**Who’s Hsu?**

***Directions:*** *Fill in the chart as you did for the Woo family. Be descriptive in your identifications; do not merely put family relationships. Under “Traits,” for the starred names, give as many traits as possible. For the others, give the predominant trait if there is one.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **People** | **Identification** | **Traits or Purpose** |
| Taitai |  |  |
| \*\*\*An-mei |  |  |
| \*\*\*Rose |  |  |
| Ted |  |  |
| \*\*\*Second Wife |  |  |
| George |  |  |
| First Wife |  |  |
| Third Wife |  |  |
| Fifth Wife |  |  |
| Popo |  |  |
| Aunt |  |  |
| Yan Chang |  |  |
| Wu Tsing |  |  |
| Old Mr. Chou |  |  |
| Luke |  |  |
| Bing |  |  |
| Syaudi |  |  |
| **Places** | **Who lived here?** | |
| Tientsin (Tianjin) |  | |
| Ningpo (Ningbo) |  | |

**Taitai**

***Directions:*** *Respond to the following questions.*

How is Taitai treated by her brother and her sister-in-law?

Of what Chinese tradition is she the victim?

What tradition does she perform to help her mother? What does this show?

In the first story Taitai is referred to several times as a ghost. Find these references and explain them.

Just before arriving in Tientsin, she changes out of her white mourning dress and puts on Western clothing and makeup. What does this change suggest?

Why does she step on An-mei’s “pearl” necklace?

How does she apparently feel about her “husband”? Give proof.

What choices does she have besides suicide?

Aside from escape, what other reason does she have for her suicide?

Do you find her admirable? Explain.

In what way has she swallowed her own tears?

**An-mei**

***Directions:*** *Complete the following.*

**Part A: In China**

An-mei realizes that Popo’s stories are really for her mother. What advice is Popo giving?

An-mei is permanently scarred by the soup that falls on her. What do the soup and the scar represent?

What is meant by the last sentence of “Scar”: “No scar, no skin, no flesh”?

An-mei is “raised the Chinese way . . . taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people’s misery, to eat my own bitterness.” What events in her childhood reflect this?

Why is she initially attracted to Second Wife?

What alternative gift does her mother give her? What eventually happens to this gift in America?

On the day Wu Tsing promises to honor An-mei’s mother and An-mei crushes Second Wife’s gift, An-mei says, “I learned to shout.” What does this mean?

Name two occasions on which An-mei is almost “without wood”--listening to people other than her mother.

**Part B: In America**

What becomes of An-mei’s Bible? What does she write in it? What is the significance of *how* she writes it?

What is *nengkan*?

After Bing’s death, how does An-mei try to show *nengkan*?

An-mei believes in the dangers children are predisposed to, as described in her book. She knows she can prevent all of them. How does this ironic turn of fate affect her faith in her *nengkan*, as well as in religion?

An-mei immediately suspects Ted’s reason for sending the check. What is it?

She tells her daughter to listen to her mother but not to others and to speak up for herself. How does her Chinese experience teach her these lessons?

What might the throwing of her mother’s ring into the ocean symbolize for An-mei?

Is An-mei admirable? Give proof.

**Rose**

***Directions:*** *Complete the following*

**Part A: As a child**

At the picnic, why does she call her brothers anchors?

Is she in any way responsible for Bing’s death? Give proof.

Why does she go out with her mother the next day?

Does she share her mother’s *nengkan*? Give proof.

What do her dreams about Mr. Chou suggest?

**Part B: As an adult**

What does she originally like about Ted?

What brings them together and holds them?

What does she allow Ted to do because of her interest only in her job?

After his malpractice suit, she finds choices confusing. When does she finally make a clear choice?

Despite her mother’s warning about being “without wood,” she listens to many people about her marriage problems. What help do they give?

Prove her indecision.

What finally makes her free?

What choice--and answer--does she finally make?

**Second Wife**

***Directions:*** *Although a secondary character, Second Wife is an important figure in the life of Taitai and, to some degree, An-mei. Her actions affect their futures. Consider her role in the novel as you respond to the following.*

How does Second Wife try to win over An-mei?

What does Taitai realize about her?

How does Second Wife control First Wife?

How does she control Third Wife?

How does she control Wu Tsing?

How does she trick Taitai into marrying Wu Tsing?

How does she get her infant son?

Is Taitai’s suicide a false one, like Second Wife’s, that goes wrong? Give proof.

After An-mei crushes the pearls in front of Second Wife, Second Wife’s hair begins to turn white. What does this suggest?

**Mothers, Daughters, and Mothers of Mothers**

***Directions:*** *Again, discuss the two types of conflict shown in the stories. Discuss where, when, and how the conflicts arise and what the resolution is, if any.*

Mother versus daughter (Rose and An-mei, An-mei and Taitai):

China (East) versus America (West):

On page 1 of “Without Wood,” Rose tells of her believing her mother’s tales of ghosts and magic because “the power of her words was that strong.” At the end of the story, when she tells Ted he can’t throw her away, he looks confused and scared: “The power of my words was that strong.” What does this repetition show about mother and daughter and East and West?

Both An-mei and Taitai suffer wounds that result in scars while in tentative contact with their mothers in “Scar.” Discuss the cause of the wounds, the connections to the mothers, and An-mei’s comment about her scar. What do these scars figuratively mean?

**Wives, Husbands, and Concubines**

“A wife is sought for her virtue, a concubine for her beauty.”---Chinese proverb

***Directions:*** *The Hsu stories involve three marriages and one concubinage. Answer these questions about the relationships.*

**Taitai’s first husband** (shown only through his painting on Popo’s wall and through Yan Chang’s story of Taitai’s past)

Occupation:

Religion:

His death’s effect on her:

Happiness of marriage:

**Wu Tsing**

Occupation:

Relationship with First Wife:

Relationship with Second Wife:

Relationship with Third Wife:

Relationship with Taitai:

Taitai’s feelings for him:

**George** (seen only in “The Joy Luck Club”)

Office in the Joy Luck Club:

Relationship with An-mei:

**Ted**

Occupation:

Cause for change in attitude toward Rose:

His treatment of Rose during divorce proceedings:

His reaction to her long-delayed decisiveness:

Compare Ted to Wu Tsing as husbands. Are they alike in their attitudes toward their wives? Explain.

Compare Rose to Taitai as wives.

**The Garden of Marriage**

***Directions:*** *Tan uses garden and weed imagery to show the condition of Ted and Rose’s marriage in “Without Wood.” Even Mr. Chou is incorporated into the image pattern. Respond to the following.*

Trace the images throughout the story. Decide what each represents and how each use fits into the pattern.

What does the former condition of the garden show about Ted?

What does the present condition show about Rose?

How does her *hulihuda* statement connect with the imagery?

What does the final dream suggest?

What about Rose’s name?

Finally, what does the imagery suggest about the future of the marriage?