**What Saints Go Marching?**

***Directions:*** *Fill in the following chart. 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, but also tell the character’s purpose in the book.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **People** | **Identification** | **Traits or Purpose** |
| \*\*\*Ying-ying St.Clair |  |  |
| \*\*\*Lena |  |  |
| \*\*\*Harold Livotny |  |  |
| Ying-ying’s mother |  |  |
| Teresa Sorci |  |  |
| Arnold |  |  |
| Clifford St. Clair (Saint) |  |  |
| The Moon lady |  |  |
| Amah |  |  |
| **Place** | **Who lived here?** |
| Wushi (Wuxi) |  |

**Ying-ying**

***Directions:*** *Answer the following.*

**Part A: In China**

What is Ying-ying’s social status in China?

What is an amah?

Ying-ying’s mother made her tiger clothes for the Moon Festival. What do these foreshadow?

Why are her two younger sisters half sisters?

She is told to stand still and let a dragonfly come to her and “hide in the comfort of your shadow.” When does she later figuratively stand still until a “dragonfly” comes?

As a child she loves her shadow, her dark side. At what stage of her life can she be said to *be* her shadow?

Who is Baba?

Amah gave up her baby son when her husband died. How does Ying-ying follow in her footsteps?

On the “floating teahouse,” what contrast is shown between the front of the boat and the back?

How is the fishing bird symbolically like Ying-ying and the other Chinese females?

What might her smearing her clothes with blood symbolize?

How do the people of the lower class treat her?

What is the moral of the Mood Lady story?

What does the Mood Lady’s turning into a man show about Chinese theater?

She much later remembers her wish. What was it? When in her later life is she figuratively lost?

**Part B: In America**

According to her daughter, what happened to her over the years when Lena was young?

What does Ying-ying always expect to happen? Why?

Her mother tells the young Ying-ying, with her tangled loose hair, that she is like the shamed lady ghosts who drowned themselves and floated into homes “to show their everlasting despair.” In what ironic way is her mother correct?

What seems to cause her first marriage?

What does the North Wind do to Ying-ying’s husband?

Why does she abort her unborn son?

Describe the two colors and ways of a tiger.

She uses her black side after her ten years of “waiting between trees.” What proofs of this side are shown in her work as a shopgirl and her romance with St. Clair?

When she gives up both her black and gold with marriage, what remains?

What will she do now that her husband is dead and therefore knows all her carefully-hidden secrets?

What do her comments, when Lena is young, about things not being balanced foreshadow?

What does this event mean to her? How does she react?

While visiting Lena and Harold, what does Ying-ying realize that they do not?

How are they out of balance?

What is meant by her “waiting between the trees”?

How is her childhood fascination with shadows reflected in her later life?

**Lena**

***Directions:*** *Answer the following.*

**Part A: As a child**

In the beggar story, told as if it were a myth, the beggar says the worst is on the other side of the wall. What is the other side?

How does Lena figuratively apply this story later?

Lena feels she should know the worst possible thing that can happen to her. She senses her mother’s terrors. What is the worst thing that happens to her as a child?

How doe her translation lies differ from her father’s?

Why does the red-faced Chinese man throw her mother off balance?

What does her father not notice about his wife?

Reread the mother’s description of the baby’s birth. How does Lena react? What does her “vision” show about Ying-ying?

What does Lena think is the worst possible thing that can happen to the girl next door?

What is the “voice pressing against my wall”?

How does the other girl’s family contrast with Lena’s?

According to the girl, how doe she and her mother get along?

What does Lena realize about them? Why does she cry for joy?

Whose home life was more unbearable, the girl’s or Lena’s? Why?

**Part B: As an adult**

What trait distinguishes Harold?

The key word in the story “Rice Husband” is *rice*. What do grains of rice left in a bowl represent to the young Lena?

How does she try to “kill” Arnold?

How does she react to news of his death, for which she feels responsible?

She asks, about Arnold, “Isn’t hate merely the result of wounded love?” How is this true of her feelings toward Harold?

How might her childhood have affected her relationship with Harold?

Is her concern about not getting a fair salary logical?

What points are brought out in the discussion about ice cream?

What does Harold’s “poorly designed” table represent?

What does its collapse suggest?

**Mother and Daughter**

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

Mother versus daughter:

China (East) versus America (West):

**Marriages**

***Directions:*** *All three marriages in the St. Clair family have a rather slippery basis to them; none are built on something solid. Discuss the following items.*

**Ying-ying’s first husband**

His character:

Reason for marriage:

Happiness of marriage:

Effect on her:

Cause of his death:

**Clifford St. Clair**

His character:

His job:

Her reaction to marriage:

Happiness of marriage:

Cause of his death:

Effect on her:

**Harold Livotny**

His job:

His source of ideas:

His flaws (or *pockmarks*):

Effect on her:

Chances of marriage lasting

A “rice Christian” was a Chinese person who hung around missionaries for a free meal. What apparently is meant by the story’s title “Rice Husband”?

What does her mother mean, at the end of this story, when she says, “Then why don’t you stop it?”

In what sense are both Lena and Harold to blame for the condition of their marriage?

Concerning her first husband, Ying-ying says, “It is because I had so much joy then that I came to have so much hate.” Discuss any of the marriages shown in the novel in terms of this comment.

**The Moon Lady**

***Directions:*** *The Moon Lady is a character in Chinese folklore. Tan has used the old story to create a new one. Respond to the following questions.*

Who is her husband?

What does he do to save the world?

What does the Queen Mother of the Western Skies give him?

After he goes off to fast for a year, what does the Moon Lady do?

What is her punishment?

What does she say about woman and man?

What familiar stories are suggested to you by this story?

How much does the Chinese view of women differ from the traditional Western view?

What does the changing of the mystical Moon Lady into an unattractive man show about Ying-ying at this point?

Discuss Amy Tan’s statement in *NEA Today* (October 1991) that the story “tells of the loss and reclamation of cultural identity.”