***The Joy Luck Club* Close Reading #1**

**Excerpted from Chapter 1 “**Feathers from a Thousand Li Away**”**

**Focus: imagery, extended metaphor, symbolism, point-of-view, theme**

*Review the following questions, then read the passage. As you read, annotate the text with the questions in mind. Then come back up here and write thoughtful responses to these questions.*

**Questions:**

1. **Consider the speaker from whose point-of-view this story is told. What can we infer about her at the beginning of the passage? What do her hopes reveal about her values? Support your answer with details from the text.**
2. **How has the new setting impacted the speaker’s hopes? Support your answer with details from the text.**
3. **How does the swan serve as an extended metaphor? Support your answer with details from the text.**
4. **What is the symbolic meaning of the feather at the end of the story? Support your answer with details from the text.**
5. **Write a statement that reflects the theme of the passage. Where does this theme begin to emerge? Where is this theme solidified? Support your answer with details from the text.**

“Feathers from a Thousand Li Away”

The old woman remembered a swan she had bought many years ago in Shanghai for a ridiculous sum. This bird, boasted the market vendor, was once a duck that stretched its neck in hopes of becoming a goose, and now look! -- It is too beautiful to eat.

Then the woman and the swan sailed across an ocean many thousands of li wide, stretching their necks towards America. On her journey, she cooed to the swan: "In America I will have a daughter just like me. But over there nobody will say her worth is measured by the loudness of her husband's belch. Over there nobody will look down on her, because I will make her speak only perfect American English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow. She will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan-- a creature that became more than was hoped for."

But when she arrived at the new country, the immigration officials pulled her swan away from her, leaving the old woman fluttering her arms and with only one swan feather for a memory. And then she had to fill out so many forms she forgot why she had come and what she had left behind.

Now the woman was old. And she had a daughter who grew up speaking only English and swallowing more Coca-Cola than sorrow. For a long time now the woman had wanted to give her daughter the single feather and tell her, "This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and carries with it all my good intentions." And she waited, year after year, for the day she could tell her daughter this in perfect American English.

**This story opens the novel *The Joy Luck Club*. Based on your analysis of this passage, what can you predict the novel will be about?**