“Mother Tongue”

By Amy Tan

**Considering Ideas**

1. When Tan was a child, how did she feel about her mother’s language? How has her perception changed as she has aged? What caused this change?
2. Why, even after all the success she has experienced as a writer, does Tan need her mother’s approval?
3. Do you feel that standardized tests are equally fair to multilingual speakers? Do they accurately measure someone’s potential to succeed? Why or why not?

**Considering Writing Strategies**

1. What effect does Tan’s use of dialogue have on her narrative? Give examples to illustrate your point. Would the story work as well without the dialogue? Why or why not?
2. Find examples of transitions that Tan uses to move from one idea to another. How do the transitions affect the flow of ideas in the narrative?
3. Tan uses both past and present verb tenses in her narrative. Does she shift between verb tenses purposely, or are the shifts awkward? Explain your answers using specific examples from the text.

**Writing Suggestions**

1. Recall a time when you made a conscious choice to vary your language based on your audience. What changes did you make? Why did you alter your speech? Write a narrative telling what happened. Be sure to include specific dialogue of conversations you had to illustrate how you used language differently.
2. When you were a child, did you ever feel embarrassed about something a family member did or said? Write a narrative telling about the situation. What did he or she do to make you feel this way? How did you deal with the situation? Have you changed your mind about what happened now that you’re older, or do you still feel the same way as you did at the time of the incident?