

## PREPERATION

Consider the title of the film „My Wedding and other secrets“ and answer the following questions:

What are your first impressions of it?

What do you imagine the film is going to be about?

What characters are possibly involved?

What part of the title interests you?



## WORD CLUSTER

Work with a partner and develop a word cluster based on your ideas. What aspects could play a role in the film?



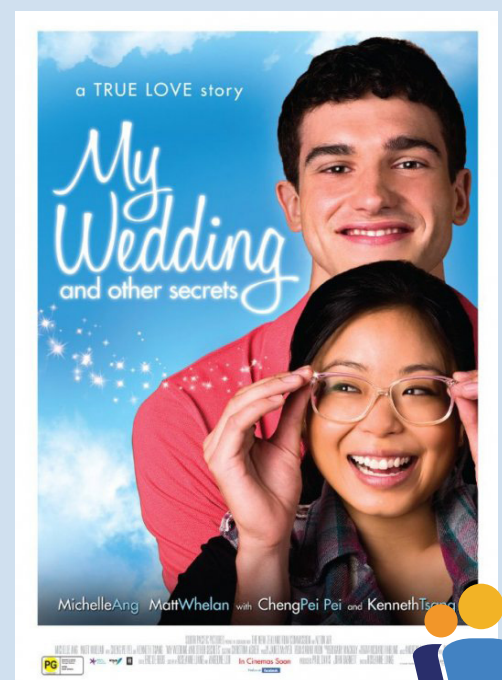
## SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Analyse the film poster.

(Questions you may want to consider:  
What/who is depicted in what way?  
What could be the reason for this?)

Based on your analysis, discuss your prediction of

- the film's genre
- its characters
- its plot
- its themes.



Source Filmposter: [www.myweddingandothersecretsmovie.com](http://www.myweddingandothersecretsmovie.com).

## MEET EMILY

Watch the opening sequence of the movie up until Emily enters the building (00:02:18), first with the sound turned off, then with the sound turned on. Take notes.

Describe Emily's character by looking at her outer appearance, behaviour, facial expressions etc.

What is your initial impression of her?

What do the film snippets of her early childhood possibly reveal about her character?



## SOME LANGUAGE SUPPORT

I imagine / guess / believe / picture ...

My first impression is ...

The film scene shows / deals with / begins with ...

The action takes place in / at ...

The atmosphere can be described as ... warm / relaxed / tense / hostile ...

The facial expressions of ... suggest / show how ...

The character's body language reflects / shows / displays / reveals / indicates ...

The character's outer appearance suggests / reflects / ...

...s behaviour shows / reflects / displays / reveals / illustrates / ...



## VIEWING NOTES

While viewing the film, copy the following grid and take notes. You do not have to fill in every aspect of each scene.



Literary aspects				
Setting	Characters	Events	Themes	Point of View
Dramatic aspects				
Locations/ Props	Acting	Costumes	Make-Up	
Cinematic aspects				
Camera	Colour/ Lighting	Montage/ Editing	Sound/ Music	

## REVIEWING

One central theme in the film is the question of intercultural understanding and tolerance.



Replay the scene of Emily's emotional outburst at the dinner table (00:42:24 - 00:45:31).

Dr. Chu once threatened his daughter Susan with disownment while she was with her white New Zealand boyfriend Danny (recurring flashbacks in the movie). Now Emily sees herself trapped in the same situation.

## A RACIST?

Split up into groups and research the following topics online (The Encyclopedia of New Zealand - <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en>): New Zealand's history of migration, Chinese migration, languages, New Zealand's society today (population, races, customs etc.).



Take notes and exchange your findings in new groups.

Afterwards, relate this researched information to Dr. Chu's behaviour. Is Melanie right to call him a racist? What part does language play in the story?

## WHAT WENT WRONG?

After suffering for a long time, James has finally received Dr. Chu's blessing for their wedding. However, while everybody is sitting happily at the dinner table celebrating the occasion, the atmosphere changes abruptly and ends with Mrs. Chu rushing into the kitchen.



Choose one of the following tasks and be prepared to present your results in class. Take notes on your conversation. Following the genre-conventions of a conversation, colloquial language is appropriate.

a.) You are **Emily**.

Right before the family's dinner with James, you were relieved and happy that the wedding situation was finally resolved. However, the atmosphere at the dinner became tense and awkward. You phone your friend Eric to tell him about the dinner, your thoughts about what went wrong, and what might happen next.



b.) You are **Mrs. Chu**.

Before James' arrival at your house, you were critical of how the situation may end. Everything happens as you expected. You are horrified and leave to vent your anger. After James and Emily have left the house, you talk to your husband. Tell him about your feelings, thoughts, and what may happen next.



c.) You are **James**.

When Emily's father gave you his blessing for your marriage, you were relieved. However, at the end of the day, your feelings have changed. Still, you plan to finally phone your mother and tell her about your forthcoming wedding.



d.) You are **Dr. Chu**.

Even though you had strong reservations regarding Emily's relationship with James, you now feel relieved that he has finally asked for her hand in marriage in the appropriate way. You are happy with your decision of giving him your blessing. Still, your wife does not seem to approve of this and left the dinner table in anger. After James and Emily have left the house, you talk with her about the situation.



## A BIG CHANCE

Emily has a great opportunity to screen her documentary at the international New Zealand Film Festival. Yet, when she tells James about this big chance in her career, he does not react as expected and the scene ends with James locking himself up in his room.



There will be a 'hot seat' of the two characters. A class member sits in the hot seat as one of the key characters. The other group members take turns to ask questions.

To prepare for the 'hot seat', you will need an in-depth look at both characters and their perspective on their relationship.

Therefore...

## HOT SEATING: EMILY AND JAMES

**Work in groups of 3 - 4 students.**

Each group works either on Emily or James. With the help of your viewing sheet, analyse Emily's / James' character while answering the following questions:



- Who are you?
- What are your aims in life?
- How does your dream partner look like?
- How important are the following aspects in your life: family, friendship, love, trust, honesty, career, success?

If possible, re-watch central scenes in the film which may give you further insight into the characters.

## PREPERATION

Prepare questions for the 'hot seat'. Questions such as:

- What do you admire / love about Emily / James?
- Are you happy? Why, why not?
- To Emily: How are you going to react to James' wish not to screen your documentary?
- To James: What are you going to do if Emily lets her documentary being screened at the film festival?



## IN THE HOT SEAT

One person in class sits in the 'hot seat'.

Now the members of the other group (Emily or James, respectively) take turns to ask questions.

Change the person in the hot seat after some time.



## OUTCOME

### **Final group discussion:**

Imagine how the film could continue.

Put yourself into the shoes of the director:

What could raise the dramatic suspense?



## WRITE DOWN YOUR IMPRESSIONS

Now that you have watched the complete film, what are your impressions? Take notes on the following questions.



- What struck you while viewing the film?
- What did(n't) you like about the film? Why?
- Was there anything that puzzled you? That you'd never seen in a film before?
- What is the most important aspect of the film for you?
- Which character in the film do you like best / least? Why?
- How is this film different from other films you've seen before?

## PUB-CORNER-TALK

As you are done, walk to one of the 'pub-corners' where you will meet with other people and discuss your thoughts.



## SOME LANGUAGE SUPPORT

I really liked / disliked / enjoyed ...  
The scene in which ... made me feel ...  
I think the director's way of ... is ...  
The part where ... is very realistic / unrealistic because ...  
I think the relationship between ... and ... is interesting because ...  
To me, the most fascinating / moving character / scene is ... because ...  
I could really relate to this part / character because ...  
I wonder why ...  
I felt angry / sad / moved by ... / shocked when ...  
I was disappointed / surprised when...



## MAPPING THE ACTION

Using the notes you have taken on the plot, work in pairs to create a flow diagram. The flow diagram should show plot points in the film and the build towards a climax and a resolution.

On the vertical axis (Y), plot the intensity of the action as each crisis occurs and is resolved. On the horizontal axis (X), label the key moments of the plot.

You may use the notes provided to the right, however take note; they are not in the correct order and the conclusion is missing.

Take turns retelling the story from beginning to end. Use the present tense.

- *Emily hides James from her mother's friend*
- *Emily starts filming documentary*
- *Emily + James fall in love*
- *Sleep together*
- *Secret wedding*
- *Emily's outburst and fight with Dr. Chu*
- *Emily + James fight over documentary / threat of dissolving marriage*
- *Relationship develops*
- *Emily + James meet at the fencing club*
- *James starts learning Mandarin*
- *Emily + Mrs. Chu argue*
- *The proposal*
- *Marriage talk*
- *Emily cuts documentary*



**INTENSITY OF ACTION**

**POINTS OF ACTION**

Meet at fencing court



## MAPPING THE ACTION

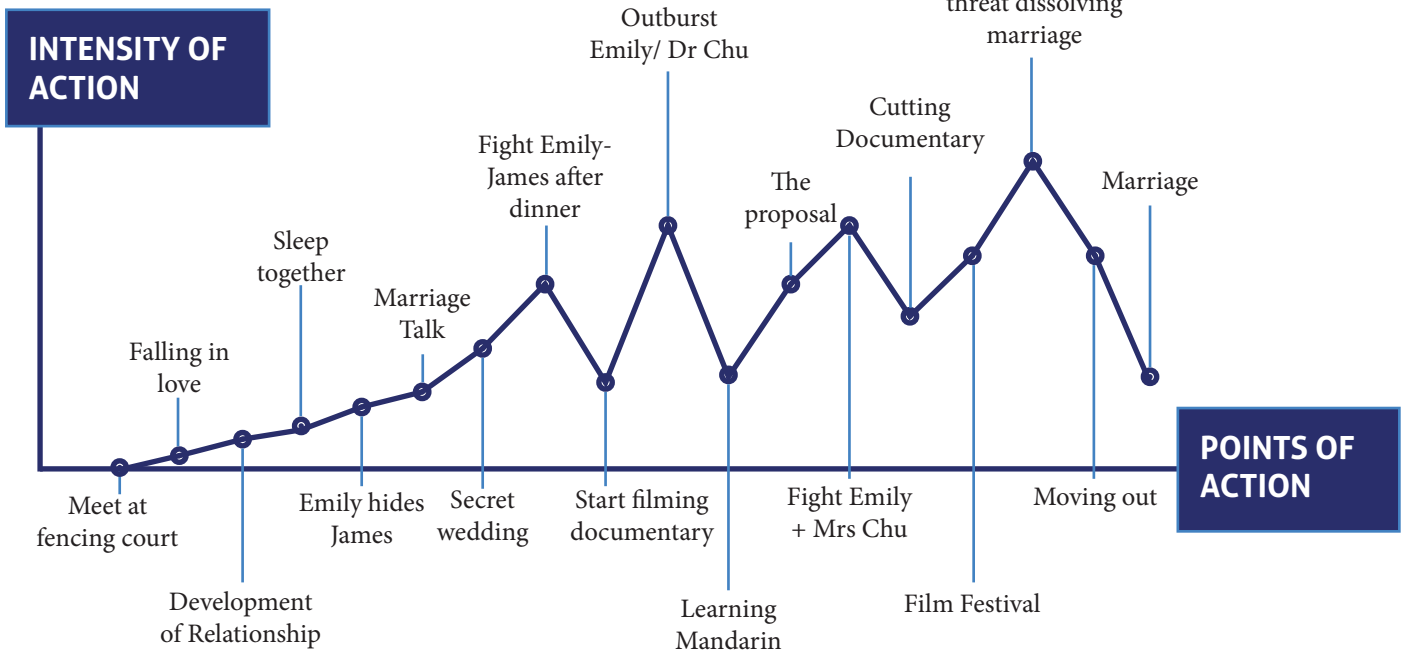
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- Marriage talk
- Emily cuts documentary



## FILM-AESTHETIC ELEMENTS

The film utilises different film-aesthetic elements such as filming techniques as well as film cutting and editing. With the help of your viewing sheet and the following topics, select specific aesthetic elements and explain how the use of the technique contributes to the meaning in the film (i.e. its effect on the film and/or audience).



**visual elements:** specific shot size (e.g. extreme close up, wide shot); camera angles (e.g. low, bird's eye), type of shot motion (e.g. tracking, pan, tilt, zoom, crane)

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**auditory elements:** music, sound effects, diegesis, narration, voice-over

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**mise-en-scène:** costume; set/location or props; lighting; performance (e.g. body language, movement)

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**editing:** transitions (e.g. dissolves, fades, cuts); time manipulation (e.g. flashback or flash forward, compression); special effects (e.g. slow/fast motion)

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## CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER

This activity maps a specific character's 'constellation' in **My Wedding and Other Secrets**, based on an in-depth analysis of the assigned character.

You will start working in separate groups (expert groups) on the following characters:

Emily Chu, James, Dr Chu, Mrs Chu, Susan Chu, Melanie Chu.

Meet with your 'home group' and choose a character.



## LEARN ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER

Meet with your 'expert group' (same character).

Within your group, split up the following character traits:

- social background
- outer appearance
- behaviour
- thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, desires

With the assistance of your viewing notes, individually work on your selected trait. If time permits, re-watch major scenes in which your character appears. Include possible changes impacting character development. Use the list of adjectives to help you describe the character, but always support your choice with reasons.

Share your results with your 'expert group'. Create a poster on the most important elements of each trait (keywords only!). Everyone in your group should be able to present your poster with their home group.



## TAKE NOTES

Posters are presented during a 'gallery walk'. Meet with your home group again. Each student is responsible for one character.

Take notes that will help you to map the character constellation afterwards.



## CHARACTER MAP

Complete the following Character Charts and add your characterization as well as the relationships between the characters.

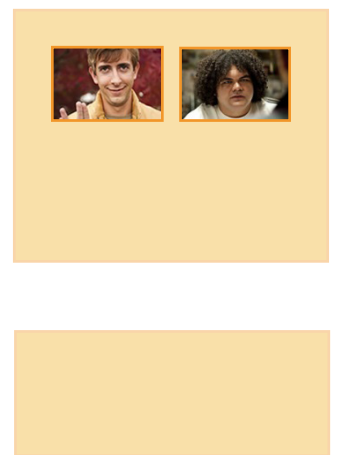
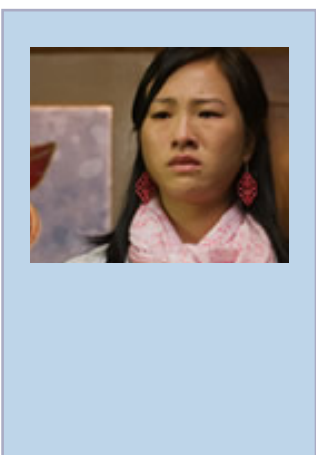
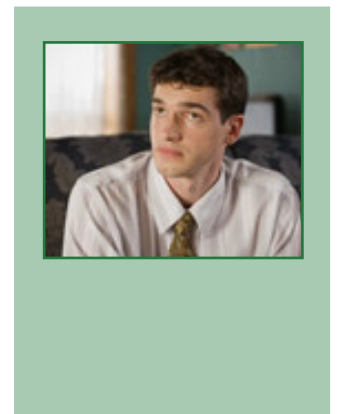
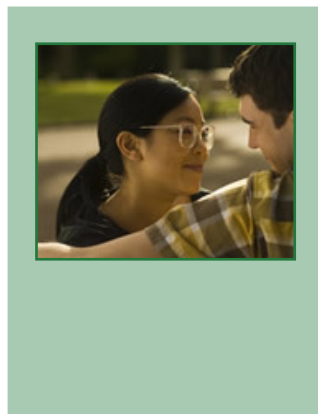
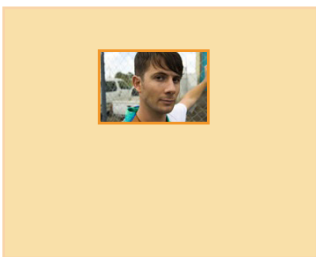
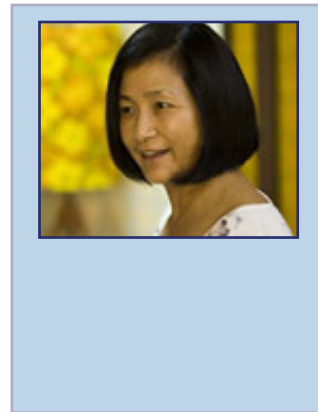
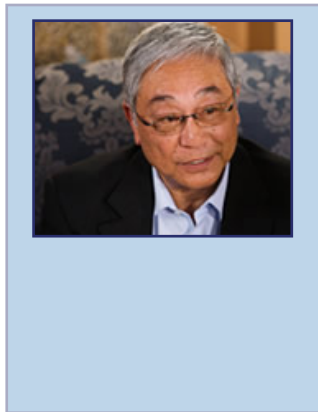


## SOME LANGUAGE SUPPORT

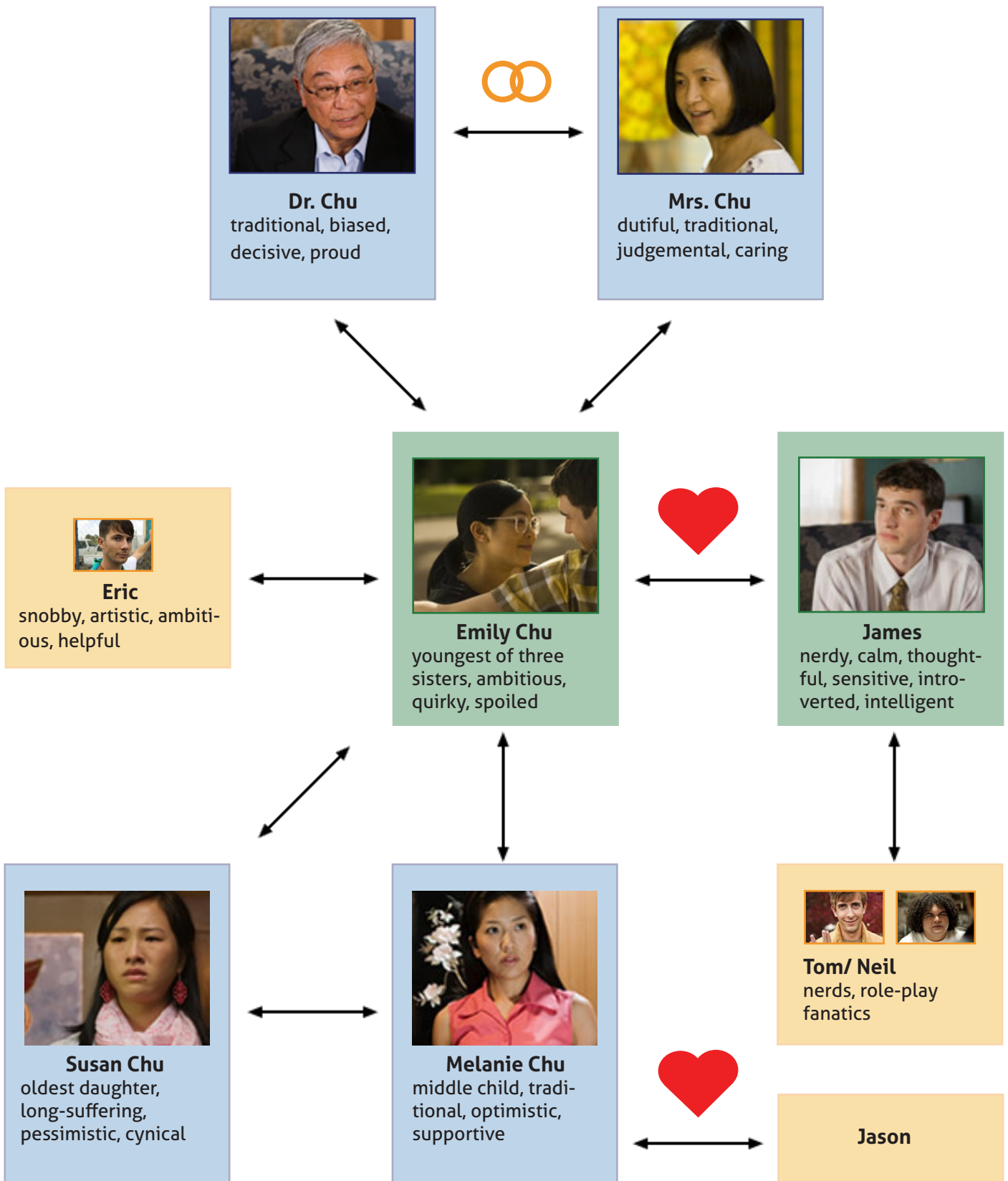
happy	hardworking	cheeky	sad	
optimistic	argumentative	unyielding	pessimistic	
handsome	talkative	unrealistic	angry	
lively	adventurous	rebellious	reckless	
helpful	extroverted	proud	rigid	
supportive	tactful	introverted	judgemental	strong
fun-loving	secretive	racist	loving	strict
immature	spoilt	wise	traditional	weird
dishonest	honest	sensitive	freaky	selfish
friendly	creative	long-suffering	egoistic	faithful
competitive	depressed	merciless	loyal	clean
suspicious	cold-hearted	intelligent	generous	geeky
repellent	likeable	dutiful	quirky	kind
mature	weak	thoughtful	ambitious	



# MY WEDDING AND OTHER SECRETS



Source: [www.myweddingandothersecretsmovie.com](http://www.myweddingandothersecretsmovie.com).



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## ANALYSE A SNAPSHOT

Select one of the following snapshots.  
Describe the snapshot in detail and explain the context  
in which it appears in the film.



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2



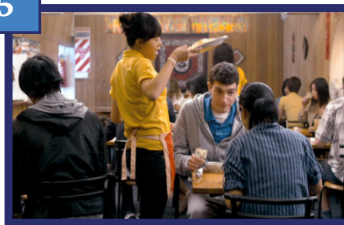
3



4



5



6



7



## SOME LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The snapshot displays / presents / shows ...  
The snapshot is composed of ... The viewer sees ...  
... is / are positioned at the side of / in the centre of the frame  
... is depicted / shown from a low / high angle which signifies  
The use of props such as ... make ...  
In the foreground / background ...  
In the centre / middle there is / are ...  
In the upper / lower / right / left part  
... stands for / alludes / illustrates / emphasises / reveals ...



Pictures taken from My Wedding and Other Secrets. Director: Roseanne Liang. Screenplay: Roseanne Liang / Angeline Loo. New Zealand: South Pacific Pictures. DVD 2011.

## SOME CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Yum cha is the traditional Chinese afternoon tea with dim sum small dishes. Dim sum is a type of Cantonese or Hokkien food prepared in small individual portions and served in small steamer baskets or on small plates.



At traditional restaurants dim sum is carried carted around in order for customers to choose their own portions while seated.

## DISCUSS

Pair up with someone who has selected the same snapshot as you and discuss the context in which it appears in the film.



## SHARE WITH THE GROUP

Arrange the different snapshots in the correct order, as they appear in the movie.  
Describe the characters' relationship with the depicted food.



## ANALYSE JAMES' BEHAVIOUR

Twice James' reluctant behaviour towards Chinese food is criticised; once by Emily and another time by her mother. Assess James' behaviour and explain how you would act in these situations.





## RESULTS AND POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION

**3) 00:00:52:** The recurrence of 'weet-biscuits' can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand it underlines the Chu family's openness towards European / British food traditions (as the product claims in a scene to be, "The best breakfast for New Zealand kids"), yet also acts as a metaphor that Emily is not a 'New Zealand kid' because she does not like them. On the other hand, 'weet-biscuits' have a symbolic meaning for Emily's character: when she was little she disliked the cereal so much that she - in an unobserved moment - even threw them away. However, she added them again to the shopping list in order to get the child's laser sword that came along when you bought five packages. After these events we see Emily in another scene with her mother and a laser sword in her hand, characterising her already strong-minded personality.

**5) 00:04:52:** Emily and James on their first date, on the day they first meet, and also the day of their first kiss. They both seem to enjoy the meal, though the hectic atmosphere of the fast-food restaurant irritates James. Both eat with chopsticks, showing that they are familiar with the Chinese way of eating. During the meal they discover many similarities between them, such as being the youngest in their families, loving lollies, and they both study computer science, though they both eventually hope to do something else (developing computer games / being a film director).

**4) 00:12:05:** This snapshot captures a number of important issues. It pictures the Chu family's tradition of having dinner together. It also shows Emily's mother's dedication to her as Emily arrived late to the meal but she was still served dinner by her mother. Mrs. Chu cooks dinner every night and always asks Emily if she had dinner when she comes home. Emily later realises that this behaviour shows how much her mother loves and cares for her. The dinner itself is dim sum (several small plates of food), showing how food is still traditionally Chinese in the Chu household. Furthermore, one can see how Jason, Melanie's boyfriend and in Dr. and Mrs. Chu's eyes the perfect Chinese boyfriend, appreciates Mrs Chu's food, which James later does not do (see 7).

**2) 00:32:16:** James and Emily are having yum cha at a traditional Chinese restaurant. While Emily is clearly enjoying the meal, James reluctantly tries it but is disgusted by the ducks' feet and the chicken head that are used as garnishes. When Emily's mother's friend approaches the two, Emily does not introduce James to her, making him feel neglected again. This eventually leads to a fight they have in James' home (see 6).

**6) 00:33:43:** After James and Emily have returned from their yum cha, their relationship is tense. Emily is upset because of James' reluctant attitude towards her carefully chosen dim sum. James, on the other hand, disliked the food and felt neglected when Emily spoke with her mother's friend and did not introduce James to her. When Tom and Neil appear and James willingly accepts their offer of cereal, Emily bursts out accusing James of not even trying the food. James loves 'weet-biscuits', probably because he grew up with them.

**7) 00:53:34:** After the happy outcome of James' proposal in front of Emily's father, the family invites him to stay for dinner. Again, it is a traditional Chinese dinner with dim sum. Mrs. Chu has cooked the live crabs James has brought as a present, which is part of the traditional proposal practice according to Emily's parents. However, James is again struggling with the food. When he explains that his parents are divorced, it is too much for Emily's mother to bear and she leaves the table. Dr. Chu tries to save the situation, talking to his wife in the kitchen and offering chicken to James. Though Dr. Chu has accepted his daughter's white New-Zealand boyfriend in this scene, Mrs. Chu has not.

**1) 01:11:29:** James is withdrawing from Emily and essentially refuses to speak with her. When the couple is about to break up over their secret relationship, Emily sends James a video of her eating 'weet-biscuits', symbolising her willingness to sacrifice for their love.