

## BOOK REVIEWS

ethnocentrism of many American students, I would feel reluctant to use this book in an American classroom, for fear that it would only confirm some students' underlying sense that "the American way is best"—the issue is of course far more complex than this, even in purely economic terms, the central language of Lingle's argument. Students in Singapore would benefit from reading this book, but students in the United States, many of whom may be only dimly aware of the earlier proclamations of the coming "Asian Century" emanating from Singapore and Malaysia, perhaps would not.

In my own class in Hong Kong on "Culture and Business," I will use Mahathir Mohamad's and Ishihara Shintaro's *The Voice of Asia* and Chris Patten's *East and West*—two utterly opposing books, with the latter similar in argument to Lingle's book, but more compelling reading—to have my students debate the question of "Asian values," and will use Lingle's book, with its often valuable economic explications, as my own reference. A good scholarly book explicating the East Asian economic crisis is sorely needed for the college classroom; perhaps Lingle, with a lighter, more detached touch, is the person to write such a book. ■

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The year 2000 is the Chinese year  
of the dragon, and our Spring issue  
of *Education About Asia*  
in the year 2000  
will be a  
thematic issue on  
Teaching about Asian Economies.

## Sharing Fruit An Anthology of Asian and Australian Writing

Erica Manh, Editor

MELBOURNE: CURRICULUM CORPORATION  
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, 1998  
VII + 192 PAGES

CURRICULUM CORPORATION, P.O. BOX 177, CARLTON  
VICTORIA 3053, AUSTRALIA. FAX: 61-3-9639-1616

**S**haring Fruit contains thirty-six selections of poetry, short stories, and excerpts from longer works of fiction and nonfiction by twenty-three contemporary Asian and Australian authors. All but four selections were published in the 1990s. The staff of the Asia Education Foundation and the Australian education system collaborated under the editorial leadership of Erica Manh to produce the anthology.

The most well-known author included may be the Indian writer Gita Mehta, represented by three excerpts from her work *Snakes and Ladders: A View of Modern India*. Many of the authors have achieved renown in their own countries and are represented here by translated works: A. Samad Said (Malaysia), Wang Meng and Zhang Xianliang (China), Taufiq Ismail (Indonesia), Naowarat Pongpaiboon and Khammaan Khonkhai (Thailand). The text also introduces readers to less-recognized voices like Australian poet Terry Whitebeach, Chinese Australian Leslie Zhao, and Korean poet and political activist Namju Kim.

Aside from the work of Mehta and the Australians, other pieces penned in English include a short story from Sri Lankan Romesh Gunsekera's collection *Monkfish Moon*; an extract from Lillian Ng's (Chinese Australian from Singapore) novel *Silver Sister*; and a portion of Adeline Yen Mah's (Hong Kong) autobiographical "story of an unwanted Chinese daughter," *Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots*. (Women writers, by the way, are well represented in the collection.) These last two pieces, with their focus on interpersonal relationships, will be appreciated by the teenage audience for whom the anthology is designed, as will Geoff Bolton's story of a Japanese family encountering an Australian family at a backyard picnic on a sweltering summer day.

Along with texts that will be more accessible for younger teenage audiences, there are demanding texts for more mature readers, such as two short stories from the controversial Chinese writer Ding Xiaoqi's collection *Maidenhome*. As any good anthology does, this one includes pieces that whet readers' appetites for more. That is certainly the case with the extract from Japanese British writer Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, which gives wonderful insight into Japanese personal sensibilities, or with the excerpt from Chinese Canadian journalist Jan Wong's *Red China Blues*. Wong, an eyewitness to the Tiananmen Square massacre, writes out

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of her experience of returning to China as a committed Maoist at the age of seventeen. The head note for the extract from Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* tantalizes readers by claiming that this North Vietnamese war veteran's first novel, a best seller in Vietnam, "ranks with the greatest war novels of this century."

Even though a wide variety of nationalities are represented in this collection, there are no pieces representing writing from central or western Asia. The anthology also manages to ignore the three great religious traditions of the region, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, by including many stories which, though Eastern in appearance, exude a Westernized secular spirit.

Intended as a textbook for middle to upper secondary English classes in Australia, the anthology includes reading comprehension questions after each selection that will not only guide students' understanding, but encourage them to probe the text more critically. Follow-up activities for discussion, essay writing, creative writing, and oral presentations are suggested at the end of each chapter, and the conclusion of each unit presents more challenging activities, such as the one at the end of the section "Freedom's Struggle": "plan a campaign to achieve a change in your community's attitude toward an issue about which you have strong feelings."

Teachers using this anthology should not only be aware of the differing levels of maturity demanded by the selections, but also probably consider alternative orders of presentation for the material. The first section, featuring authors addressing the question of why writers write, may best be saved for later in the course, after reading selections that spark more personal interest about issues in life that are more relevant to young people. For this purpose, texts from the sections entitled "Identity," "Freedom's Struggle," "Life's Choices," or "Co-existence" provide a variety of good options. The last section, "Cultural Confrontation," will be of special interest to Australian readers, though even a poem like "Aboriginal Dreaming" by the Indonesian writer Subagio Sastrowardoyo can speak powerfully about the experiences of indigenous peoples everywhere. There is pleasure in sharing "the fruits of literary endeavour in this region" through texts that feature "universal themes that young people [and older people!] may identify with" (vii). ■

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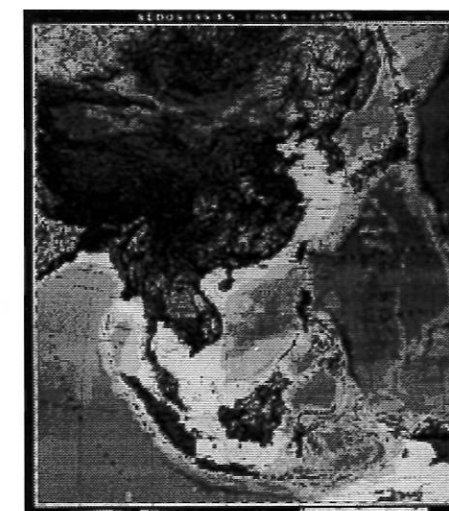
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