

**PROTAGONIST'S SOCIAL CLASS IN KEVIN KWAN'S *CRAZY RICH ASIAN***

**A THESIS**

**BY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM  
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**SUBMITTED TO  
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix

Biography author : Kevin Kwan is the author of CRAZY RICH ASIANS, the international bestselling novel that has been translated into more than 30 languages. Its sequel, CHINA RICH GIRLFRIEND, was released in 2015, and RICH PEOPLE PROBLEMS, the final book in the trilogy, followed in 2017. For several weeks in 2018, the *Crazy Rich Asians* trilogy commanded the top three positions of the *New York Times* bestseller list --- an almost unprecedented single-author trifecta, and the film adaptation of CRAZY RICH ASIANS became Hollywood's highest grossing romantic comedy in over a decade. In 2018, Kevin was named by *Time Magazine* as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World.

### Summary

Crazy Rich Asians is a funny fiction novel written by Kevin Kwan that highlights and ridicules the lifestyle of upper-class Asian families and society. The book is about three wealthy, upper-class Chinese families, and how they undermine those who are not as rich and influential as them. It shows the scheming, gossip, and backbiting that occurs when Nicholas Young, the heir to one of the richest families in Asia, brings his girlfriend, Rachel Chu, home to one of the greatest weddings of the season. Rachel is an American-born Chinese girl who doesn't come from a very rich family. Her presence causes jitters among the guests. Kevin Kwan himself comes from a wealthy and established family in Singapore, which is why he knows so much about these things.

### Plot summary

*Crazy Rich Asians* is divided into three parts, each sectioned into chapters that tell the story of the events leading up to and directly following the wedding of [Colin Khoo](#) and [Araminta Lee](#), from the perspectives of several of the book's characters.

In the prologue, a young Nicholas Young has traveled to London with his mother, aunts, and cousins in 1986. They are soaked from walking in the rain from the London Underground station and enter an exclusive, private hotel called the Calthorpe, where his family has reservations under his mother Eleanor's name. The manager of the Calthorpe pretends not to find their reservations and puts them out of the hotel, insinuating that the three Chinese women and their children couldn't possibly be the right sort of people to stay in such a place. Eleanor sees her name in the reservations book, but the man still refuses to honor the reservation and suggests they try Chinatown. The family convenes at a phone booth outside and the kids, Nick, Astrid, and Eddie, argue about the possibility that they will have to sleep outside. However, Felicity, Astrid's mother, and Nick's aunt, calls her husband Harry, who knows the owner of the hotel, Lord Rupert Calthorpe-Cavendish-Gore, and buys it from him. The family goes back to the hotel and Lord Calthorpe-Cavendish-Gore comes down to escort them personally. He relays to the hotel manager that Mrs. Felicity Leong is now the property owner of the hotel. As the ladies and their children settle, Felicity casually fires the manager, dismissing him the same way he'd dismissed them earlier.

In Part 1, Nick is now grown up and is living in New York City with his girlfriend and fellow New York University professor, Rachel Chu. As the pair have tea in a tea shop, Nick invites Rachel to spend the summer with him in Singapore, his

home country. Nick is planning to return to Singapore to be the best man in his best friend Colin Khoo's wedding. Rachel, a Chinese American who has never traveled to Asia, is hesitant but ultimately decides that she should go, especially because she also has a friend named Peik Lin who lives in Singapore. Nick is spotted with Rachel by a Singaporean girl who takes a picture of the couple and shares it to people who keep sharing it until everyone in Singaporean society knows that Nick is planning to bring a girl back to Singapore.

Rachel is assumed to be part of the Chu family that owns a Taipei Plastics company, which Eleanor, Nick's mother, is not sure she can condone because they're new money. Meanwhile, Astrid is surprised to discover an illicit text message on her husband Michael's phone. She tries not to read into the text too much, but the idea of Michael cheating weighs on her. This comes just as Nick and Rachel arrive in Singapore, met at the airport by Colin Khoo and his fiancée, Araminta Lee. Colin and Araminta take Nick and Rachel to Lau Pa Sat, where they get food from food stalls and introduce Rachel to the food culture of Singapore. Astrid, back in Singapore from her spring in Paris, goes to her jeweler friend, Stephen, to shop and take her mind off of her husband's potential infidelity. There, she learns that Michael has purchased a charm bracelet that was not for her.

Nick spends the day with Colin, helping him prepare for the wedding, while Rachel spends time with her friend Peik Lin's family. Peik Lin's family has never heard of Nick or the Young family but are floored to learn that Nick is best friends with Colin Khoo and that the wedding that Rachel is attending is Colin's wedding to Araminta. Colin warns Nick that once he is married, Nick will become the most eligible young man in Singapore and that he needs to be mindful of "dark

forces” plotting against him, referring to unmarried young women and their mothers. Nick laughs it off, assuming that none of this gossip would bother Rachel.

Rachel and Nick decide to meet at Tyersall Park, Nick’s grandmother’s home, and Peik Lin agrees to drop Rachel off, mostly out of curiosity. The young women are both shocked to see the sprawling mansion hidden behind a gate, down an unmarked road, and past lines of English colonial houses. Rachel realizes for the first time that Nick comes from a very prominent, wealthy family. Nick talks about his childhood at Tyersall Park, and he introduces people at his Ah Ma’s (grandmother’s) party, most of whom are the upper crust of Asian society. There, Shang Su Yi, Nick’s grandmother, invites Nick and Rachel to come stay at Tyersall Park instead of in a hotel.

After the party, Astrid gets into a car accident with her son in the car while trying to speed home to catch her husband cheating. She ends up hospitalized, but once home with Michael, she confronts him about the cheating, and he suggests that they break up. Unable to cope with just breaking up, Astrid is left depressed and looking for answers, while trying to save face with her nosy family members.

Rachel and Nick attend Colin and Araminta’s separate bachelor/bachelorette parties and find themselves subjected to the extreme behaviors of their peers. Nick and Colin are dragged into debauchery with Bernard Tai, who takes Colin’s guests to see illegal dogfights, tries to get them to do drugs, and throws a wild yacht party where they are expected to eat confections off of naked women’s bodies. Colin, along with Nick and their friend Mehmet, devise a plan to escape, pretending Colin is extremely sick and commissioning a helicopter to take them away from the yacht. They continue their trip in the peaceful Australian desert.

Rachel, on the other hand, finds herself being treated like the odd woman out by Araminta's stuck-up peers. The women grill her about her background and her relationship with Nick. One woman, Francesca, twists Rachel's words when she refers to Nick as a "good catch," implying that Rachel is a gold digger. Rachel meets Astrid's cousin and Colin's sister, Sophie, and makes friends with her. She is much more down to earth than the other women, and Rachel finally feels comfortable opening up. After enjoying drinks, Rachel and Sophie go to their rooms, where Rachel finds a bloody, gutted fish in her bag. On the wall, someone has written a threatening insult in blood. She goes to Sophie for help, and Sophie suggests she ignore it, and not give those girls the satisfaction of reacting to their bullying.

Once back in Singapore, Nick finally brings Rachel to meet his parents, Philip and Eleanor. His mother had just returned from Shenzhen, where she had purchased information about Rachel's past. They have dinner with Nick's parents, as well as several women whom Eleanor called for back-up. One of the women is Francesca. Everyone is nice enough to Rachel at dinner, but as soon as she and Nick leave, Francesca tells Eleanor that Rachel bragged about Nick being a "great catch" and suggests that Eleanor get rid of her. Some of the other ladies agree, but Philip excuses himself, annoyed with them. Eleanor decides that she will get rid of Rachel, but that she should do it subtly.

Araminta and Colin's wedding events fill the next few days. The wedding is star studded and filled with a who's who guest with celebrities, royalty, and high-ranking officials among the guests. Everyone is surprised to see Shang Su Yi at the wedding, entering with Astrid, who is not with Michael. The wedding is opulent, which garners criticism from the old-money crowd, but it goes smoothly. Seeing

Araminta walk down the aisle makes Nick realize that he wants to marry Rachel. At the reception in the park behind the church, Nick takes Rachel into a cave that used to be his hideout when he was young. He starts to tell her that he wants to marry her, but they are interrupted by Mandy, Nick's ex-girlfriend. She seems nice enough, but oddly territorial over Nick.

Everyone heads home to change before the wedding banquet, and Su Yi hands out her jewelry to the women in her family. She gives a special sapphire necklace to Fiona, Eddie's wife. Rachel asks Nick the nature of his relationship with Mandy. Once she is reassured that there is nothing more between him and Mandy, they head downstairs and run into Augustine, Eddie's son. He is running from Eddie because he accidentally spilled orange soda on his suit. They reassure the boy that he will be okay, but Eddie berates the boy. Fiona comes and puts Eddie in his place, calling him a tyrant. She asks to ride to the banquet with Rachel and Nick and offers Rachel the sapphire necklace.

Later, at the banquet, Mandy and Francesca imply to Rachel that they had a threesome with Nick, and Francesca makes it blatantly clear that Nick performed certain sexual acts with her. Rachel is mortified and wants to leave Singapore. Meanwhile, Astrid finds her ex-fiancé Charlie. They catch up and realize that they are both in failed marriages. Charlie offers to fly Astrid to Hong Kong to confront Michael, whom she believes is off meeting his mistress. After the banquet, Rachel packs her things to leave. Nick tries to convince her to stay, but she tells him about all of the bullying she has faced since they arrived in Singapore. He promises to make it up to her and to take her away where they can just be together. Before they

leave, he tells his mother, Eleanor, that he intends to propose to Rachel and doesn't care if his mother approves.

In Hong Kong, Charlie helps Astrid track down Michael, and they go to confront him at an apartment. He assumes that she had her father track him down, and he initially agrees that he had been having an affair until she sobs, asking how he could do that to Cassian. Then, he admits that he made the whole affair up, and that there was no mistress or outside child. The woman was actually his cousin, and the little boy was her son. He reveals that he staged the whole affair so that Astrid would have an excuse to leave him, and that he wants to be out of the marriage because he can't handle being Astrid's husband.

Rachel and Nick go to Malaysia for a romantic excursion, where Nick plans to propose. They head to his grandmother's vacation lodge, but when they arrive, his mother and grandmother are waiting for them. They confront Nick about his plans to propose to Rachel, and Su Yi refuses to give her blessing because Rachel isn't from a proper family. Nick defends her, but Eleanor reveals that she found Rachel's father, who is in jail. Rachel and Nick assert that Rachel's father is long dead, but Eleanor pulls out records that claim Rachel's father is a man named Zhou Fang Min who is in jail for negligence that killed multiple people. Shocked by the news, Rachel faints. Nick tells his mother and grandmother off and carries Rachel out. He apologizes to Rachel and drives her away, but Rachel asks him to drop her off once they are down the mountain. He checks her into a hotel, but as soon as he leaves, she checks herself out and goes to stay with Peik Lin.

Devastated by their breakup, Nick stays at Colin's place and tries constantly to contact Rachel. Eleanor laments that she cannot contact him after

sabotaging his relationship with Rachel. Colin returns from his honeymoon out of concern for Nick and he suggests that Nick keep trying to get Rachel back. Rachel calls her mom and asks her about Zhou Fang Min, but in her anger, she hangs up before her mother can offer her a proper explanation. On the morning that Rachel is about to go to China with Peik Lin to meet Zhou Fang Min, Nick arrives with her mother to stop her.

Kerry explains to Rachel that Zhou Fang Min isn't her father. She reveals that her real father is a kind young man named Kao Wei. She had initially rebelled against her parents to marry Zhou Fang Min, but he was cruel and treated her poorly, and Kao Wei started to comfort her and help protect her against Fang Min's violent outburst. She formed a relationship with Kao Wei, and when she became pregnant with Rachel, she worried for Rachel's safety. The family was upset that Rachel was a girl and wanted to blind her so that the government would allow them to have another child. Kao Wei helped Kerry escape to America without ever knowing that Rachel was his daughter.

In Hong Kong, Astrid is heartbroken over Michael and despite his lies, still loves him. Charlie realizes that he has feelings for her that she can't reciprocate, yet. He decides to buy Michael's company for far more than its worth, hoping that it will somehow help Astrid. Back at Peik Lin's place, Nick and Peik Lin are glad to see that Rachel and Kerry have reconciled. They all gather at the poolside bar. Nick and Rachel finally talk, and Rachel thanks him for going to California to get her mother. She is impressed that someone would do that for her, and they share a kiss. With everything resolved, Peik Lin and Nick argue about where they should take Kerry and Rachel to eat, and Rachel explains to her mother that this is the Singapore way.



## **Characters of the story**

Rachel is the protagonist of the book (and film), played by Constance Wu. She's an Economics professor at NYU, and she's starting to imagine a future with her boyfriend Nick Young. At least, she is until she meets his disapproving family. The film's protagonist goes through a lot during this tale. Rachel Chu (Constance Wu) does a good job of integrating herself into a world that is so out of her league. She fights through the other women being mean to her, Eleanor's constant put-downs, and never quite feeling like she's good enough.

Nick is a Young. In other words, in Asia, his family name carries incredible weight signifying his class and wealth. He is an Oxford alum and a history professor who brings his girlfriend Rachel home to meet his intimidating family. For the most part, Nick Young (Henry Golding) is a good character. He comes from money but knows that means people will treat him differently, so he woos Rachel without ever telling her about his wealth. It's a big secret but it proves that he and Rachel love each other for them and nothing more.

While Nick is also supportive of Rachel, he does allow a few too many negative things to go on. For example, he knows that his mother is treating Rachel poorly but he doesn't really stand up for her until it's too late.

Nick's formidable mother Eleanor is perfectly-coiffed, classy, and terrifying. Despite her polite demeanor, she has a distaste for Rachel and Nick's relationship, and she makes her feelings known. The biggest villain of the story is Eleanor Young (Michelle Yeoh). Nick's mother almost instantly disapproves of Rachel as a fitting suitor for her son and isn't afraid to let her feelings known. The

vicious conversation they have on the steps shows just how scathing Eleanor could really be.

Rachel's inspiring mom immigrated from the United States and raised her daughter all on her own. This puts her in stark contrast to Nick's high-society family, where labels are everything.

Shang Su Yi (Lisa Lu) She is Nick Young's grandmother, better known as Ah Ma, and impressing her means the world to Rachel Chu. At first glance, she does so and it makes Eleanor jealous since she never really got that.

Eventually, Ah Ma is pretty negative towards Rachel and Nick when she finds out the details about Rachel's family. You can tell that she means a lot and she's pivotal to the plot but she doesn't get nearly as much screen time as some of the other characters. Plus, her turn at the end was disappointing.