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| Amy Tan |  |

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Amy Tan was born in Oakland, California. Her family lived in several communities in Northern California before settling in Santa Clara. Both of her parents were Chinese immigrants. Her father, John Tan, was an electrical engineer and Baptist minister who came to America to escape the turmoil of the Chinese Civil War.

The harrowing early life of her mother, Daisy, inspired Amy Tan's novel *The Kitchen God's Wife.* In China, Daisy had divorced an abusive husband but lost custody of her three daughters. She was forced to leave them behind when she escaped on the last boat to leave Shanghai before the Communist takeover in 1949. Her marriage to John Tan produced three children, Amy and her two brothers.

Tragedy struck the Tan family when Amy's father and oldest brother both died of brain tumors within a year of each other. Mrs. Tan moved her surviving children to Switzerland, where Amy finished high school, but by this time mother and daughter were in constant conflict.

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Mother and daughter did not speak for six months after Amy Tan left the Baptist college her mother had selected for her to follow her boyfriend to San Jose City College. Tan further defied her mother by abandoning the pre-med course her mother had urged to pursue the study of English and linguistics. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees in these fields at San Jose State University. In 1974, she and her boyfriend, Louis DeMattei, were married and settled in San Francisco.

Just as she was embarking on this new career, Tan's mother fell ill. Amy Tan promised herself that if her mother recovered, she would take her to China, to see the daughter who had been left behind almost 40 years before. Mrs. Tan regained her health, and, after reuniting with mom, mother and daughter departed for China in 1987. The trip was a revelation for Tan. It gave her a new perspective on her often-difficult relationship with her mother, and inspired her to complete the book of stories she had promised her agent.

On the basis of the completed chapters, and a synopsis of the others, she found a publisher for the book, now called *The Joy Luck Club.* Upon its publication in 1989, Tan's book won enthusiastic reviews and spent eight months on *The New York Times*bestseller list. The paperback rights sold for $1.23 million. The book has been translated into 17 languages, including Chinese. Her subsequent novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), confirmed her reputation and enjoyed excellent sales.