

# AMY TAN



THE  
BONESETTER'S  
DAUGHTER

The Bonesetter's Daughter, Amy Tan, Penguin, 2001, 1101202955, 9781101202951, 400 pages. More information to be announced soon on this forthcoming title from Penguin USA.

The Kitchen God's Wife , Amy Tan, Sep 21, 2006, Fiction, 416 pages. Winnie and Helen have kept each other's worst secrets for more than fifty years. Now, because she believes she is dying, Helen wants to expose everything. And Winnie angrily ....

Perché i pesci non affogano , Amy Tan, , Fiction, 448 pages. Nascondevo i miei sentimenti più profondi così bene che finii col dimenticare dove li avevo messi. Si può continuare a essere vivi anche da morti? Evidentemente sì. Bibi Chen ....

Passing Into Light , Sharon Ewell Foster, Mar 1, 2003, Fiction, 334 pages. In a sequel to Riding Through Shadows, Mother, Ma Dear, and Tony Taylor wonder if Sheri exists outside of Shirley Ferris's imagination and considers the contents and mysterious ....

De dood van mijn moeder , Amy Tan, De dood van mijn moeder, 2002, History, 387 pages. Als een Chinees-Amerikaanse vrouw wordt geconfronteerd met de dementie van haar Chinese moeder, ontdekt ze haar aantekeningen over haar veelbewogen leven..

The Children's Writer , Gary Crew, Feb 1, 2010, Fiction, 240 pages. Charlie Bloome wants to be a writer. Twenty-three years old, he is studying literature and living with his game partner, Alice - 'Lootie' - who plans to be a teacher and is ....

I cento sensi segreti , Amy Tan, 1998, Fiction, 336 pages. .

Matilda Bone , Karen Cushman, 2002, Juvenile Fiction, 167 pages. Fourteen-year-old Matilda, an apprentice bonesetter and practitioner of medicine in a village in medieval England, tries to reconcile the various aspects of her life, both ....

Amy Tan , Bella Adams, Jul 22, 2005, Literary Criticism, 220 pages. The first study of Amy Tan's entire oeuvre, with individual chapters on The Joy Luck Club, The kitchen god's wife, The hundred secret senses and The bonesetter's daughter. The ....

Iron Shoes A Novel, Molly Giles, Feb 21, 2001, Fiction, 240 pages. From acclaimed short story writer Molly Giles, author of the Pulitzer Prize-nominated collection Rough Translations, comes this splendid debut novel about one woman's spirited ....

Love Made of Heart , Teresa LeYung Ryan, 2002, Fiction, 304 pages. When an emotional breakdown forces her to hospitalize her mother, forever shaming the family, Ruby Lin, torn between two very different cultures, tries to help her mother heal ....

The Bonesetter's Daughter dramatically chronicles the tortured, devoted relationship between LuLing Young and her daughter Ruth. . . . A strong novel, filled with idiosyncratic, sympathetic characters, haunting images, historical complexity, significant contemporary themes, and suspenseful mystery.

At the beginning of Amy Tan's fourth novel, two packets of papers written in Chinese calligraphy fall into the hands of Ruth Young. One bundle is titled Things I Know Are True and the other, Things I Must Not Forget. The author? That would be the protagonist's mother, LuLing, who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. In these documents the elderly matriarch, born in China in 1916, has set down a record of her birth and family history, determined to keep the facts from vanishing as her mind deteriorates.

A San Francisco career woman who makes her living by ghostwriting self-help books, Ruth has little idea of her mother's past or true identity. What's more, their relationship has tended to be an angry one. Still, Ruth recognizes the onset of LuLing's decline--along with her own remorse over past

rancor--and hires a translator to decipher the packets. She also resolves to "ask her mother to tell her about her life. For once, she would ask. She would listen. She would sit down and not be in a hurry or have anything else to do."

Framed at either end by Ruth's chapters, the central portion of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* takes place in China in the remote, mountainous region where anthropologists discovered Peking Man in the 1920s. Here superstition and tradition rule over a succession of tiny villages. And here LuLing grows up under the watchful eye of her hideously scarred nursemaid, Precious Auntie. As she makes clear, it's not an enviable setting: I noticed the ripe stench of a pig pasture, the pockmarked land dug up by dragon-bone dream-seekers, the holes in the walls, the mud by the wells, the dustiness of the unpaved roads. I saw how all the women we passed, young and old, had the same bland face, sleepy eyes that were mirrors of their sleepy minds. Nor is rural isolation the worst of it. LuLing's family, a clan of ink makers, believes itself cursed by its connection to a local doctor, who cooks up his potions and remedies from human bones. And indeed, a great deal of bad luck befalls the narrator and her sister GaoLing before they can finally engineer their escape from China. Along the way, familial squabbles erupt around every corner, particularly among mothers, daughters, and sisters. And as she did in her earlier *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan uses these conflicts to explore the intricate dynamic that exists between first-generation Americans and their immigrant elders.

--Victoria Jenkins --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In its rich character portrayals and sensitivity to the nuances of mother-daughter relationships, Tan's new novel is the real successor to, and equal of, *The Joy Luck Club*. This luminous and gripping book demonstrates enhanced tenderness and wisdom, however; it carries the texture of real life and reflects the paradoxes historical events can produce. Ruth Young is a 40-ish ghostwriter in San Francisco who periodically goes mute, a metaphorical indication of her inability to express her true feelings to the man she lives with, Art Kamen, a divorced father of two teenage daughters. Ruth's inability to talk is subtly echoed in the story of her mother LuLing's early life in China, which forms the long middle section of the novel. Overbearing, accusatory, darkly pessimistic, LuLing has always been a burden to Ruth. Now, at 77, she has Alzheimer's, but luckily she had recorded in a diary the extraordinary events of her childhood and youth in a small village in China during the years that included the discovery nearby of the bones of Peking Man, the Japanese invasion, the birth of the Republic and the rise of Communism. LuLing was raised by a nursemaid called Precious Auntie, the daughter of a famous bonesetter. Once beautiful, Precious Auntie's face was burned in a suicide attempt, her mouth sealed with scar tissue. When LuLing eventually learns the secrets of Precious Auntie's tragic life, she is engulfed by shame and guilt. These emotions are echoed by Ruth when she reads her own mother's revelations, and she finally understands why LuLing thought herself cursed. Tan conjures both settings with resonant detail, juxtaposing scenes of rural domestic life in a China still ruled by superstition and filial obedience, and of upscale California half a century later. The novel exhibits a poignant clarity as it investigates the dilemma of adult children who must become caretakers of their elderly parents, a situation Tan articulates with integrity and exemplary empathy for both generations. Agent, Sandy Dijkstra. (Feb. 19) Forecast: With a readership already clamoring for the book, and Tan embarking on a 22-city tour, this novel will be a sure hit; its terrific sepia-tinted cover photo of a woman in old China only adds to its allure. Moreover, readers will be intrigued by Tan's hint that this story about family secrets is semi-autobiographical. The dedication reads: "On the last day my mother spent on earth, I learned her real name, as well as that of my grandmother."

Two mother-daughter stories are presented here, as the relationship between LuLing and her mother are also central to the telling of this wonderful story. Amy Tan does a superb job of presenting these separate yet connected narratives into a masterpiece of a book, blending character, dialogue, and narrative seamlessly (and seemingly effortlessly) together.

Readers of the author's previous novels will find similarity between *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and her previous novels. Some readers, as I, will find everything comfortably familiar. On the other hand, it is only fair to criticize the formulaic sameness of her work. The repeated exploration of the relationship between a Chinese-born mother and her American born daughter is a bit off-putting; as is the parallel telling of two generations' narrative. Also, I don't find that her male characters are

realistically drawn, and the relationship struggles between the daughter and her significant other (at least in Ms. Tan's last two books) seem rather superficial.

I purchased this book when it was first released (I'd become a fan of Amy Tan's books having read the other three before), and then just out of curiosity decided to check the reviews of it here at amazon to catch a glimpse of what I was getting into. I'm sad to say that many of the reviews readers gave "The Bonesetter's Daughter", of it being a "rehashing of the same story" and such made me prejudiced towards it, and I put down the book for a few weeks. Pure boredom this past weekend made me finally resolve to give it a try anyway, and I could barely stop to put it down. Sure, it can be argued that the bulk of Ms. Tan's books focus on the mother-daughter relationship dynamic and of past wrongs done to them by men of their pasts...but I think that part of the reason why she's successfully been able to transform these themes into their own unique story every time, is because they deal with a part of history in which several different cultures can find kinship. The fact is that Amy Tan is a master of capturing true human emotion in her characters' lives, that touches the reader in a very poignant way. And this one is no exception. "The Bonesetter's Daughter" has now become my favorite of Amy Tan's novels, and I just moments ago finished it and passed it along to my own mother telling her that she "MUST read this book right away!" I'd like to extend the same recommendation to everyone else who is considering taking up "The Bonesetter's Daughter" as well. Luyi--\*all that you wish\*

In "The Bonesetter's Daughter," set in San Francisco and in North China, Amy Tan tells the story of Ruth Young and her mother, LuLing, in a story that reflects much of her own background. In the story, Ruth is a successful "book doctor," a ghostwriter who translates other people's thoughts into a coherent book--a skill at which she is adept. She is the "as told to" name below the author's, although the real creative effort is her own.

Like Amy Tan herself, Ruth is in her forties, and the similarities do not stop there. While the book is not strictly autobiographical, there are a great many parallels between the author and Ruth. For example: both of their mothers were stricken with Alzheimers disease, and both had stormy relationships with their Chinese mothers, both of whom were suicidal.

Ruth's mother, LuLing, came from China in the late 'forties, as did Amy Tan's mother. The story is told in three parts: first is Ruth's ten-year relationship with Art and his two daughters--teenagers in the story--with whom she lives; a relationship that is in trouble for reasons that Ruth cannot determine or resolve. Art seems to be a self-centered individual who takes advantage of Ruth's tendency to always place her own interests secondary.

The second part of the story is LuLing's own story in China, which, fearing memory loss, she is writing, in Chinese calligraphy and which she eventually presents to her daughter. Ruth, because of their difficult relationship lets the manuscript gather dust for seven years, untranslated. LuLing's life story is a tale of tragedy and suffering, lost love and a tempestuous relationship with her own mother, Precious Auntie, which later--after her mother's death--haunts her.[Read more &rsaquo;](#)

The Bonesetter's Daughter is divided into two major stories. The first is about Ruth, a Chinese-American woman living in San Francisco. She worries that her elderly mother, Lu Ling, is gradually becoming more and more demented. Lu Ling seems increasingly forgetful, and makes bizarre comments about her family and her own past.

Ruth is a self-sufficient woman who makes her living as a ghostwriter for self-help books. She lives with her boyfriend, Art Kamen, and acts as a stepmother to Art's two teenage daughters, Dory and Fia. Meanwhile, as LuLing is showing signs of dementia, Ruth struggles to juggle her mother's illness, her job, and her relationship. As an adult, Ruth struggles to understand her mother and her strange behavior during Ruth's childhood. Although she loves her mother, she also resents her for having criticized her harshly when she was young and forcing her to obey strict rules. LuLing believed that young Ruth had the ability to communicate with the spirit world, and often expected her to produce messages from the ghost of LuLing's long-dead nursemaid, Precious Auntie, by writing on a sand tray.

LuLing's autobiography makes up the middle section of the book. This story within a story describes LuLing's early life in a small Chinese village called Immortal Heart. LuLing is raised by a mute, burned nursemaid called "Precious Auntie." It is later revealed that Precious Auntie sustained her injuries by swallowing burning ink resin. Although the oldest daughter in her family, LuLing is ignored by her mother in favor of her younger sister GaoLing. However, Precious Auntie was entirely devoted to caring for LuLing.

LuLing's story goes further back, describing Precious Auntie's childhood as the daughter of a local bonesetter. The teen-aged Precious Auntie is the only person who knows the location of a hidden cave where many ancient "dragon bones" can be found, knowledge that she retains even after being burned and coming to live with LuLing's family. After the discovery of the Peking Man, fossilized bones and information about where they might be found becomes extremely valuable. A local family, the Changs, wish to arrange a marriage between LuLing and their son Fu Nan because they believe that LuLing can lead them to the fossil cave. LuLing's family approves of the marriage, but Precious Auntie violently opposes it. Unable to speak in detail, she writes LuLing a long letter explaining her reasons, but LuLing does not read it to its end.

Only after Precious Auntie's death does LuLing learn that her nursemaid was actually her mother, and that the woman she had thought to be her mother is actually her father's sister. After Precious Auntie's death, GaoLing marries Fu Nan and LuLing is sent away to a Christian orphanage where she completes her education, grows up and becomes a teacher. Here, she meets her first husband, Pan Kai Jing. LuLing lives in the orphanage as a teacher through World War II, often going to extreme lengths to protect the students from the Japanese soldiers and other dangers. A few years later she is reunited with GaoLing. The two "sisters" immigrate to America separately and marry a pair of brothers, Edmund and Edwin. LuLing's second husband dies from a hit and run accident when Ruth was two years old.

The novel was made into an opera<sup>[1]</sup> that premiered at San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House and was performed by the San Francisco Opera on September 13, 2008. The opera was composed by Stewart Wallace, and the libretto penned by Amy Tan. The opera condenses the novel's plot through various devices: it omits peripheral characters and the subplot about the Christian orphanage and expands Chang the Coffin Maker into the key villain. He rapes Precious Auntie after killing her father, the Bonesetter, and unknowingly fathers Lu Ling. The score folds traditional Chinese brass and percussion into a Western orchestra, with Chinese classical musicians led by Wu Tong and Li Zhonghua performing at the premiere. The suona, a raucous reed horn, features in the orchestration and is played onstage several times. The character of Precious Auntie sings and moves in the kunju style of Chinese Opera and was created and enacted by kunju star Qian Yi at the premiere. The other members of the premiere cast included mezzo-soprano Zheng Cao singing the dual roles of Ruth and the youthful Liu Ling, mezzo-soprano Ning Liang as Old Lu Ling, bass Hao Jiang Tian as Chang, folk/pop vocalist and suona player Wu Tong as the Taoist priest, baritone James Maddalena as Ruth's husband, Art Kamen, mezzo-soprano Catherine Cook as Art's mother Arlene Kamen and as Madame Wang in the flashback to Immortal Heart village, bass-baritone Valery Portnov as Art's father, Marty Kamen, with 14-year-old Madelaine Matej and 17-year-old Rose Frazier, respectively, playing Art's teen daughters, Dory and Fia Kamen. Chang's wives were played by Mary Finch, Natasha Ramirez Leland, and Erin Neff. The Dalian Acrobatic Troupe performed aerial and floor stunts and played numerous supernumerary roles alongside the San Francisco Opera Chorus. The premiere was directed by Chen Shi-Zheng and conducted by Steven Sloane.

In a remote mountain village where ghosts and tradition rule, LuLing grows up in the care of her mute Precious Auntie as the family endures a cu...more Ruth Young and her widowed mother, LuLing, have always had a tumultuous relationship. Now, before she succumbs to forgetfulness, LuLing gives Ruth some of her writings, which reveal a side of LuLing that Ruth has never known. . .

In a remote mountain village where ghosts and tradition rule, LuLing grows up in the care of her

mute Precious Auntie as the family endures a curse laid upon a relative known as the bonesetter. When headstrong LuLing rejects the marriage proposal of the coffinmaker, a shocking series of events are set in motion—“all of which lead back to Ruth and LuLing in modern San Francisco. The truth that Ruth learns from her mother’s past will forever change her perception of family, love, and forgiveness.(less)

Her mother, Luling, was in the early stages of Alzheimers, which forced Ruth (or Lootie as her mother pronounced he...more A great read! The mother-daughter relationships spanning over three generations was done so authentically it is hard to believe that Amy Tan was not there herself in each generation living those lives in all the different scenes/eras of the book.

After discovering her mother and grandmother's remarkable life stories hidden in the old Laz-y-Boy chair, Ruth could finally understand herself better, although it was unintended. But she first had to relive two other lives through her mother's meticulous writings to reach a point where she connect all the dots in her own personal relationship-issues with the people around her.

This is a chronicle of voicelessness across three generations of a Chinese family: it captures how these women lost their voices, why they continued to be voiceless, and how they attempted to reclaim their voice. Voice in this book is both literal and figurative: it's about standing up for oneself, speaking one's truth, being acknowledged, being understood, and not being censored. And the perpetrators who claim the women's voices can be cultural, personal (through the violation of one's secrets...more This is a chronicle of voicelessness across three generations of a Chinese family: it captures how these women lost their voices, why they continued to be voiceless, and how they attempted to reclaim their voice. Voice in this book is both literal and figurative: it's about standing up for oneself, speaking one's truth, being acknowledged, being understood, and not being censored. And the perpetrators who claim the women's voices can be cultural, personal (through the violation of one's secrets or body), cross-cultural, as what happens to the youngest when she finds herself in a relationship with a man who already has two Caucasian children, and even professional, as what happens for those who choose to give voice to others' ideas but not their own (as ghostwriters). And not incidentally, it is also a book about ghosts who remain with us from our past, haunting us with their curses or benevolently giving us advice about our current choices. Serendipitously enough, this book made me proud to be part-Chinese, but also sad that there was so much about Chinese culture and especially its writing and its calligraphy that I cannot understand. But in the end, it inspires the reader to speak out, to express appreciation to relatives, to insist on being heard in one's relationship, and to rediscover the paths of their ancestors. It may sound corny, but this book was an incredibly moving read for me, unsettling me and making me question my own experiences at its more difficult passages.

On a general note, however, please stop titling book's The Blank's Daughter. From the abortionist to the gravedigger to the bonesetter, I'm tired of women being defined by the occupation of their father. What shall I title my memoir? The Senior Health-care Analyst's Daughter? Hmm. . . . Regardless, after Joy Luck Club, this is definitely Tan's most powerful novel. Bravo.

"A lot of her [mother's] admonitions had to do with not showing what you really felt about all sorts of things: hope disappointment , and especially love. The less you showed, the more you meant" (p. 92). Or in my own mother's case, the less you showed, the more you were in control of your feelings, your effect on others, and the situation involved: a misguided philosophy I took years to unlearn, though I know it's hopeless to convince my mom of the error of her affective formula.

This was the first Amy Tan book I read. This book wasn't specifically recommended, but the author was. I was expecting something magical to happen as I turned the pages, but I couldn't get past the first four or five chapters of the book. Besides the overly long sections of actionless description (the story stagnated because of a poor balance between backstory, scene setup and description, and actual let's-move-things-along plot), the main character Ruth is so weak and whiny that I couldn't empa...more This was the first Amy Tan book I read. This book wasn't specifically recommended, but the author was. I was expecting something magical to happen as I turned the pages, but I couldn't get past the first four or five chapters of the book. Besides the overly long sections of



actionless description (the story stagnated because of a poor balance between backstory, scene setup and description, and actual let's-move-things-along plot), the main character Ruth is so weak and whiny that I couldn't empathize, sympathize or even remotely identify with her; she made it impossible to get into the novel. It may be unfair to give *The Bonesetter's Daughter* a poor review without reading the whole thing, but I wonder how anyone could stay with this character for any length of time. I did like the character of LuLing, even if the stilted, stereotypical dialog coming from her seemed unnecessary at best and amateurish at worst. LuLing, Ruth's aging and Alzheimer-stricken mother, is a strong character and the only thing that kept me in the novel as long as I was.

Xavier Guillaume Ruth isn't that bad, but I did just recently read *Julie and Julia*, and Julie from that book is way worse, so Ruth is a cakewalk, haha. But anyway, I k...more Ruth isn't that bad, but I did just recently read *Julie and Julia*, and Julie from that book is way worse, so Ruth is a cakewalk, haha. But anyway, I kind of thought that hearing about how she was treated by her mother makes you feel sympathetic towards her, but maybe you don't, but I did. Especially hearing about what happened when she slid down the slide, and how her mother treated her. Teaching her you are only loved if you don't complain, causing her to fear to even talk. But I do know what you mean. I found it annoying she couldn't get her love life in order when for a living she wrote books on the subject. But it was also because she didn't know her mother's story. I had a similar situation with my mother, not exactly the same, but she came from Vietnam during the war, and as a kid, she never really told me about the hardships of her life, but as I got older, I found out all these terrible things, and it allowed me to understand her more. It explained a lot of things, and this book really points out that idea, that you really need to know your parents story to know where they're coming from and why they might be treating you poorly. Not that my mother treated me poorly, but Ruth's mother definitely does when she's a kid. But you learn that her mother had it even worse, so...you learn that some things don't matter as much, especially when people start to change, which Ruth does at the end after she finds her mother's story.(less)

Jennifer although there were times i kept reading just to find out how they got to america; i think the character of Ruth was whiny and weak as a reflection of...more although there were times i kept reading just to find out how they got to america; i think the character of Ruth was whiny and weak as a reflection of our culture, suffering from first-world problems over coffee and inbetween yoga sessions. the discovery of her mother and the trials and suffering endured gave Ruth perspective to find her own courage , she ends on a much higher note.(less)

Amy Tan has a way of starting a story that's impossible to put down. For the first half of the book I kept wondering what about it made it so good. Anecdotal stories, relatable characters, Chinese folklore for interest ... these are all good, but I finally realized in the last quarter of the book why I liked it so much. Because it's a book about learning to love your past no matter how many scars it gives you, and learning to love and forgive your parents and ancestors, no matter what they may h...more Amy Tan has a way of starting a story that's impossible to put down. For the first half of the book I kept wondering what about it made it so good. Anecdotal stories, relatable characters, Chinese folklore for interest ... these are all good, but I finally realized in the last quarter of the book why I liked it so much. Because it's a book about learning to love your past no matter how many scars it gives you, and learning to love and forgive your parents and ancestors, no matter what they may have done to your gene pool. It's a story about loving people the best way you know how, and believing that some day they'll know just how much you love them, and just how much you wish you could change your faults so you could love them better. But you hope that your feeble offering will be enough. And it's a story about accepting the feeble offering for the gold mine that it is ... not feeble at all. I learned a lot about myself and my family relationships through reading this book, and would recommend it to anyone who has a loved one they just can't quite relate to or understand. (less)

Like most of Tan's books, this novel focuses on mother-daughter relationships extending over several generations. It is a tale of discovering the truth about our past and ourselves. Ruth's mother LuLing is suffering with the early stages of Alzheimer's and carefully writes down the "Things I Know Are True" and the "Things I Must Not Forget" - leaving them for her daughter to find. These are the

vehicles through which Ruth discovers the secrets and truths hidden in her mother's past. This is a wo...more Like most of Tan's books, this novel focuses on mother-daughter relationships extending over several generations. It is a tale of discovering the truth about our past and ourselves. Ruth's mother LuLing is suffering with the early stages of Alzheimer's and carefully writes down the "Things I Know Are True" and the "Things I Must Not Forget" - leaving them for her daughter to find. These are the vehicles through which Ruth discovers the secrets and truths hidden in her mother's past. This is a wonderful book - a little slow in the beginning but fantastic overall.

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