

Rules of the Game

Short Story by Amy Tan

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML8-230

Can allies be OPPONENTS?



READING 6 Draw conclusions about the elements of fiction.
READING 6C Analyze different forms of point of view. **RC-8(B)**
Ask interpretive questions of text.

Family, friends, coaches—these are people who usually want the best for you. Then why can it feel like they’re always giving you a hard time? Understanding people’s good intentions can be challenging, and it may even feel like your supporters aren’t on your side. In “Rules of the Game,” find out why a young girl sees her mother—who is her biggest fan—as her main opponent.

QUICKWRITE Think of one or two people in your life who want you to be the best you can be. Then write a brief journal entry about your relationship with them. In what ways does their support help you? In what ways does their support make things harder for you?



LITERARY ANALYSIS: FIRST-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

When a writer uses the **first-person point of view**, the narrator is a character in the story—usually the main character. A story is told in the first-person point of view when the narrator

- describes people and events as he or she experiences them
- uses the pronouns *I* and *me* to talk about himself or herself
- doesn't know what other characters are thinking and feeling

As you read, notice how the narrator's **subjective**, or personal, observations affect your understanding of the selection.

READING SKILL: DRAW CONCLUSIONS

In reading and in life, you often have to **draw conclusions**, or make logical judgments, about things that are not directly stated. Follow these steps to draw a conclusion:

- Gather evidence from the literature.
- Consider your own experience and knowledge.
- Make a judgment that combines both.

As you read, use a chart like the one shown to help you form conclusions about Waverly's relationship with her mother.

Evidence	My Thoughts	Conclusion
Mrs. Jong scolds Waverly for crying out for salted plums.	I know parents try to teach their kids how to behave.	Mrs. Jong wants Waverly to learn self-control.

Review: **Visualize**

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Amy Tan uses the words listed to help her describe one girl's conflicts with her mother. In your Reader/Writer Notebook, write a sentence for each of the vocabulary words. Use a dictionary or the definitions in the following selection pages to help you.

WORD LIST	adversary	impart	pungent
	benefactor	malodorous	retort
	concession	ponder	tactic
	foresight		

Amy Tan

born 1952

Change of Heart

The daughter of Chinese immigrants, Amy Tan grew up in California having little interest in her heritage. When she was a teenager, her father and older brother died. Their deaths devastated her, and her rocky relationship with her mother became worse. Tan's mother wanted her to become a doctor or a concert pianist, but Tan became a business writer instead. She later turned to fiction writing, which helped her express her emotions about her family and embrace her Chinese heritage as an important part of her identity.

Mother-Daughter Ties

Tan wrote "Rules of the Game" for a writing workshop in 1985. She later used it as part of her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, which is a series of interconnected stories about four Chinese mothers and their Chinese-American daughters. Tan's family stories have inspired her writing. She once said of her mother, "My books have amounted to taking her stories—a gift to me—and giving them back to her."

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

An Old Game Lives On

Although the game of chess is hundreds of years old, competitive chess remains a popular pastime today. A special class of players strives for the title of grand master, which only the top 0.02% of tournament players worldwide earn. A player must accumulate at least 2,500 points in tournament play to be recognized as a grand master by the World Chess Federation.

Author Online

THINK central

Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML8-231



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

RULES of the Game

Amy Tan

I was six when my mother taught me the art of invisible strength. It was a strategy for winning arguments, respect from others, and eventually, though neither of us knew it at the time, chess games.

“Bite back your tongue,” scolded my mother when I cried loudly, yanking her hand toward the store that sold bags of salted plums. At home, she said, “Wise guy, he not go against wind. In Chinese we say, Come from South, blow with wind—poom!—North will follow. Strongest wind cannot be seen.”

The next week I bit back my tongue as we entered the store with the forbidden candies. When my mother finished her shopping, she quietly plucked a small bag of plums from the rack and put it on the counter with the rest of the items. **A**

My mother **imparted** her daily truths so she could help my older brothers and me rise above our circumstances. We lived in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Like most of the other Chinese children who played in the back alleys of restaurants and curio shops,¹ I didn’t think we were poor. My bowl was always full, three five-course meals every day, beginning with a soup full of mysterious things I didn’t want to know the names of.

We lived on Waverly Place, in a warm, clean, two-bedroom flat that sat above a small Chinese bakery specializing in steamed pastries and dim sum.²

Analyze Visuals ▶

Note which **details** of this photograph are in focus and which are blurry. What effect does this have on you, the viewer?

A POINT OF VIEW

Identify who is telling this story. What has she suggested about her relationship with her mother so far?

impart (ĭm-pärt') v.
to make known; reveal

1. **curio shops:** shops that sell curious or unusual objects.

2. **dim sum:** small portions of a variety of Chinese foods and dumplings.



20 In the early morning, when the alley was still quiet, I could smell fragrant red beans as they were cooked down to a pasty sweetness. By daybreak, our flat was heavy with the odor of fried sesame balls and sweet curried chicken crescents. From my bed, I would listen as my father got ready for work, then locked the door behind him, one-two-three clicks.

At the end of our two-block alley was a small sandlot playground with swings and slides well-shined down the middle with use. The play area was bordered by wood-slat benches where old-country people sat cracking roasted watermelon seeds with their golden teeth and scattering the husks to an impatient gathering of gurgling pigeons. The best playground, however, was the dark alley itself. It was crammed with daily mysteries and adventures. My brothers and I would peer into the medicinal herb shop, watching old Li³ dole out onto a stiff sheet of white paper the right amount of insect shells, saffron-colored seeds, and **pungent** leaves for his ailing customers. It was said that he once cured a woman dying of an ancestral curse that had eluded the best of American doctors. Next to the pharmacy was a printer who specialized in gold-embossed wedding invitations and festive red banners. **B**

Farther down the street was Ping Yuen⁴ Fish Market. The front window displayed a tank crowded with doomed fish and turtles struggling to gain footing on the slimy green-tiled sides. A hand-written sign informed tourists, “Within this store, is all for food, not for pet.” Inside, the butchers with their bloodstained white smocks deftly gutted the fish while customers cried out their orders and shouted, “Give me your freshest,” to which the butchers always protested, “All are freshest.” On less crowded market days, we would inspect the crates of live frogs and crabs which we were warned not to poke, boxes of dried cuttlefish, and row upon row of iced prawns, squid, and slippery fish. The sanddabs made me shiver each time; their eyes lay on one flattened side and reminded me of my mother’s story of a careless girl who ran into a crowded street and was crushed by a cab. “Was smash flat,” reported my mother.

At the corner of the alley was Hong Sing’s, a four-table café with a recessed stairwell in front that led to a door marked “Tradesmen.” My brothers and I believed the bad people emerged from this door at night. Tourists never went to Hong Sing’s, since the menu was printed only in Chinese. A Caucasian man with a big camera once posed me and my playmates in front of the restaurant. He had us move to the side of the picture window so the photo would capture the roasted duck with its head dangling from a juice-covered rope. After he took the picture, I told him he should go into Hong Sing’s and eat dinner. When he smiled and asked me what they served, I shouted, “Guts and duck’s feet and octopus gizzards!” Then I ran off with my friends, shrieking with laughter as we scampered across the alley and hid in the entryway grotto⁵ of the China Gem Company, my heart pounding with hope that he would chase us. **C**

pungent (pŭn’jənt) *adj.*
sharp or intense

B VISUALIZE

Reread lines 25–36.
What words help you picture the neighborhood?

C POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 49–60.
What do the narrator’s words and actions tell you about her attitude toward taking risks?

3. Li (lì).

4. Ping Yuen (bǐng yŭ’èn).

5. **grotto** (grŏt’ō): an artificial structure made to resemble a cave or cavern.



My mother named me after the street that we lived on: Waverly Place Jong, my official name for important American documents. But my family called me Meimei,⁶ “Little Sister.” I was the youngest, the only daughter. Each morning before school, my mother would twist and yank on my thick black hair until she had formed two tightly wound pigtails. One day, as she struggled to weave a hard-toothed comb through my disobedient hair, I had a sly thought.

I asked her, “Ma, what is Chinese torture?” My mother shook her head. A bobby pin was wedged between her lips. She wetted her palm and smoothed the hair above my ear, then pushed the pin in so that it nicked sharply against my scalp.

“Who say this word?” she asked without a trace of knowing how wicked I was being. I shrugged my shoulders and said, “Some boy in my class said Chinese people do Chinese torture.”

“Chinese people do many things,” she said simply. “Chinese people do business, do medicine, do painting. Not lazy like American people. We do torture. Best torture.” **D**

My older brother Vincent was the one who actually got the chess set. We had gone to the annual Christmas party held at the First Chinese Baptist Church at the end of the alley. The missionary ladies had put together a Santa bag of gifts donated by members of another church. None of the gifts had names on them. There were separate sacks for boys and girls of different ages.

▲ Analyze Visuals

This photograph shows a Chinese market in San Francisco. How would you describe the **setting**?

D DRAW CONCLUSIONS

How does Waverly feel about her mother fixing her hair?

6. **Meimei** (mǎ'mā).

One of the Chinese parishioners had donned a Santa Claus costume and a stiff paper beard with cotton balls glued to it. I think the only children who thought he was the real thing were too young to know that Santa Claus was not Chinese. When my turn came up, the Santa man asked me how old I was. I thought it was a trick question; I was seven according to the American formula and eight by the Chinese calendar. I said I was born on March 17, 1951. That seemed to satisfy him. He then solemnly asked if I had been a very, very good girl this year and did I believe in Jesus Christ and obey my parents. I knew the only answer to that. I nodded back with equal solemnity.

Having watched the other children opening their gifts, I already knew that the big gifts were not necessarily the nicest ones. One girl my age got a large coloring book of biblical characters, while a less greedy girl who selected a smaller box received a glass vial of lavender toilet water. The sound of the box was also important. A ten-year-old boy had chosen a box that jangled when he shook it. It was a tin globe of the world with a slit for inserting money. He must have thought it was full of dimes and nickels, because when he saw that it had just ten pennies, his face fell with such undisguised disappointment that his mother slapped the side of his head and led him out of the church hall, apologizing to the crowd for her son who had such bad manners he couldn't appreciate such a fine gift.

As I peered into the sack, I quickly fingered the remaining presents, testing their weight, imagining what they contained. I chose a heavy, compact one that was wrapped in shiny silver foil and a red satin ribbon. It was a twelve-pack of Life Savers and I spent the rest of the party arranging and rearranging the candy tubes in the order of my favorites. My brother Winston chose wisely as well. His present turned out to be a box of intricate plastic parts; the instructions on the box proclaimed that when they were properly assembled he would have an authentic miniature replica of a World War II submarine.

Vincent got the chess set, which would have been a very decent present to get at a church Christmas party, except it was obviously used and, as we discovered later, it was missing a black pawn and a white knight. My mother graciously thanked the unknown **benefactor**, saying, "Too good. Cost too much." At which point, an old lady with fine white, wispy hair nodded toward our family and said with a whistling whisper, "Merry, merry Christmas."

When we got home, my mother told Vincent to throw the chess set away. "She not want it. We not want it," she said, tossing her head stiffly to the side with a tight, proud smile. My brothers had deaf ears. They were already lining up the chess pieces and reading from the dog-eared instruction book. **E**

I watched Vincent and Winston play during Christmas week. The chessboard seemed to hold elaborate secrets waiting to be untangled. The chessmen were more powerful than Old Li's magic herbs that cured ancestral curses. And my brothers wore such serious faces that I was sure something was at stake that was greater than avoiding the tradesmen's door to Hong Sing's.

"Let me! Let me!" I begged between games when one brother or the other would sit back with a deep sigh of relief and victory, the other annoyed, unable

◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Notice in line 86 that an **adverbial clause** beginning with the **subordinating conjunction** *when* comes before the independent clause.

benefactor

(bĕn'ə-făk'tər) *n.* a person who gives monetary or other aid

E DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Why does Mrs. Jong want Vincent to throw away his chess set?

to let go of the outcome. Vincent at first refused to let me play, but when I offered my Life Savers as replacements for the buttons that filled in for the missing pieces, he relented. He chose the flavors: wild cherry for the black pawn and peppermint for the white knight. Winner could eat both.

As our mother sprinkled flour and rolled out small doughy circles for the steamed dumplings that would be our dinner that night, Vincent explained the rules, pointing to each piece. “You have sixteen pieces and so do I. One king and queen, two bishops, two knights, two castles, and eight pawns. The pawns can only move forward one step, except on the first move. Then they can move two. But they can only take men by moving crossways like this, except in the beginning, when you can move ahead and take another pawn.”

“Why?” I asked as I moved my pawn. “Why can’t they move more steps?”
140 “Because they’re pawns,” he said.

“But why do they go crossways to take other men? Why aren’t there any women and children?”

“Why is the sky blue? Why must you always ask stupid questions?” asked Vincent. “This is a game. These are the rules. I didn’t make them up. See. Here. In the book.” He jabbed a page with a pawn in his hand. “Pawn. P-A-W-N. Pawn. Read it yourself.”

My mother patted the flour off her hands. “Let me see book,” she said quietly. She scanned the pages quickly, not reading the foreign English symbols, seeming to search deliberately for nothing in particular.

150 “This American rules,” she concluded at last. “Every time people come out from foreign country, must know rules. You not know, judge say, Too bad, go back. They not telling you why so you can use their way go forward. They say, Don’t know why, you find out yourself. But they knowing all the time. Better you take it, find out why yourself.” She tossed her head back with a satisfied smile.

I found out about all the whys later. I read the rules and looked up all the big words in a dictionary. I borrowed books from the Chinatown library. I studied each chess piece, trying to absorb the power each contained.

I learned about opening moves and why it’s important to control the center early on; the shortest distance between two points is straight down the middle. I learned about the middle game and why **tactics** between two **adversaries** are like clashing ideas; the one who plays better has the clearest plans for both attacking and getting out of traps. I learned why it is essential in the endgame to have **foresight**, a mathematical understanding of all possible moves, and patience; all weaknesses and advantages become evident to a strong adversary and are obscured to a tiring opponent. I discovered that for the whole game one must gather invisible strengths and see the endgame before the game begins.

I also found out why I should never reveal “why” to others. A little knowledge withheld is a great advantage one should store for future use. That is the power of chess. It is a game of secrets in which one must show and never tell.

170 I loved the secrets I found within the sixty-four black and white squares. I carefully drew a handmade chessboard and pinned it to the wall next to my

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION

Waverly’s mother might be suggesting something larger about American rules. Between the years 1882 and 1965, Chinese immigration to the U.S. was restricted. Those who were let into the country were not granted the same rights as other Americans.

tactic (tăk’tĭk) *n.*
a maneuver to achieve a goal

adversary (ăd’vər-sĕr’ĕ) *n.*
an opponent

foresight (fôr’sīt) *n.*
perception of the significance of events before they have occurred

bed, where at night I would stare for hours at imaginary battles. Soon I no longer lost any games or Life Savers, but I lost my adversaries. Winston and Vincent decided they were more interested in roaming the streets after school in their Hopalong Cassidy cowboy hats. **F**

On a cold spring afternoon, while walking home from school, I detoured through the playground at the end of our alley. I saw a group of old men, two seated across a folding table playing a game of chess, others smoking pipes, eating peanuts, and watching. I ran home and grabbed Vincent's
180 chess set, which was bound in a cardboard box with rubber bands. I also carefully selected two prized rolls of Life Savers. I came back to the park and approached a man who was observing the game.

"Want to play?" I asked him. His face widened with surprise and he grinned as he looked at the box under my arm.

"Little sister, been a long time since I play with dolls," he said, smiling benevolently. I quickly put the box down next to him on the bench and displayed my **retort**.

Lau Po,⁷ as he allowed me to call him, turned out to be a much better player than my brothers. I lost many games and many Life Savers. But over the
190 weeks, with each diminishing roll of candies, I added new secrets. Lau Po gave me the names. The Double Attack from the East and West Shores. Throwing Stones on the Drowning Man. The Sudden Meeting of the Clan. The Surprise from the Sleeping Guard. The Humble Servant Who Kills the King. Sand in the Eyes of Advancing Forces. A Double Killing Without Blood.

7. Lau Po (lou bō).



F POINT OF VIEW

What do Waverly's descriptions of her thoughts and actions reveal about her?

retort (rĭ-tōrt') *n.* a quick, sharp, witty reply

Analyze Visuals

How does the angle at which this photograph was taken affect what you first notice in the picture?

There were also the fine points of chess etiquette. Keep captured men in neat rows, as well-tended prisoners. Never announce “Check”⁸ with vanity, lest someone with an unseen sword slit your throat. Never hurl pieces into the sandbox after you have lost a game, because then you must find them again, by yourself, after apologizing to all around you. By the end of the summer, Lau Po had taught me all he knew, and I had become a better chess player.

A small weekend crowd of Chinese people and tourists would gather as I played and defeated my opponents one by one. My mother would join the crowds during these outdoor exhibition games.⁹ She sat proudly on the bench, telling my admirers with proper Chinese humility, “Is luck.” **G**

A man who watched me play in the park suggested that my mother allow me to play in local chess tournaments. My mother smiled graciously, an answer that meant nothing. I desperately wanted to go, but I bit back my tongue. I knew she would not let me play among strangers. So as we walked home I said in a small voice that I didn’t want to play in the local tournament. They would have American rules. If I lost, I would bring shame on my family. **H**

“Is shame you fall down nobody push you,” said my mother.

During my first tournament, my mother sat with me in the front row as I waited for my turn. I frequently bounced my legs to unstick them from the cold metal seat of the folding chair. When my name was called, I leapt up. My mother unwrapped something in her lap. It was her *chang*, a small tablet of red jade which held the sun’s fire. “Is luck,” she whispered, and tucked it into my dress pocket. I turned to my opponent, a fifteen-year-old boy from Oakland. He looked at me, wrinkling his nose.

As I began to play, the boy disappeared, the color ran out of the room, and I saw only my white pieces and his black ones waiting on the other side. A light wind began blowing past my ears. It whispered secrets only I could hear.

“Blow from the South,” it murmured. “The wind leaves no trail.” I saw a clear path, the traps to avoid. The crowd rustled. “Shhh! Shhh!” said the corners of the room. The wind blew stronger. “Throw sand from the East to distract him.” The knight came forward ready for the sacrifice. The wind hissed, louder and louder. “Blow, blow, blow. He cannot see. He is blind now. Make him lean away from the wind so he is easier to knock down.”

“Check,” I said, as the wind roared with laughter. The wind died down to little puffs, my own breath.

My mother placed my first trophy next to a new plastic chess set that the neighborhood Tao society had given to me. As she wiped each piece with a soft cloth, she said, “Next time win more, lose less.”

“Ma, it’s not how many pieces you lose,” I said. “Sometimes you need to lose pieces to get ahead.”

G DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Why does Waverly start winning more chess games?

H POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 208–211. How are Waverly’s thoughts and words different from each other? What does this tell you about her?

8. **check:** a move in chess that places an opponent’s king under direct attack.

9. **exhibition games:** public showings or demonstrations.

“Better to lose less, see if you really need.”

At the next tournament, I won again, but it was my mother who wore the triumphant grin.

240 “Lost eight pieces this time. Last time was eleven. What I tell you? Better off lose less!” I was annoyed, but I couldn’t say anything. **I**

I attended more tournaments, each one farther away from home. I won all games, in all divisions. The Chinese bakery downstairs from our flat displayed my growing collection of trophies in its window, amidst the dust-covered cakes that were never picked up. The day after I won an important regional tournament, the window encased a fresh sheet cake with whipped-cream frosting and red script saying, “Congratulations, Waverly Jong, Chinatown Chess Champion.” Soon after that, a flower shop, headstone engraver, and funeral parlor offered to sponsor me in national tournaments. That’s when my mother decided I no longer had to do the dishes. Winston and Vincent had to do my chores.

250 “Why does she get to play and we do all the work?” complained Vincent.

“Is new American rules,” said my mother. “Meimei play, squeeze all her brains out for win chess. You play, worth squeeze towel.”

By my ninth birthday, I was a national chess champion. I was still some 429 points away from grand-master status, but I was touted as the Great American Hope, a child prodigy and a girl to boot. They ran a photo of me in *Life* magazine next to a quote in which Bobby Fischer¹⁰ said, “There will never be a woman grand master.” “Your move, Bobby,” said the caption.

260 The day they took the magazine picture I wore neatly plaited braids clipped with plastic barrettes trimmed with rhinestones. I was playing in a large high school auditorium that echoed with phlegmy coughs and the squeaky rubber knobs of chair legs sliding across freshly waxed wooden floors. Seated across from me was an American man, about the same age as Lau Po, maybe fifty. I remember that his sweaty brow seemed to weep at my every move. He wore a dark, **malodorous** suit. One of his pockets was stuffed with a great white kerchief on which he wiped his palm before sweeping his hand over the chosen chess piece with great flourish.

270 In my crisp pink-and-white dress with scratchy lace at the neck, one of two my mother had sewn for these special occasions, I would clasp my hands under my chin, the delicate points of my elbows poised lightly on the table in the manner my mother had shown me for posing for the press. I would swing my patent leather shoes back and forth like an impatient child riding on a school bus. Then I would pause, suck in my lips, twirl my chosen piece in midair as if undecided, and then firmly plant it in its new threatening place, with a triumphant smile thrown back at my opponent for good measure.

I no longer played in the alley of Waverly Place. I never visited the playground where the pigeons and old men gathered. I went to school, then directly home to learn new chess secrets, cleverly concealed advantages, more escape routes.

I DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Why does Waverly feel she can’t correct her mother?

Language Coach

Informal Language In the dialogue in lines 251–252, notice grammatical errors such as missing pronouns and verbs that do not agree with their subjects. The author intentionally included these errors to reflect Mrs. Jong’s struggle with the English language. Rewrite the dialogue in standard English.

malodorous

(mä-l-ō’där-əs) *adj.*
having a bad odor

10. **Bobby Fischer:** a well-known chess player who, at 15, was the world’s youngest grand master.

But I found it difficult to concentrate at home. My mother had a habit of standing over me while I plotted out my games. I think she thought of herself
280 as my protective ally. Her lips would be sealed tight, and after each move I made, a soft “Hmmmph” would escape from her nose.

“Ma, I can’t practice when you stand there like that,” I said one day. She retreated to the kitchen and made loud noises with the pots and pans. When the crashing stopped, I could see out of the corner of my eye that she was standing in the doorway. “Hmmmph!” Only this one came out of her tight throat. **J**

My parents made many **concessions** to allow me to practice. One time I complained that the bedroom I shared was so noisy that I couldn’t think. Thereafter, my brothers slept in a bed in the living room facing the street. I said I couldn’t finish my rice; my head didn’t work right when my stomach
290 was too full. I left the table with half-finished bowls and nobody complained. But there was one duty I couldn’t avoid. I had to accompany my mother on Saturday market days when I had no tournament to play. My mother would proudly walk with me, visiting many shops, buying very little. “This my daughter Wave-ly Jong,” she said to whoever looked her way.

One day, after we left a shop I said under my breath, “I wish you wouldn’t do that, telling everybody I’m your daughter.” My mother stopped walking. Crowds of people with heavy bags pushed past us on the sidewalk, bumping into first one shoulder, then another.

“Aiii-ya. So shame be with mother?” She grasped my hand even tighter as
300 she glared at me.

I looked down. “It’s not that, it’s just so obvious. It’s just so embarrassing.”

“Embarrass you be my daughter?” Her voice was cracking with anger.

“That’s not what I meant. That’s not what I said.”

“What you say?”

I knew it was a mistake to say anything more, but I heard my voice speaking. “Why do you have to use me to show off? If you want to show off, then why don’t you learn to play chess.” **K**

My mother’s eyes turned into dangerous black slits. She had no words for me, just sharp silence.

310 I felt the wind rushing around my hot ears. I jerked my hand out of my mother’s tight grasp and spun around, knocking into an old woman. Her bag of groceries spilled to the ground.

“Aii-ya! Stupid girl!” my mother and the woman cried. Oranges and tin cans careened down the sidewalk. As my mother stooped to help the old woman pick up the escaping food, I took off.

I raced down the street, dashing between people, not looking back as my mother screamed shrilly, “Meimei! Meimei!” I fled down an alley, past dark curtained shops and merchants washing the grime off their windows. I sped
320 into the sunlight, into a large street crowded with tourists examining trinkets and souvenirs. I ducked into another dark alley, down another street, up another alley. I ran until it hurt and I realized I had nowhere to go, that I was not running from anything. The alleys contained no escape routes.

J POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 278–285. How does knowing only Waverly’s point of view affect your impression of her mother?

concession (kən-sĕsh’ən)
n. the act of yielding or conceding

K DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Why is Waverly embarrassed by her mother’s behavior?

My breath came out like angry smoke. It was cold. I sat down on an upturned plastic pail next to a stack of empty boxes, cupping my chin with my hands, thinking hard. I imagined my mother, first walking briskly down one street or another looking for me, then giving up and returning home to await my arrival. After two hours, I stood
330 up on creaking legs and slowly walked home.

The alley was quiet and I could see the yellow lights shining from our flat like two tiger's eyes in the night. I climbed the sixteen steps to the door, advancing quietly up each so as not to make any warning sounds. I turned the knob; the door was locked. I heard a chair moving, quick steps, the locks turning—click! click! click!—and then the door opened. **L**

“About time you got home,” said Vincent.
340 “Boy, are you in trouble.”

He slid back to the dinner table. On a platter were the remains of a large fish, its fleshy head still connected to bones swimming upstream in vain escape. Standing there waiting for my punishment, I heard my mother speak in a dry voice.

“We not concerning this girl. This girl not have concerning for us.”

Nobody looked at me. Bone chopsticks clinked against the insides of bowls being emptied into hungry mouths.

I walked into my room, closed the door, and lay down on my bed. The
350 room was dark, the ceiling filled with shadows from the dinnertime lights of neighboring flats.

In my head, I saw a chessboard with sixty-four black and white squares. Opposite me was my opponent, two angry black slits. She wore a triumphant smile. “Strongest wind cannot be seen,” she said.

Her black men advanced across the plane, slowly marching to each successive level as a single unit. My white pieces screamed as they scurried and fell off the board one by one. As her men drew closer to my edge, I felt myself growing light. I rose up into the air and flew out the window. Higher and higher, above the alley, over the tops of tiled roofs, where I was gathered up
360 by the wind and pushed up toward the night sky until everything below me disappeared and I was alone.

I closed my eyes and **pondered** my next move. **∞**



▲ Analyze Visuals

What is the **mood** of this photograph?

L VISUALIZE

Reread lines 331–338. What **images** help you picture Waverly's walk home?

ponder (pɒnˈdər) v. to think or consider carefully

Comprehension

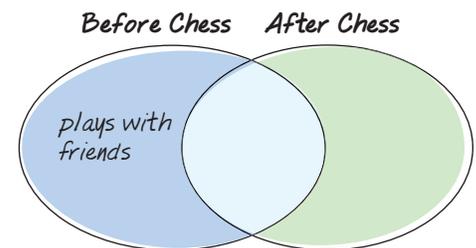
1. **Recall** How does Waverly's family get a chess set?
2. **Clarify** What does Waverly learn from the old man in the park?
3. **Clarify** What events cause Waverly to run away from her mother at the market?



READING 6 Draw conclusions about the elements of fiction. **6C** Analyze different forms of point of view. **RC-8(B)** Ask interpretive questions of text.

Literary Analysis

4. **Visualize** What scene in this story can you picture most vividly? Reread that part of the selection, noting at least three words or phrases that help you visualize the people, places, or events.
5. **Compare and Contrast** Use a Venn diagram like the one shown to compare and contrast Waverly before she learns chess and after she learns chess. How does she change? How does she stay the same?
6. **Analyze First-Person Point of View** How would "Rules of the Game" be different if you knew what Waverly's mother was thinking?
7. **Draw Conclusions** Review the chart you made as you read. Why does Waverly view her mother as her opponent? Use evidence from the story and your own ideas to support your conclusion.
8. **Evaluate Conflict** Give one or two reasons why Waverly and her mother might be in conflict with each other. Do you think they treat each other fairly? Explain.



Extension and Challenge

9. **Literary Criticism** Amy Tan once mentioned in an interview that even though "Rules of the Game" is fiction and she never played chess, it is the closest she has come to describing her own life with her mother. She spoke of the "invisible force" her mother taught her. Tan uses the image of the wind throughout the story to represent this invisible force. Look for specific passages in the story in which Tan writes about the wind. With a small group, discuss the wind's effect on Waverly and her chess game.
10. **SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION** What challenges did Chinese immigrants face when they moved to the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, as Waverly's mother probably did? Research what it was like for newly arrived people to find jobs and housing and how the government responded to immigration from China. Share your findings with the class.

Can allies be **OPPONENTS**?

Do you think that Waverly and her mother will soon end their quarrel and become allies again? Why or why not?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Answer each question to show your understanding of the vocabulary words.

1. Is a **retort** a high-pitched sound or a sharp reply?
2. When you **ponder**, do you think carefully or wander around a pond?
3. Which is an **adversary**—an opponent or an advisor?
4. Would a **tactic** help you more in playing sports or watching a movie?
5. Is a **pungent** smell faint or sharp?
6. If a person has **foresight**, is she likely to make a mistake or avoid one?
7. Is a **concession** more like giving in or letting loose?
8. When you **impart** something, do you hide it or reveal it?
9. What is more likely to be **malodorous**—flowers or garbage?
10. Is a **benefactor** someone who gives money or takes it away?



ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

- appropriate
- assess
- intelligence
- motive
- role

Is it **appropriate** for Mrs. Jong to show off her daughter in public? Explain why or why not in a paragraph in a discussion with your classmates. Use at least one of the Academic Vocabulary words in your response.



READING 2A Determine the meaning of grade-level academic English words derived from Latin or other linguistic affixes.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE PREFIXES *fore-* AND *mal-*

The prefixes *fore-* and *mal-* are used in the vocabulary words *foresight* and *malodorous*. The prefix *fore-* means “in front” or “before,” and the prefix *mal-* means “bad” or “badly.”

PRACTICE Decide which prefix, *fore-* or *mal-*, should be added to each word to make it match the definition provided.

1. ___ **cast**: to predict the weather conditions in advance
2. ___ **content**: dissatisfied with existing conditions
3. ___ **function**: to function improperly
4. ___ **arm**: part of the arm between the wrist and elbow
5. ___ **word**: a preface or introductory note in a book
6. ___ **practice**: improper treatment of a patient



Conventions in Writing

◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Add Descriptive Details

Review the **Grammar in Context** note on page 236. An **adverbial clause** is a dependent clause that modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb. It generally tells *where, why, how, when, or to what degree* something was done. An adverbial clause is introduced by a **subordinating conjunction** such as *after, as, before, because, since, until, when, whenever, and where*. When an adverbial clause comes before an independent clause, the two clauses should be separated with a comma.

Example: When Mrs. Jong showed how proud she was of her daughter, Waverly became embarrassed.

PRACTICE Identify each adverbial clause in the following sentences.

1. Waverly learned to play chess after her brother got a chess set for Christmas.
2. As she played against Lau Po, Waverly improved her game.
3. Mrs. Jong started to annoy Waverly because she stood over her while Waverly practiced.
4. Whenever they passed someone in the street, Mrs. Jong pointed out that Waverly was her daughter.

For more help with adverbial clauses and subordinating conjunctions, see page R62 in the **Grammar Handbook**.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Show how well you know the characters in “Rules of the Game” by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Extended Response: Explore Point of View

If Waverly’s mother were telling the story, what might she say? In **two or three paragraphs**, retell from Waverly’s mother’s point of view the scenes in which Waverly runs away from the market and then returns home.

REVISING TIP

Review your response. Have you used any adverbial clauses? If not, revise.



ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 19A Understand the function of adverbial clauses and subordinating conjunctions.

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