

Amy Tan “Mother Tongue”

SOAPSTONE Example

<p>Speaker</p>	<p>Identify the voice (narrator) and the point of view from which he or she is speaking. Identify the speaker’s values, biases, and beliefs (if you are able). Determine if the speaker can be trusted.</p>	<p>Tan, first person point of view. Values her mother and her heritage. She is trustworthy as she opens up and reflects on her understanding of the English language.</p>
<p>Occasion</p>	<p>What is the time and place? Is there a particular historical context that influences the message or the speaker? What specific set of circumstances prompted the writer to write?</p>	<p>20th century. The context: Tan wants to explain how her mother influenced her language practices inside her home and in writing. The realization that prompted Tan’s thinking about her subject was her delivery of a speech to an audience that included her mother, who, perhaps for the first time, heard Tan use an elevated style of English.</p>
<p>Audience</p>	<p>Who will hear or read this message? What are this audience’s biases or values? Is this audience open to the message?</p>	<p>Her readers, and most importantly her mother, are her audience. The audience is lead to understand characteristics of Tan’s mother (in particular her comprehension of standard English in comparison to her ability to verbally use standard English) perhaps in an effort to address potential audience bias based on the way Tan’s mother is described. The essay was originally published in a literary magazine; those reading the article there were likely receptive to her message.</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>What does this speaker hope to achieve? What is the main purpose (overall point or argument)?</p>	<p>The purpose is to let her mother and her readers know of the influence Chinese language practices have had on Tan. Tan later reveals (through a series of anecdotes) her struggle with English in school led to her at first pursuing a career in the areas of math and science, but her determined spirit pushed her to become a writer. She opens her experience to the possibility other students like her are also being directed to math/science fields.</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>What is this work about?</p>	<p>Her mother’s tongue and its influence on her life, her speaking, and her writing.</p>
<p>Tone</p>	<p>What is the dominant tone and what is its effect? Look primarily at the speaker’s attitude. What words, images, or figures of speech reveal the speaker’s attitude? Are there any shifts in tone within this document, and if so, what is the result/effect?</p>	<p>Her tone appears a bit nostalgic through her reflective discussion of her mother’s influence. Her use of narration helps to reveal her regret for being ashamed of her mother.</p>