

Savoring the China Box

By Molly Mullin

“When can we look in the *China Box*?”

The seventh graders I teach as we move through our Culture Studies curriculum ask this question of me frequently.

The lure of the *China Box* unopened on a shelf in the room is strong. In the early spring of the past two years when my students have finally been allowed to look into the *China Box*, they have not been disappointed.

The first year that I used this resource to enrich the study of China, I was very fortunate in that Dr. Levine brought it to my classroom himself and gave a demonstration of much of its contents. He explained about the intricacies of Chinese writing and showed us how to eat raisins using chopsticks. It was a fantastic introduction to a wonderful teaching tool.

When it came time to study China the second year, I was as eager as the students to delve into the *China Box*. I like to pick out a category of items, such as puzzles, maps, books, toys, or masks each day and use them as a warm-up at the start of class.

Students are particularly fond of the chirping crickets in a box, so I am prepared to hear them a lot on the day they are brought out of the *China Box*! There is also delight, especially among the boys, with the racing cars and *djianze*, which is a kick toy. Possibly the only flaw in the contents of the *China Box* is that many of the toys are fragile and I must often remind

the students to handle them with care. This is hard because they are very eager to get their hands on them.

I rounded up a few of my students from last year to ask what they remembered about the *China Box*. I was pleased to find that each person had an instant favorite object and that they were all different ones. This prompted them to ask for one more peek into the *China Box* despite the fact that they are now such grown-up eighth graders.

The maps and posters are used as bulletin board displays during the study of China. Students are fond of finding Greensboro on the Chinese map of the United States and are intrigued by the poster showing the Healthy Eye Exercises. Usually there are a few students who become absorbed with learning about Chinese writing, money, or using the abacus. For them there is a wealth of enrichment in the *China Box* and *China Talk* materials.

The slides of everyday life that are included in *China Talk* are used to illustrate the geographic theme of place. They provide a chance to look at urban and rural life, as well as the diverse physical features of the Chinese landscape. I have used the sections on the Great Wall, the dynasties, and Confucius to elaborate on the information that is in our textbook. The flexibility of the material in the *China Talk* binder is one of its strengths. Teachers can pick and choose what works best for the age group and time frame that they have and will find something for everyone. I only wish there were a Box for every country I teach! ■

The lure of the China Box unopened on a shelf in the room is strong. In the early spring of the past two years when my students have finally been allowed to look into the China Box, they have not been disappointed.



MOLLY MULLIN is a Social Studies Teacher at Greensboro Day School in Greensboro, North Carolina. She teaches the Geography and Cultures of Asia and Africa to seventh grade students. Ms. Mullin traveled recently to Israel and hopes to visit China one day.

DANCE
The Tale of Genji (源氏物語)
 Performance or Lecture Demo
 contact:
Saeko Ichinohe Dance Company
 159 West 53 Street, NY, NY 10019
 Tel: (212) 757-2531 Fax: (212) 757-3614
 e-mail: Sichinohe@aol.com www.instantmedia.com/saeko