought grammatical phrases, burdened, it suddenly seemed to me, with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phrases, all the forms of standard English that I had learned in school and through books, the forms of English I did not use at home with my mother.

Just last week, I was walking down the street with my mother, and I again found myself conscious of the English I was using, the English I do use with her. We were talking about the price of new and used furniture and I heard myself saying this: "Not waste money that way." My husband was with us as well, and he didn't notice any switch in my English. And then I realized why. It's because over the twenty years we've been together I've often used that same kind of English with him, and sometimes he even uses it with me. It has become our language of intimacy, a different sort of English that relates to family talk, the language I grew up with.

So you'll have some idea of what this family talk I heard sounds like, I'll quote what my mother said during a recent conversation which I videotaped and then transcribed. During this conversation, my mother was talking about a political gangster in Shanghai who had the same last name as her family's, Du, and how the gangster in his early years wanted to be adopted by her family, which was rich by comparison. Later, the gangster became more powerful, far richer than my mother's family, and one day showed up at my mother's wedding to pay his respects. Here's what she said in part: "Du Yusong having

business like fruit stand. Like off the street kind. He is Du like Du Zong -- but not Tsung-ming Island people. The local people call putong, the river east side, he belong to that side local people. That man want to ask Du Zong father take him in like become own family. Du Zong father wasn't look down on him, but didn't take seriously, until that man big like become a mafia. Now important person, very hard to inviting him. Chinese way, came only to show respect, don't stay for dinner. Respect for making big celebration, he shows up. Mean gives lots of respect. Chinese custom. Chinese social life that way. If too important won't have to stay too long. He come to my wedding. I didn't see, I heard it. I gone to boy's side, they have YMCA dinner. Chinese age I was nineteen."

You should know that my mother's expressive command of English belies how much she actually understands. She reads the Forbes report, listens to Wall Street Week, converses daily with her stockbroker, reads all of Shirley MacLaine's books with ease--all kinds of things I can't begin to understand. Yet some of my friends tell me they understand 50 percent of what my mother says. Some say they understand 80 to 90 percent. Some say they understand none of it, as if she were speaking pure Chinese. But to me, my mother's English is perfectly clear, perfectly natural. It's my mother tongue. Her language, as I hear it, is vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery. That was the language that helped shape the way I saw things, expressed things, made sense of the world.

Lately, I've been giving more thought to the kind of English my mother speaks. Like others, I have described it to people as "broken" or "fractured" English. But I wince when I say that. It has always bothered me that I can think of no way to describe it other than "broken," as if it were damaged and needed to be fixed, as if it lacked a certain wholeness and soundness. I've heard other terms used, "limited English," for example. But they seem just as bad, as if everything is limited, including people's perceptions of the limited English speaker.

I know this for a fact, because when I was growing up, my mother's "limited" English limited my perception of her. I was ashamed of her English. I believed that her English reflected the quality of what she had to say. That is, because she expressed them imperfectly her thoughts were imperfect. And I had plenty of empirical evidence to support me: the fact that people in department stores, at banks, and at restaurants did not take her seriously, did not give her good service, pretended not to understand her, or even acted as if they did not hear her.

My mother has long realized the limitations of her English as well. When I was fifteen, she used to have me call people on the phone to pretend I was she. In this guise, I was forced to ask for information or even to complain and yell at people who had been rude to her. One time it was a call to her stockbroker in New

York. She had cashed out her small portfolio and it just so happened we were going to go to New York the next week, our very first trip outside California. I had to get on the phone and say in an adolescent voice that was not very convincing, "This is Mrs. Tan."

And my mother was standing in the back whispering loudly, "Why he don't send me check, already two weeks late. So mad he lie to me, losing me money."

And then I said in perfect English, "Yes, I'm getting rather concerned. You had agreed to send the check two weeks ago, but it hasn't arrived."

Then she began to talk more loudly. "What he want, I come to New York tell him front of his boss, you cheating me?" And I was trying to calm her down, make her be quiet, while telling the stockbroker, "I can't tolerate any more excuses. If I don't receive the check immediately, I am going to have to speak to your manager when I'm in New York next week." And sure enough, the following week there we were in front of this astonished stockbroker, and I was sitting there red-faced and quiet, and my mother, the real Mrs. Tan, was shouting at his boss in her impeccable broken English.

We used a similar routine just five days ago, for a situation that was far less humorous. My mother had gone to the hospital for an appointment, to find out about a benign brain tumor a CAT scan had revealed a month ago. She said she had spoken very good English, her best English, no mistakes. Still, she said, the hospital did not apologize when they said they had lost the CAT scan and she had come for nothing. She said they did not seem to have any sympathy when she told them she was anxious to know the exact diagnosis, since her husband and son had both died of brain tumors. She said they would not give her any more information until the next time and she would have to make another appointment for that. So she said she would not leave until the doctor called her daughter. She wouldn't budge. And when the doctor finally called her daughter, me, who spoke in perfect English -- lo and behold -- we had assurances the CAT scan would be found, promises that a conference call on Monday would be held, and apologies for any suffering my mother had gone through for a most regrettable mistake.

I think my mother's English almost had an effect on limiting my possibilities in life as well. Sociologists and linguists probably will tell you that a person's developing language skills are more influenced by peers. But I do think that the language spoken in the family, especially in immigrant families which are more insular, plays a large role in shaping the language of the child. And I believe that it affected my results on achievement tests, I.Q. tests, and the SAT. While my English skills were never judged as poor, compared to math, English could not be considered my strong suit. In grade school I did moderately well,

getting perhaps B's, sometimes B-pluses, in English and scoring perhaps in the sixtieth or seventieth percentile on achievement tests. But those scores were not good enough to override the opinion that my true abilities lay in math and science, because in those areas I achieved A's and scored in the ninetieth percentile or higher.

This was understandable. Math is precise; there is only one correct answer. Whereas, for me at least, the answers on English tests were always a judgment call, a matter of opinion and personal experience. Those tests were constructed around items like fill-in-the-blank sentence completion, such as, "Even though Tom was, Mary thought he was --." And the correct answer always seemed to be the most bland combinations of thoughts, for example, "Even though Tom was shy, Mary thought he was charming:" with the grammatical structure "even though" limiting the correct answer to some sort of semantic opposites, so you wouldn't get answers like, "Even though Tom was foolish, Mary thought he was ridiculous:" Well, according to my mother, there were very few limitations as to what Tom could have been and what Mary might have thought of him. So I never did well on tests like that

The same was true with word analogies, pairs of words in which you were supposed to find some sort of logical, semantic relationship -- for example, "Sunset is to nightfall as is to ." And here you would be presented with a list of four possible pairs, one of which showed the same kind of relationship: red is to stoplight, bus is to arrival, chills is to fever, yawn is to boring: Well, I could never think that way. I knew what the tests were asking, but I could not block out of my mind the images already created by the first pair, "sunset is to nightfall"--and I would see a burst of colors against a darkening sky, the moon rising, the lowering of a curtain of stars. And all the other pairs of words --red, bus, stoplight, boring--just threw up a mass of confusing images, making it impossible for me to sort out something as logical as saying: "A sunset precedes nightfall" is the same as "a chill precedes a fever." The only way I would have gotten that answer right would have been to imagine an associative situation, for example, my being disobedient and staying out past sunset, catching a chill at night, which turns into feverish pneumonia as punishment, which indeed did happen to me.

I have been thinking about all this lately, about my mother's English, about achievement tests. Because lately I've been asked, as a writer, why there are not more Asian Americans represented in American literature. Why are there few Asian Americans enrolled in creative writing programs? Why do so many Chinese students go into engineering! Well, these are broad sociological questions I can't begin to answer. But I have noticed in surveys -- in fact, just last week -- that Asian students, as a whole, always do significantly better on math achievement tests than in English. And this makes me think that there are other Asian-American students whose English spoken in the home might also be described as "broken" or

"limited." And perhaps they also have teachers who are steering them away from writing and into math and science, which is what happened to me.

Fortunately, I happen to be rebellious in nature and enjoy the challenge of disproving assumptions made about me. I became an English major my first year in college, after being enrolled as pre-med. I started writing nonfiction as a freelancer the week after I was told by my former boss that writing was my worst skill and I should hone my talents toward account management.

But it wasn't until 1985 that I finally began to write fiction. And at first I wrote using what I thought to be wittily crafted sentences, sentences that would finally prove I had mastery over the English language. Here's an example from the first draft of a story that later made its way into *The Joy Luck Club*, but without this line: "That was my mental quandary in its nascent state." A terrible line, which I can barely pronounce.

Fortunately, for reasons I won't get into today, I later decided I should envision a reader for the stories I would write. And the reader I decided upon was my mother, because these were stories about mothers. So with this reader in mind -- and in fact she did read my early drafts--I began to write stories using all the Englishes I grew up with: the English I spoke to my mother, which for lack of a better term might be described as "simple"; the English she used with me, which for lack of a better term might be described as "broken"; my translation of her Chinese, which could certainly be described as "watered down"; and what I imagined to be her translation of her Chinese if she could speak in perfect English, her internal language, and for that I sought to preserve the essence, but neither an English nor a Chinese structure. I wanted to capture what language ability tests can never reveal: her intent, her passion, her imagery, the rhythms of her speech and the nature of her thoughts.

Apart from what any critic had to say about my writing, I knew I had succeeded where it counted when my mother finished reading my book and gave me her verdict: "So easy to read."

Mother Tongue

1. A reflective essay is a short piece of nonfiction in which the author uses informal language and draws conclusions from personal experiences. Based on the first eight sentences of this essay, how do we know this is a reflective essay?
2. How does Tan's language change when she gives her speech on page 1?
3. What division in her sense of identity does Tan experience while giving her lecture on pages 1-2?
4. What point is Tan making on page 2-3 with her anecdote about speaking for her mother? Do you find her point valid? Explain.
5. In what ways did Tan's sense of her mother's English differ from the perceptions of strangers? (3)
6. How does Tan believe her mother's English has affected her own life? (3-5)
7. What point about defying expectations is Tan making? Do you agree with her? (5)
8. What would it be like to live in a place where a language barrier made it difficult for you to communicate with others? What actions might you take to overcome the barrier?

May 16, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child is scheduled for College Prep. American Lit. during the 2017-2018 school year. All enrolled students are required to read *The Joy Luck Club*, seven chapters from *On Writing Well*, and complete the three assignments directly related to the reading. I have enclosed your child's commitment statement at the bottom of this letter

Each student can obtain his or her print own copy of the titles or use one of the offered school copies. Additional copies of the assignments are posted on the school website.

All assignments are due on the first day of class.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at eliegl@mail.meridian223.org.

Cordially,

Mr. Edward Liegl
Stillman Valley High School English Teacher

I (your name printed) _____ understand and affirm that I have registered for and am committed to completing my requested College Prep. American Lit. summer assignments. Additionally, I am aware that the assignments will need to be completed prior to the first session of the class in the fall.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____