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Amy Tan's "Fish Cheeks" uses point of view to suggest that being different from anyone else is fine. Her family is Chinese and we see through her eyes that she is ashamed that her family lacks proper American manners.

Tan freaks out because her parents invited a white family with a boy, Robert, she likes to Christmas Eve dinner at her house. Tan starts to cry because her Chinese Christmas is noisy and will not have the normal roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese traditional food. She was afraid of what Robert would think because she liked him.

She is embarrassed by her family because they are doing their traditional Chinese rituals instead of the normal American Christmas. She tells of the "strange menu" her mother had created including such foods as "slimy rock cod", tofu, dried fungus and squid. When they got to the table to eat, Robert's family was waiting for the food to be passed while Tan's family started "...licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table," digging in without respectfully passing the plates around. We see that Tan becomes even more embarrassed when her father takes the fish cheek and offers it to her because it was her favorite, something she didn't want Robert to know because it was so different. Her embarrassment continued when her father burped loudly saying it was "...custom to show you are satisfied" to the host. Amy was so upset by this that she couldn't even speak anymore. She states that she was "stunned into silence for the rest of the night." Her shock allows us to see, once again, how embarrassed she was by her Chinese ways.

Her mom tells her that it's okay to be different from everybody else because you must take pride in your heritage. She then gives Amy an American gift of a miniskirt. She understood Amy's need to fit in but wanted her to be proud of being Chinese. Years later Tan came to realize her mother's lesson and that she had actually prepared the dinner for Amy with all of her favorite foods. Amy's perspective allows us to see how one terrible evening years ago was a lesson well learned.