

It was the best
of times, it
was the worst
of times...

It was the best
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of times, it

Novels

for Students



NOVELS
for Students

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NOVELS

for Students

**Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on
Commonly Studied Novels**

VOLUME 31

Sara Constantakis, Project Editor

Foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan



Detroit • New York • San Francisco • New Haven, Conn • Waterville, Maine • London

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Table of Contents

ADVISORS	ii
THE INFORMED DIALOGUE: INTERACTING WITH LITERATURE <i>(by Anne Devereaux Jordan)</i>	ix
INTRODUCTION	xi
LITERARY CHRONOLOGY	xv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xvii
CONTRIBUTORS	xix

THE BONESETTER'S DAUGHTER <i>(by Amy Tan)</i>	1
Author Biography	2
Plot Summary	2
Characters	6
Themes	9
Style	11
Historical Context	11
Critical Overview	12
Criticism	13
Sources	25
Further Reading	25
COLD SASSY TREE <i>(by Olive Ann Burns)</i>	26
Author Biography	26
Plot Summary	28
Characters	31

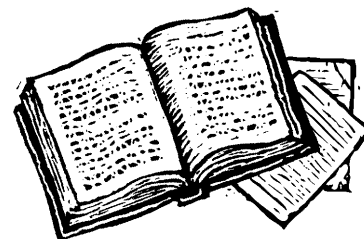


Table of Contents

Themes	33	Sources	152
Style	36	Further Reading	153
Historical Context	37		
Critical Overview	39	THE PRINCESS BRIDE	
Criticism.	40	(by <i>William Goldman</i>)	154
Sources	46	Author Biography	155
Further Reading	47	Plot Summary	155
		Characters	159
DUNE (by Frank Herbert)	48	Themes	162
Author Biography	49	Style	164
Plot Summary	49	Historical Context	165
Characters	53	Critical Overview	167
Themes	57	Criticism.	168
Style	59	Sources	170
Historical Context	61	Further Reading	171
Critical Overview	63		
Criticism.	63	THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER	
Sources	79	(by <i>Mark Twain</i>).	172
Further Reading	79	Author Biography	173
		Plot Summary	174
IVANHOE (by Walter Scott)	80	Characters	179
Author Biography	81	Themes	182
Plot Summary	81	Style	185
Characters	85	Historical Context	186
Themes	87	Critical Overview	189
Style	90	Criticism.	189
Historical Context	91	Sources	201
Critical Overview	92	Further Reading	201
Criticism.	93		
Sources	102	RESERVATION BLUES	
Further Reading	102	(by <i>Sherman Alexie</i>).	203
		Author Biography	204
THE NAMESAKE (by Jhumpa Lahiri)	104	Plot Summary	204
Author Biography	105	Characters	206
Plot Summary	105	Themes	209
Characters	110	Style	212
Themes	112	Historical Context	213
Style	114	Critical Overview	214
Historical Context	114	Criticism.	215
Critical Overview	116	Sources	227
Criticism.	116	Further Reading	227
Sources	127		
Further Reading	127	THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL	
		(by <i>Emmuska Orczy</i>).	228
THE POWER AND THE GLORY		Author Biography	229
(by <i>Graham Greene</i>).	128	Plot Summary	229
Author Biography	129	Characters	233
Plot Summary	129	Themes	236
Characters	132	Style	238
Themes	135	Historical Context	239
Style	137	Critical Overview	241
Historical Context	138	Criticism.	242
Critical Overview	140	Sources	250
Criticism.	140	Further Reading	250

SPEAK (<i>by Laurie Halse Anderson</i>)	251	Themes	308
Author Biography	252	Style	311
Plot Summary	252	Historical Context	311
Characters	255	Critical Overview	314
Themes	258	Criticism.	314
Style	260	Sources	320
Historical Context	261	Further Reading	321
Critical Overview	262		
Criticism.	262	ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE	
Sources	276	MAINTENANCE: AN INQUIRY INTO VALUES	
Further Reading	276	(<i>by Robert Pirsig</i>)	322
A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN		Author Biography	323
(<i>by Betty Smith</i>)	278	Plot Summary	324
Author Biography	279	Characters	329
Plot Summary	280	Themes	331
Characters	284	Style	333
Themes	287	Historical Context	334
Style	290	Critical Overview	337
Historical Context	290	Criticism.	337
Critical Overview	292	Sources	344
Criticism.	293	Further Reading	344
Sources	301	GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS.	347
Further Reading	301	CUMULATIVE AUTHOR/TITLE INDEX	359
WHEN RAIN CLOUDS GATHER		CUMULATIVE NATIONALITY/ ETHNICITY INDEX	367
(<i>by Bessie Head</i>)	302	SUBJECT/THEME INDEX	375
Author Biography	303		
Plot Summary	304		
Characters	306		

The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature

When we pick up a book, we usually do so with the anticipation of pleasure. We hope that by entering the time and place of the novel and sharing the thoughts and actions of the characters, we will find enjoyment. Unfortunately, this is often not the case; we are disappointed. But we should ask, has the author failed us, or have we failed the author?

We establish a dialogue with the author, the book, and with ourselves when we read. Consciously and unconsciously, we ask questions: “Why did the author write this book?” “Why did the author choose that time, place, or character?” “How did the author achieve that effect?” “Why did the character act that way?” “Would I act in the same way?” The answers we receive depend upon how much information about literature in general and about that book specifically we ourselves bring to our reading.

Young children have limited life and literary experiences. Being young, children frequently do not know how to go about exploring a book, nor sometimes, even know the questions to ask of a book. The books they read help them answer questions, the author often coming right out and *telling* young readers the things they are learning or are expected to learn. The perennial classic, *The Little Engine That Could*, tells its readers that, among other things, it is good to help others and brings happiness:

“Hurray, hurray,” cried the funny little clown and all the dolls and toys. “The good little boys and girls in the city will be happy because you helped us, kind, Little Blue Engine.”

In picture books, messages are often blatant and simple, the dialogue between the author and reader one-sided. Young children are concerned with the end result of a book—the enjoyment gained, the lesson learned—rather than with how that result was obtained. As we grow older and read further, however, we question more. We come to expect that the world within the book will closely mirror the concerns of our world, and that the author will *show* these through the events, descriptions, and conversations within the story, rather than *telling* of them. We are now expected to do the interpreting, carry on our share of the dialogue with the book and author, and glean not only the author’s message, but comprehend how that message and the overall affect of the book were achieved. Sometimes, however, we need help to do these things. *Novels for Students* provides that help.

A novel is made up of many parts interacting to create a coherent whole. In reading a novel, the more obvious features can be easily spotted—theme, characters, plot—but we may overlook the more subtle elements that greatly influence how the novel is perceived by the reader: viewpoint, mood and tone, symbolism, or the use of humor. By focusing on both the obvious and more subtle literary elements within a novel,

Novels for Students aids readers in both analyzing for message and in determining how and why that message is communicated. In the discussion on Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Vol. 2), for example, the mockingbird as a symbol of innocence is dealt with, among other things, as is the importance of Lee's use of humor which "enlivens a serious plot, adds depth to the characterization, and creates a sense of familiarity and universality." The reader comes to understand the internal elements of each novel discussed—as well as the external influences that help shape it.

"The desire to write greatly," Harold Bloom of Yale University says, "is the desire to be elsewhere, in a time and place of one's own, in an originality that must compound with inheritance, with an anxiety of influence." A writer seeks to create a unique world within a story, but although it is unique, it is not disconnected from our own world. It speaks to us *because* of what the writer brings to the writing from our world: how he or she was raised and educated; his or her likes and dislikes; the events occurring in the real world at the time of the writing, and while the author was growing up. When we know what an author has brought to his or her work, we gain a greater insight into both the "originality" (the world of the book), and the things that "compound" it. This insight enables us to question that created world and find answers more readily. By informing ourselves, we are able to establish a more effective dialogue with both book and author.

Novels for Students, in addition to providing a plot summary and descriptive list of characters—to remind readers of what they have read—also explores the external influences that shaped each book. Each entry includes a discussion of the author's background, and the historical context in which the novel was written. It is vital to know, for instance, that when Ray Bradbury was writing *Fahrenheit 451* (Vol. 1), the threat of Nazi domination had recently ended in Europe, and the McCarthy hearings were taking place in Washington, D.C. This information goes far in answering the question, "Why did he write a story of oppressive government control and book burning?" Similarly, it is important to know that Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was born and raised in

Monroeville, Alabama, and that her father was a lawyer. Readers can now see why she chose the south as a setting for her novel—it is the place with which she was most familiar—and start to comprehend her characters and their actions.

Novels for Students helps readers find the answers they seek when they establish a dialogue with a particular novel. It also aids in the posing of questions by providing the opinions and interpretations of various critics and reviewers, broadening that dialogue. Some reviewers of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, for example, "faulted the novel's climax as melodramatic." This statement leads readers to ask, "Is it, indeed, melodramatic?" "If not, why did some reviewers see it as such?" "If it is, why did Lee choose to make it melodramatic?" "Is melodrama ever justified?" By being spurred to ask these questions, readers not only learn more about the book and its writer, but about the nature of writing itself.

The literature included for discussion in *Novels for Students* has been chosen because it has something vital to say to us. *Of Mice and Men*, *Catch-22*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *My Antonia*, *A Separate Peace* and the other novels here speak of life and modern sensibility. In addition to their individual, specific messages of prejudice, power, love or hate, living and dying, however, they and all great literature also share a common intent. They force us to *think*—about life, literature, and about others, not just about ourselves. They pry us from the narrow confines of our minds and thrust us outward to confront the world of books and the larger, real world we all share. *Novels for Students* helps us in this confrontation by providing the means of enriching our conversation with literature and the world, by creating an *informed* dialogue, one that brings true pleasure to the personal act of reading.

Sources

Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon, The Books and School of the Ages*, Riverhead Books, 1994.

Watty Piper, *The Little Engine That Could*, Platt & Munk, 1930.

Anne Devereaux Jordan
Senior Editor, TALL (Teaching and Learning Literature)

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of *Novels for Students (NfS)* is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, *NfS* is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the lit-

erary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of *NfS* is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further help today's student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided (if available), as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical and reference sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of *NfS* are selected by surveying numerous sources on notable literary works and analyzing course curricula for various schools, school districts, and states. Some of the sources surveyed include: high school and undergraduate literature anthologies and textbooks; lists of award-winners, and recommended titles, including the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults.

Input solicited from our expert advisory board—consisting of educators and librarians—guides us to maintain a mix of "classic" and

contemporary literary works, a mix of challenging and engaging works (including genre titles that are commonly studied) appropriate for different age levels, and a mix of international, multicultural and women authors. These advisors also consult on each volume's entry list, advising on which titles are most studied, most appropriate, and meet the broadest interests across secondary (grades 7–12) curricula and undergraduate literature studies.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in *NfS* focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.

Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.

Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.

Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation.

Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as “The Narrator” and alphabetized as “Narrator.” If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name.

Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name “Jean Louise Finch” would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname “Scout Finch.”

Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.

Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry but can also be found in the Glossary.

Historical Context: this section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate *in which the author lived and the novel was created*. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.

Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.

Criticism: an essay commissioned by *NfS* which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material used in compiling the entry, with full bibliographical information.

Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. It includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

Media Adaptations: if available, a list of audiobooks and important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, musical adaptations, etc.

Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be

studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.

Compare and Contrast: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century or early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after the mid-1970s may not have this box.

What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might give a reader points of entry into a classic work (e.g., YA or multicultural titles) and/or complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works from various genres, YA works, and works from various cultures and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for *Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL)*, and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how *Novels for Students* can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the *NfS* series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the *NfS* series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects, from events to broad themes, are included.

Each entry may include illustrations, including photo of the author, stills from film adaptations, maps, and/or photos of key historical events, if available.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of *Novels for Students* may use

the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed.

When citing text from *NfS* that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“*Night*.” *Novels for Students*. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from *NfS* (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “*Winesburg, Ohio*.” *Novels for Students*. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of *NfS*, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and the Dystopian Tradition.” *Canadian Literature* 112 (Spring 1987): 9–16. Excerpted and reprinted in *Novels for Students*. Vol. 4. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of *NfS*, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: ‘Wearing the Mask.’” In *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography*. University of North Carolina Press, 1990. 69–83. Excerpted and reprinted in *Novels for Students*. Vol. 1. Ed. Diane Telgen. Detroit: Gale, 1997. 59–61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editorial staff of *Novels for Students* welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via e-mail at: ForStudentsEditors@cengage.com. Or write to the editor at:

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Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

Literary Chronology

- 1771:** Sir Walter Scott is born on August 15 in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 1819:** Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* is published.
- 1835:** Mark Twain is born Samuel Langhorne Clemens on November 30 in Florida, Missouri.
- 1865:** Emmuska Orczy is born Emma Magdalena Rosalia Maria Josefa Barbara Orczy on September 23 in Tarna-Örs, Hungary.
- 1881:** Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* is published.
- 1896:** Betty Smith is born Elizabeth Lillian Wehner on December 15 in Brooklyn, New York.
- 1904:** Graham Greene is born on October 2 in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England.
- 1905:** Emmuska Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is published.
- 1910:** Mark Twain dies of a heart attack on April 21 in Redding, Connecticut.
- 1920:** Frank Herbert is born on October 8 in Tacoma, Washington.
- 1924:** Olive Ann Burns is born on July 27 in Banks County, Georgia.
- 1928:** Robert Pirsig is born on September 6 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- 1931:** William Goldman is born on August 12 in Chicago, Illinois.
- 1932:** Sir Walter Scott dies of the lingering effects of a stroke on September 21 at Abbotsford, his home near Melrose, Scotland.
- 1937:** Bessie Head is born on July 6 in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa.
- 1940:** Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* is published in the United Kingdom and under the title *The Labyrinthine Ways* in the United States.
- 1943:** Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is published.
- 1947:** Emmuska Orczy dies on November 12 in London, England.
- 1952:** Amy Tan is born on February 19 in Oakland, California.
- 1961:** Laurie Halse Anderson is born on October 23 in Potsdam, New York.
- 1965:** Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* is published after being serialized in the science fiction magazine *Analog* between 1963 and 1965.
- 1966:** Sherman Alexie is born on October 7 in Wellpinit, Washington.
- 1967:** Jhumpa Lahiri is born Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri on July 11 in London, England.
- 1969:** Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* is published.
- 1972:** Betty Smith dies on January 17 of pneumonia at a nursing home in Shelton, Connecticut.

- 1973:** William Goldman's *The Princess Bride* is published.
- 1974:** Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* is published.
- 1984:** Olive Ann Burns's *Cold Sassy Tree* is published.
- 1986:** Bessie Head dies of alcohol-induced hepatitis on April 17 in Serowe, Botswana.
- 1986:** Frank Herbert dies while recovering from pancreatic cancer surgery in a hospital on February 11 in Madison, Wisconsin.
- 1990:** Olive Ann Burns dies of congestive heart failure on July 4 in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1991:** Graham Greene dies of heart failure on April 3 in Vevey, Switzerland.
- 1995:** Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* is published.
- 1999:** Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* is published.
- 2000:** Jhumpa Lahiri is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *Interpreter of Maladies*.
- 2001:** Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is published.
- 2003:** Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* is published.

Acknowledgments

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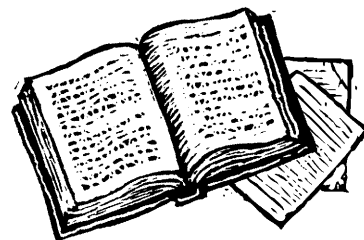
The Bonesetter's Daughter

The Bonesetter's Daughter, published in 2001 by Putnam, is Amy Tan's fourth novel. It spans two continents and more than one hundred years of history. Like Tan's other novels, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* is about family—specifically the relationship between mothers and daughters—and cultural identity. It tells the tale of three generations of women: how they loved, how they suffered, and how they survived. Precious Auntie was raised in privilege and love but lived out her life in grief and obscurity, and died trying to save her daughter LuLing from an abusive man. LuLing bridged the transition from a traditional Chinese rural life to a modern American life full of conflicting messages but she is distanced from her daughter Ruth by their different upbringings. Ruth, disconnected from her past and upset at her superstitious mother, wants to understand and reconcile her roots with who she is as a Chinese American woman.

Although it is not Tan's most famous novel, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* has received accolades. It was named a Notable Book by the *New York Times* and nominated for the prestigious Orange Prize and the IMPAC Dublin Award. Framed by war, self-discovery, and superstition, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* ultimately delivers truth and peace from the ashes of history.

AMY TAN

2001





Amy Tan (© Christopher Felver / Corbis)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Amy Tan was born on February 19, 1952, in Oakland, California, to John and Daisy Tan. Her parents had left China only a few years before, fleeing the new Communist government. After settling safely in the United States, John changed careers from electrical engineer to Baptist minister. Daisy worked as a vocational nurse. Tan, the middle child, had two brothers. Her parents had high expectations of her, deciding by the time she was six years old that she would be a medical doctor and play piano. She showed interest in language and writing early on but was discouraged from pursuing English as a course of study.

When Tan was fifteen, she lost both her father and older brother to brain cancer within six months of each other. Superstitious that their home in California may have contributed to their deaths, Daisy moved the family to Switzerland for a year where Tan finished high school. In college she began as a premed student but threw off her parents wishes, earning a bachelor of arts degree in English in 1973 and a master of arts degree in linguistics in 1974, both

from San Jose State University. Also in 1974, Tan married her college sweetheart, Louis DeMattei.

Tan had several jobs dealing with language and writing before she settled into a successful career as a freelance technical writer. When she began to suffer exhaustion from working eighty to ninety hours each week, Tan took up jazz piano and fiction writing to balance her life. Her first short story, "Endgame," was published in the prestigious *FM* literary magazine in the mid-1980s and, with her second story, was impressive enough to get Tan the attention of a literary agent.

Tan's first book, *The Joy Luck Club*, often called a novel but considered by Tan to be a collection of connected short stories, was published in 1989 to great critical acclaim. It was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association (ALA). Tan's other books, including *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005), her two children's books *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa: The Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), and her memoir *The Opposite of Fate* (2003) have garnered her many award nominations. Her books have often been recognized as Notable Books by the *New York Times* and as Editors' Choice by *Booklist*. Her signature combination of history, family saga, and multicultural struggle have made Tan's books popular with teachers, who find that these novels are accessible to students.

Tan is an outspoken advocate for people suffering from Lyme Disease, which she contracted in 1999. She lives in San Francisco, California, and New York, New York, with her husband.

PLOT SUMMARY

Truth (Prologue)

The Bonesetter's Daughter begins with LuLing's childhood memory of waking with her nursemaid, Precious Auntie, when she is six years old. Precious Auntie helps LuLing bathe and dress, like they do every morning, then they go to the ancestral hall to pray before breakfast. Precious Auntie, who is mute, uses her hands to tell LuLing that her family name, the name of the bonesetters, is written on a paper and she shows it to LuLing, asking her to remember, before leaving the paper on the altar. LuLing cannot remember Precious Auntie's family name and begs her forgiveness, calling her mother.