

Special Feature

Including Asian Perspectives in the English Classroom



The Access Asia program aims to increase empathy, knowledge and understanding about the peoples and countries of Asia amongst teachers and students.

www.eddept.wa.edu.au/accessasia/operations/whatis.htm

Literature includes a wide variety of creative and imaginative writing, oral performance and texts which contribute to an appreciation of students' own cultural heritages and the heritages of other cultures.

Students' experience and study of Australian texts is balanced by the study of texts from other countries, nationalities and cultures.

The study of a wide range of texts provides students with the opportunity to reflect on different values and value systems and assists in the development of their own values.

www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/pages/framework/framework05c1.htm

Curriculum Framework: English Learning Area: The Scope of the Curriculum: Texts

Asian cuisine has become commonplace in Australia, moviegoers flock to films such as *Raise the Red Lantern* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and even after the Bali bombings, many areas of Asia remain popular tourist destinations, especially with young adults. How many students, however, have more than a superficial knowledge of this region, which is Australia's nearest neighbour, and the heritage of approximately ten percent of Australia's population?

Anyone who frequents good bookshops is likely to have noticed the increasing availability of books written by Asian authors or written by others about Asia. Many titles focus on the experiences of Asian immigrants in western countries or provide insight into the history, stories and culture of their homeland. Some non-Asian authors use Asian settings and fantasy

writers such as Lian Hearn and Tamora Pierce have invented worlds inspired by Asian culture, history and geography for some of their novels. Yet, beyond the study of the occasional Haiku poem or Asian legend does your school make a concerted effort to incorporate Asian voices into the English curriculum?

In a 2002 survey of Western Australian English teachers, Pamela Stewart, Access Asia Advisor, established that many teachers were reluctant to use Asian content in their programs due to their 'lack of knowledge about the cultures and peoples...and an uncertainty about what resources were available.'¹ The Access Asia program through its professional development sessions, cluster schools, teacher study tours and publications aims to redress these concerns. By highlighting contemporary fiction and personal stories in this issue of *Fiction Focus* and on the

CMIS Database we hope to improve teachers' awareness of the wealth of material that could be incorporated into literature programs to enhance students' critical literacy and their Asian literacy.

Allan Luke, Dean of the National Institute of Education, Singapore, (previously Dean of Education, University of Queensland) argues that in today's more interconnected and complex world 'our students need a literacy education that provides critical engagements with globalised flows of information, image, text and discourse.'² We need to assist students to engage with other cultures and worldviews — to 'build bridges, cross borders and apply critical scrutiny to competing and complex texts.'³ Teachers can begin in a small way by providing students with opportunities to explore texts with Asian content to balance the current Western focus. The more ambitious may wish to emulate teachers at John Curtin College for the Arts, who used Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* to devise a literature and performing arts project, which culminated in a spectacular students' performance of a play adapted from the novel, incorporating Banraku puppets and quotations from the novel projected on a screen.

TITLES PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED IN FICTION FOCUS

AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN

- ELLIS, Deborah. *Parvana*
ELLIS, Deborah. *Parvana's Journey*
GLEITZMAN, Morris. *Boy Overboard*
HAWKE, Rosanne. *Borderland*
LATIFA. *My Forbidden Face*
STAPLES, Suzanne Fisher. *Daughter of the Wind*
ZOYA, with John Follain and Rita Cristofari. *Zoya's Story: an Afghan Woman's Battle for Freedom*

CHINA

- BAILLIE, Allan. *The China Coin*
CHAI, Arlene J. *On the Goddess Rock*
MAH, Adeline Yen. *Chinese Cinderella*
MCCAUGHREAN, Geraldine. *The Kite Rider*

- RIPPIN, Sally. *Chenxi and the Foreigner*
SA, Shan. *The Girl who Played Go*
(China/Japan)
WANG, Gabrielle. *The Garden of Empress Cassia*

EAST TIMOR

- GLEESON, Libby. *Refuge*
VONDRA, Josef. *No-Name Bird*

INDIA

- GAVIN, Jamila. *Out of India*
WATSON, Jane. *Hindustan Contessa*
WHELAN, Gloria. *Homeless Bird*

INDONESIA

- BAILLIE, Allan. *The Treasure Hunters*
FLYNN, Warren. *Escaping Paradise*
HAVEL, Geoff. *Grave of the Roti Men*
MASSON, Sophie. *The Tiger*

JAPAN

- DISHER Gary. *The Divine Wind*
HEARN Lian. *Across the Nightingale Floor*
(historical fantasy)
HEARN Lian. *Grass for His Pillow*
(historical fantasy)
MOCHIZUKI Ken. *Beacon Hill Boys*

KOREA

- NA, An. *A Step from Heaven*

TIBET

- CATRAN, Wendy. *Not Raining Today*
TOLBERT, Steve. *Tracking the Dalai Lama*

VIETNAM

- ANDERSON, Rachael. *The War Orphan*
ANDERSON, Rachael. *Warlands*
CASWELL, Brian and CHIEM, David. *Only the Heart*
CASWELL, Brian and CHIEM, David. *The Full Story*
FLYNN, Warren. *Different Voices*
HIGGINS, Simon. *Jade Draper in the DreamWeb Files*



Full reviews for these and other titles can be found on the CMIS database.

amlib.eddept.wa.edu.au



Choose CMIS TOPIC

Insert the CMIS TOPIC Keyword:

Access Asia – Fiction

Or, **Access Asia – Personal Stories** (for auto/biographies & memoirs)

Use Phase of Development to restrict searches



Challenge Students in Late Adolescence with these Titles:

CHANG, Jung. **Wild Swans** (First published 1991, new edition May 2004)

FORSTER, E.M. **A Passage to India**

GOLDEN, Arthur. **Memoirs of a Geisha**

GREENE, Graham. **The Quiet American**

KOCH, Christopher J. **Highways to a War**

KOCH, Christopher J. **The Year of Living Dangerously**

ROY, Ashanti. **The God of Small Things**

TAN, Amy. **The Joy Luck Club**



REFERENCES AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

1. Stewart, Pamela. 'Pathways to Asia Through Literacy'. *AEF News Vol. 12 No. 2 2003, p. 14.*
 2. Luke, Allan. 'Literacy Education for a New Ethics of Global Community – After 9/11'. In *AEF News Vol. 12 No. 2 2003, p. 22 – 23.*
 3. Luke, Allan. 'Literacy Education for a New Ethics of Global Community – After 9/11'. In *AEF News Vol. 12 No. 2 2003, p. 22 – 23.*
- The Asia Education Foundation. *AEF News Vol. 12 No. 2 November 2003.* Includes articles, teacher profiles, news about programs in Access Asia schools, study tours, resources, websites.

☺ Available to WA teachers through Pamela Stewart:
Pamela.Stewart@det.wa.edu.au

- Access Asia website
www.eddept.wa.edu.au/accessasia



Contains information about the Access Asia program including a schedule of Professional Development sessions for teachers to explore the use of Asian content in the English classroom.

- Asia EdNet site
www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/network



A national collaborative project for all educators interested in studies of Asia and Asian languages, which includes an online tutorial, discussion group, regular guest experts, directory of evaluated online resources and a newsletter.

- Asia Link website
www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au



Promotes the public understanding of the countries of Asia. It includes The Asia Education Foundation, which promotes the studies of Asia in schools across all curriculum areas through the development of curriculum materials, school programs, teacher study tours and professional development.

- Hotta, Anne and Probst. 'Beyond Tokenism: The English Classroom and Asian Literacy.' *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years. Vol. 11 No. 2 2003 p. 55-60.* This article by two teachers advocates that teachers invigorate their English courses through the inclusion of Asian literacy.
- Millard, Carolyn. "Becoming 'Asia Literate'." In *AEF News. No. 2 2003, p. 6.* Explores a rationale for using texts from Asia to foster student literacy.
- **Voices and Visions CD-ROMs**
Voices & Visions: Texts for the Senior English Classroom. Carlton South, Vic, Curriculum Corporation. CD-ROM.

The *Voices and Visions* series of CD-ROMS for Indonesia, China, Japan and India are now in schools. Each CD includes a variety of texts from the source country organized around Literature, Film and Television, Popular Publishing and Visual and Performing Arts genres.

☺ For further information about *Voices & Visions* and other Studies of Asia materials produced by Asia Education Foundation and Curriculum Corporation go to:

The Curriculum Corporation:
www.curriculum.edu.au



Asialink:
www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/aef/curriculum/index.html



☺ Professional Development to support use of *Voices & Visions* CD-Roms:
www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/pd.htm

