

The Woman Warrior One-Sheet

Plot Summary:

In this story Kingston is listening to a story told by her mother. The story is focuses around her aunt who she did not know existed. Her mother tells her that her aunt kills herself after being shunned by her family for having a baby out of wedlock. Because the woman's husband had left the country years before, the village knew that the child is illegitimate. The night she had the child, the villagers went and ransacked her home and she was forced to have her baby in the pigsty. The next morning her family found her and the baby clogging up the well. Committing suicide was seen as a way at getting back at her family for not supporting her through everything. Kingston's mother told her this story in an effort to prevent her daughter from having sexual relations.

Themes:

- **Silence and Voice:** The very first line her mother tells Kingston not to mention her aunt to anyone. Women in Chinese culture are expected to stay quiet and not voice their opinion. This is shown consistently throughout the story. Kingston tries to find her voice.
- **Growing up Chinese American:** Kingston had a problem distinguishing what was normal to Chinese culture and what was from her family. Throughout the passage she questioned whether or not she should say something. She believed that her aunt was treated poorly and did not believe that having her should mean that her life is over.
- **Role of Women in China:** Women in China were seen as inferior. Any mistakes that they make were taken more seriously than if a man had made them.

Quotes:

- **"You must not tell anyone" (1507).** This ties directly into the theme of silence and voice. Her mother is talking about something that is seen as taboo in their family and wants to make sure that her daughter does not talk about it either.
- **"Don't let your father know that I told you. He denies her" (1508).** This is another quote that show how important it was to her mother to keep this a secret.
- **"But there is more to this silence: they want me to participate in her punishment. And I have." (1515)** Kingston begins to realize after a few years that it is wrong of her to keep silent about her aunt. By being quiet she is no better than the rest of her family. She is doing exactly what her family did even though she knows it is wrong.
- **"She was a spite suicide drowning herself in the drinking water" (1515).** By killing herself in the family well she is basically poisoning the family's water. It is seen as her way of getting back at her family for not supporting her.