

Discussion Questions

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother by Amy Chua

Source: Madison Public Library

1. In the final ‘Coda’ chapter, we find that Jed has mostly been edited out of the book. Did you wonder about him during the narrative? Without his part, does he seem absent and uninvolved? Did you form an opinion about him?
2. Would it have been helpful to have more information about girls’ baby years? Amy is so tough, but says she was not when they were very small. Do you believe her? Would it alter your perception of Tiger Mother if she’d shown us, say, attachment parenting behavior toward her infants and toddlers?
3. When Sophia begins taking piano from Wei-Yi, Amy writes “Wei-Yi had expectations that were of an order galactically beyond what we’d been used to.” Did this surprise you? Had you thought Amy’s expectations were at the far end of the spectrum? What did this tell you about the world of prodigies?
4. Chua appears to set up a black and white world: Tiger Mothers are very strict, Western mothers are very lax. Does she really believe this, or is she over-generalizing to serve her narrative? Are you aware of Western mothers as strict as Amy? What do you think of her response to those who think Tiger Mothers are an analog to the American sports parent?
5. Chua prints verbatim some of the notes she leaves for Lulu regarding her violin practice for the day. Did Amy’s close attention to Lulu’s playing and pieces and her participation in her training reveal anything new to you?
6. Amy addresses remarks that sometimes Western parents ask ‘who is this all for?’ by assuring them (and the reader) that it is of course for the child, not the parent. Do you believe her? Amy once called Sophia’s lesson with Wei-Yi her favorite thing that she (Amy) looked forward to all week. How does that square with the ‘who is this all for’ question?
7. Is this book meant to be shocking to most readers? Is it a true memoir or more of a manifesto? Is it supposed to be an introduction for Western parents into an alternative style of parenting?
8. Upon reflection, are there things Western parents can learn from Tiger Mothers? Are there aspects of Amy’s style that you might try?