



Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother

By Amy Chua

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Genre & subject

Chinese American Women -- Biography

Mothers and Daughters - United States

Synopsis

An awe-inspiring, often hilarious, and unerringly honest story of one mother's exercise in extreme parenting, revealing the rewards-and the costs-of raising her children the Chinese way. All decent parents want to do what's best for their children. What *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* reveals is that the Chinese just have a totally different idea of how to do that. Western parents try to respect their children's individuality, encouraging them to pursue their true passions and providing a nurturing environment. The Chinese believe that the best way to protect your children is by preparing them for the future and arming them with skills, strong work habits, and inner confidence. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* chronicles Chua's iron-willed decision to raise her daughters, Sophia and Lulu, her way—the Chinese way—and the remarkable results her choice inspires.

Author biography

Amy L. Chua is the John M. Duff, Jr. Professor of Law at Yale Law School. She joined the Yale faculty in 2001 after teaching at Duke Law School for 7 years. Prior to starting her teaching career, she was a corporate law associate at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton. She specialises in the study of international business transactions, law and development, ethnic conflict, and globalisation and the law and is noted for her parenting memoir, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*.

Discussion starters

- What is your overall reaction to Battle Hymn of the Mother Tiger? Are you appalled or impressed, in agreement, disagreement...or something else?
- What kind of mother is Amy Chua? Do you wish you'd had a mother like Chua? Or that you were a mother like Chua?
- Is this a parenting manual? Are Western parents too soft on, or too permissive toward, their children? Does Amy Chua offer an alternative parenting model?
- What is the most extreme example of Amy Chua's mothering? Which incidents stuck with you more than others—the piano practice threats? The birthday card rejection?
- Success for Chua is important: how does she define success...and how do you define it? How important is success to you?

- Consider whether Chua's children are such extraordinarily high achievers (musically and academically) because of their strict upbringing...or because of their innate abilities, i.e., genetics? (See her father's background in the Author Bio above.)
- According to Chua, her parenting method is typical of Chinese families. Is their method—with its strict demands for high achievement—superior to that of Western parents? How would you describe the differences between parenting in the two cultures?
- Do you agree or disagree with Chua's criticisms of various aspects of Western culture—Facebook and junk food being two examples?
- What does Chua think of the Western emphasis on self-esteem? Do you agree...or disagree with her assessment?
- Chua dismisses the happy endings of Disney family movies by saying that that's "just Disney's way of appealing to all the people who never win prizes." What do you think—are the movies' soft-focus on parenting values pandering to low-achievers, to those who will never rise above average?
- Part of Chua's rationale is that she understands what all Chinese parents understand: "that nothing is fun until you're good at it." Do you agree? Is playing the piano well as an adult, for instance, worth those tooth-marks bitten into the piano as a child?
- Chua says of herself, "the truth is I'm good at enjoying life." What do you make of her admission? Has she risked teaching her daughters the same attitude toward life?
- What role does Chua's husband, Jed, play in all this? What should his role have been? What do you make of the fact that Chua is not unlike his own mother?
- How did her sister's illness change Chua's views on life?
- When Lulu had her outburst in Russia, did you root for her, or shrink back in horror?
- How, eventually, is Chua "humbled" by her daughters—in what way do they prove wiser than their mother? Is, in fact, Chua truly humbled by Lulu? Does she have a genuine awakening?
- What area some of the books humorous moments. Many reviewers talked about laughing out loud. What sections do you find especially funny, even hilarious?
- Is success worth the time and effort it takes to maintain oversight and discipline...and, most especially, is it worth a child's unhappiness? Is that unhappiness only momentary in the larger scheme of life? In the end, is the payoff—a lifetime of accomplishment—worth the cost?
- What do you predict for Chua's daughters? Do you think they will raise their children with the same strict standards their mother applied to them?

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