

## BOOK REVIEWS

Q:

**BY 2020, WHOSE ECONOMIES ARE EXPECTED TO BE BIGGER THAN THOSE OF EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS PUT TOGETHER?**

**A: THE NATIONS OF ASIA.\***

It's important to keep your class informed about the latest Asian economic trends. And now you can do that with NBR/Asia from public television's *Nightly Business Report*.

Timely videos on Asian economic and financial issues are available to high school teachers for classroom use at no charge. Each tape contains reports from Tokyo, Beijing and other Asian financial centers, presented as they aired on *Nightly Business Report* a few weeks earlier.

And to help you find a way to work these reports into your curriculum, supporting lesson plans will be available on *Nightly Business Report's* website, [www.nbr.com/asia](http://www.nbr.com/asia)

For more information on the series of three videos for the current school year (to be delivered in January, March and May), go to [www.nbr.com/asia](http://www.nbr.com/asia)

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**NIGHTLY  
BUSINESS  
REPORT**

Where America Turns  
for Business News

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and The United States-Japan Foundation*

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## Access Asia

3 volumes

***Impressions*** (lower secondary)

49 PAGES, ISBN 1-86366-415-7

***Reflections*** (middle secondary)

66 PAGES, ISBN 1-86366-416-5

***Dimensions*** (upper secondary)

81 PAGES, ISBN 1-86366-417-3

By Anthony Bott, Lee Grafton, Carolyn Millard  
and Doug Trevaskis

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA: CURRICULUM CORPORATION, 1998

The Access Asia project has produced a new trilogy for lower (*Impressions*), middle (*Reflections*) and upper (*Dimensions*) secondary school students. These volumes, dealing with Asian themes, represent a timely resource. With cultural studies back on the school curriculum and interest in other cultures at an all-time high, the publication of these books is particularly welcome. They will be useful to teachers of Asian studies, languages other than English, and English as a second language, as well as to the English teacher.

The written and visual texts are quite distinct in content, mood and style, each giving a different perspective of issues relating to cultural diversity and interaction. They reach across the curriculum, complementing the Curriculum and Standards Framework and the National Profiles' eight learning areas.

Many Asian writers in a postcolonial era tend to center on either the migrant's trials in a host community or focus on oppositional cultural values. The extracts offered here are different; they move between traditional cultural worlds and the contemporary experience, providing a record of the many experiences and issues which confront all of us in everyday life within the context of a culture, a time span and a society. As the authors comment, "Images of Asia portrayed on Australian television tend to focus on underdeveloped rural life, crowded bustling city life, or human or natural disasters. Which is the real Asia?"

The full coursework is based around 17 units, and there is a nice sense of progression both within each unit and over the whole series. Several units deal with literary themes, and all suggest activities ranging from talking points and close reading to writing options and investigations. But the stunning illustrations in the 'Visiting the Visuals' chapters captured my eye and the immediate attention of my students. These range from beautiful reproductions of Rama and Sita, Balinese paintings, and Indian miniatures to contemporary cartoons from Hong Kong. This quality black-and-white format with a dramatic full color insert is designed to match students' interests, and gives this series instant appeal.

There is also an overarching unity in the series inspiring confidence in its use and effective balance of the diversity of authorship and approach. The range of source material is quite impressive, drawing on film and media ideas as well as written texts of all styles, including in the latter category such moving pieces as Kish-

war Naheed's poem, "I am not that woman," Ku Sang's "Wasteland" poems, and Brian Caswell and David Phu An Chiem's "Toan's Story."

Alternately, such pieces as "The Gossamer Years" with its diary description of travel and the Japanese countryside written by a tenth-century noblewoman of Heian, certainly highlight the originality of the authors' choices. These distant worlds of rituals, rules and etiquette governed by interpersonal behavior are old fashioned worlds to today's mind, and yet the reader comes to understand the way of life and what it represented. All the extracts are concise and should therefore lend themselves easily to exploration within a single lesson.

Another interesting and useful inclusion in the series is a progression of chapters about memoirs and reports. Report writing is a necessary skill in the modern world, and my students were interested to learn this was so even in ancient times, with examples from China, Japan, Laos and India, among others, showing a long tradition of report writing. The chapters also highlight the diversity of cultural, economic and political conditions, and I have used them to good effect in my classroom.

This collection will prove a very practical addition to any department's stock; certainly it broadens the range of texts available and presents students with an original and stimulating experience of Asian writing.

This is a curriculum based in the real world of discourse. It is multidisciplinary, accessible, and lucid in layout and articulation, with some of the most beautifully presented pages I've seen for many years. Students will surely gain an appreciation of textual presentation as well as enjoy the beautiful photographs and graphics. An excellent and thoroughly useful resource. ■

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## Brush Meditation

### *A Japanese Way to Mind & Body Harmony*

By H. E. Davey

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA: STONE BRIDGE PRESS, 1999  
144 PAGES, ISBN 1-880656-38-8, PAPERBACK

"We are witnessing the meeting of East and West. Through positive, nonbiased Eastern and Western cultural exchange, a new, more balanced, more enlightened global culture may result" (preface). So begins *Brush Meditation* by H. E. Davey, who according to the author biography is the first non-Japanese ever to receive the highest rank from a worldwide Japanese calligraphy association and who has received numerous awards for his calligraphy.

Why someone with such impressive credentials would write such a superficial book on his art is a mystery waiting to be solved. Perhaps the preface can shed some light. Davey states, "I'm not teaching and pursuing the above-mentioned art forms because of an overwhelming interest in Japanese culture. While I certainly am, of course, interested in Japan, my main intention in studying these arts is to examine the nature of the self, the universe, and life as a whole" (7). Following this approach, the book treats calligraphy lightly and holds out the promise of enlightenment to those who pursue the Japanese traditional arts.

The book begins with a history of calligraphy that includes the names of a few of China's classic masters—sometimes written using Chinese pronunciation, sometimes written using Japanese pronunciation, and seldom including birth and death dates. Next, a few Japanese Zen calligraphers receive mention in a fuzzy discussion of Zen and the Japanese arts. A few pages later, Davey explores the relationship between calligraphy and Western artists such as Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell. This potentially fruitful discussion is abandoned after a few pages, without providing a single reproduction of Eastern-inspired Western art. In fact, the only reproductions in the book are from the author and one of his students.

The last half of the book is a "how to" manual for studying calligraphy that explains even the most basic aspects of practice along with more esoteric advice about *ki* energy and meditation. Finally, Davey encourages the reader to pick up the brush and imitate a few examples. But surely the author realizes that calligra-

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**NEH Stipend for Participants: \$2,800**

For a detailed review of the Institute's curriculum and an application, you may consult our website at [http://college.holycross.edu/orgs/himalayan\\_cultures/](http://college.holycross.edu/orgs/himalayan_cultures/). Or email Prof. Lewis at [tlewis@holycross.edu](mailto:tlewis@holycross.edu).