BIOGRAPHY:
(<https://jenyenwrites.com/>)

Jennifer Yen started her writing career as far back as elementary school, in the fourth grade when she wrote up a small detective story. Her teacher at the time went as far as to publish her modest story into a full fledged book for the public Now living in Texas, Jennifer Yen continues to live out her life as a happily single author, sharing a perspective of young adults from an Asian American contemporary standpoint. Two points of interest that stood out to me personally would be her intersectionality between her Asian American identity and her writing, and her playful, cutesy way of writing stories about romance and love.



SUMMARY:

A romantic comedy about a baking competition, immerse yourself in the mindset of recently-heartbroken-and-reluctant-to-love-again Liza Yang. Liza starts off the book freshly cheated on by her white ex boyfriend, and makes it a point to say “I’m never dating asian men '' because of her Asian tiger mom, who has been trying so hard to set her up with a nice Asian boy.As fate would have it, she meets two absolute Asian HOTTIES one that dates her bestie, and another that blows her off. The real story begins when the mom, a professional baker herself, decides to host a Masterchef-style baking competition, where all the contestants… are more hot Asian men! Who better to co-host the competition than her recently single daughter? Things heat up in this chaotic kitchen mess of a novel.

“We share a laugh and another round, this time on me. It’s a while….”

.” 39

This quote signifies Jessica’s revelation that her now ex boyfriend Brodie has cheated on her with another girl. Not only does this break her her heart and leave her single once again, setting up for future romantic events with James down the line, but also acts as apotheosis to her claim that she didn’t need a nice Asian boy. Brody wasn’t just a boyfriend she wasn’ allowed to have, he was WHITE, which actively went against her mom’s philosophy that Asian girls should only date Asian guys. Him turning out to be a rotten guy almost validates her mom’s claims, much to Jessica’s chagrin.

“So . . . you and James, huh?...” 74-5

Here, Jessica shows hints of finally showing attraction to James. James is a boy that both contrasts her previous boyfriend Brodie’s image and Jessica’s ideals of who she should date( dating anyone at all, not exclusively Asian) while also nevertheless being attractive to Jessica. This serves as to question Jessica unto whether or not she should try opening up to Asian men despite her mom’s overbearing philosophy. This could be pertinent to Asain AMerican teens in particular, as there is indeed a stereotype that Asians tend to date other Asians, and oftentimes Asian Americans form an opinion on that statement that dictates their preferences, much like Jessica did prior.

Ben and Grace lead the way back toward the building. I turn to follow,...

." 190-192

The climax of James and Jessica’s romance, where they finally kiss, essentially confirming their feelings for each other. Not really much to say here; as this book being a cheesy romcom, one of the most intriguing aspects of the genre is the satisfaction of having the romance blossom; this moment is precisely that.

LITERARY RESPONSE:

Ultimately, this book is relatively both harmless in its lack of thought provoking writing, as well as the language not being particularly challenging for high schoolers to comprehend. What it DOES provide is a lighthearted read by anyone(literally. ANYONE. This book goes down like cake, ironically), and a surprisingly well executed use of tension and symbolic descriptors in its writing, a la Jame’s lips tasting good juxtaposing his role as a baking contestant. I would probably had pick passages or have my students do as such, finding words and descriptors for a unit on something like symbolism or simile.

 As for the text and how it relates to *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story, Taste of Love* pairs nicely with Chapter 6:”Books About Idenity, Discrimination, and Struggle With Decsisions,” seeing how the main caracter Jessica is quite literally defined by her cultural identity, and how it relates to her decision making, romance wise.

SALES PITCH:

This book is easily digestible and can be read comfortably over long periods of time. It’s more contemporary approach to its characters can potentially appeal to youth, as much of the dialogue references things like k-pop or trendy foods that “these kids these days” are interested in. The romance between James and Jessica is endearing and playful, and gives you this rascalish feeling as you read, seeing how they develop their wholesome relationship. Pick up this novel if your looking for some youthful, tongue in cheek romance that’ll put a smile on your face.

ANALYSIS:

Jessica’s relationship with her mother and their opposing philosophies on dating different ethnicities is an intriguing topic that permeates to my own, and I’m sure, other young teens’ experiences with their identity and the people they should date. Does dating someone your parent approves of, because they are the same ethnicity as you, invalidate the notion that people of different cultures can be together? Vice versa? By dating someone of your culture, are you perpetuating stereotypes of people of the same culture that do date together? If someone that met your preferences culturally you date goes south, does that invalidate your stance on who you should date? Does it prove your parents were right all along? Summatively, while *Taste Of Love* is certainly not a complex tale, it does have potential to invite conversation on the dynamics between culture and romance.