

“Rules of the Game” by Amy Tan
Suggested Lesson Procedure (~95 Minutes)

1. Vocabulary Introduction (~15 minutes)

Distribute the Vocabulary Chart handout. Use the Powerpoint lesson to teach students the vocabulary words. Have students copy down the definitions in their graphic organizers.

2. Before Reading Discussion (~10 minutes)

Have students review the 11 words provided (strength, game, chess, pride, rules, secrets, family, tradition, opponent, victory, strategy). Students choose 10 of the 11 words and pair them into 5 sets that are either similar, opposite, or connected. For each pair, students write 1–2 sentences explaining why they matched them together. This activity builds anticipation and gives students a preview of what the story will be about.

3. Reading the Text (~20 minutes)

Read the short story “Rules of the Game” together.

4. Reading Questions (~35 minutes)

Distribute the Reading Questions handout. Students can work individually or in pairs on the questions. Review the correct answers as a whole class after ~20 minutes. Ask for volunteers to share responses. Facilitate meaningful conversations while scaffolding literary analysis.

5. After Reading Activity (~15 minutes)

Students create their own short handbook with 10 “rules” for navigating family, culture, and growing up. For each rule, they explain its significance in 1–2 sentences.

Name:

Date:

Vocabulary Chart

Vocabulary Word	Part of Speech	Definition	Synonyms
impart	verb		
obscured	adjective		
foresight	noun		
concessions	noun		
ancestral	adjective		
benefactor	noun		
etiquette	noun		
exhibition	noun		
humility	noun		
prodigy	noun		

Name:

Date:

Before Reading

Directions: Look at the words in the box below. Choose 10 of the 11 to make 5 pairs that go together because they are similar, opposite, or connected in some way. One word will be left out. Write 1-2 sentences for each pair explaining why you matched them.

strength	game	chess	pride	rules	secrets
family	tradition	opponent	victory	strategy	

Paired Words

Explanation

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Name:

Date:

Reading Questions

1. What does Waverly's mother call the "art of invisible strength"?

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2. Where does Waverly's family live?

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3. How does Waverly convince her brothers to let her play chess with them?

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4. Who is Lau Po, and how does he help Waverly?

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5. What unspoken rules seem to govern Waverly's relationship with her mother, and how do they shape her choices?

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6. How does Waverly's mother embarrass her?

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7. How does Waverly's character change from the beginning to the end of the story?

PREVIEW

8. What qualities make Waverly a strong chess player?

PREVIEW

9. How is chess used as a symbol for power and control?

10. What role does the wind imagery play throughout the story?

11. How does Amy Tan's use of first-person narration affect the reader's understanding of Waverly's struggle?

PREVIEW

12. How do the “rules” of chess mirror the “rules” Waverly’s mother tries to teach her about life and survival?

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13. Why do you think Waverly views her mother as both her greatest support and her greatest opponent?

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14. Are Waverly’s victories the result of her own skill and control, or is it “luck” as her mother suggests?

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15. How does Waverly’s struggle compare to challenges young people face today in balancing personal freedom with family expectations?

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16. Chess teaches Waverly strategy and patience. What activity, sport, or hobby in your life has taught you important lessons that apply outside of the activity itself?

Name:

Date:

After Reading
“Rules of Life” Handbook

Write a short handbook with 10 “rules” for navigating family, culture, and growing up.
Explain the significance of each rule in 1-2 sentences.

	Rule	Explanation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

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RULES OF THE GAME

Vocabulary



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impart

PREVIEW

Part of speech: Verb

Definition: to communicate or make known

Example: The professor tried to impart wisdom to her students through personal stories.

Synonyms: convey, transmit



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obscured

Part of Speech: adjective

Definition: describes hidden or made unclear

Example: Thick fog obscured the mountain peak from view.

Synonyms: concealed, hidden



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foresight PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: the ability to predict or plan for the future

Example: His foresight in saving money allowed him to retire comfortably.

Synonyms: prudence, anticipation



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concessions

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: things given up or allowed, often to reach an agreement

Example: The company made several concessions during the contract negotiations.

Synonyms: compromises, allowances



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ancestral

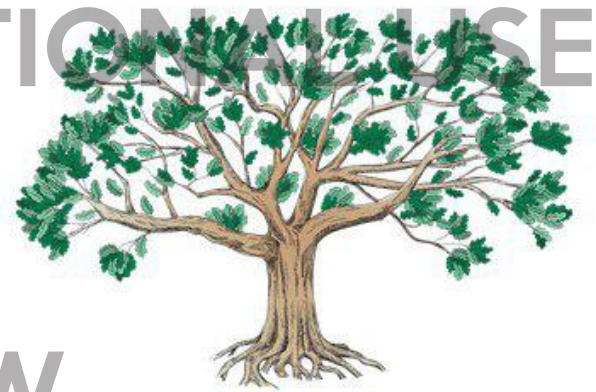
PREVIEW

Part of Speech: adjective

Definition: describes related to family members from long ago

Example: They visited their ancestral home in the countryside, where generations had lived before them.

Synonyms: heritage, inherited



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benefactor

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: a person who gives help, especially financial gifts

Example: The scholarship was made possible by a generous benefactor.

Synonyms: patron, sponsor

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etiquette

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: the rules of polite behavior in society or a particular activity

Example: Good table etiquette requires keeping your elbows off the table.

Synonyms: manners, decorum



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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW
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exhibition

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: a public display of skill or items; an exhibition game is a competitive event with no serious value, not counting towards league standings, and is held for practice, entertainment, or fundraising

Example: The gymnast gave an exhibition of skill before the judges at the championship.

Synonyms: demonstration, showcase



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humility

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: modesty; not thinking too highly of oneself

Example: Despite her grand achievements, she carried herself with humility.

Synonyms: unpretentious, humbleness



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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

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prodigy

PREVIEW

Part of Speech: noun

Definition: a young person with extraordinary talent or ability

Example: The math prodigy solved complex equations in front of an astonished audience.

Synonyms: genius, mastermind



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