

CURRICULUM MATERIALS REVIEWS

I strongly recommend *Spotlight on Confucius* for use in the secondary classroom. Best for juniors and seniors, it provides a wealth of material written by experts intentionally for the high school and accessible to virtually all teachers regardless of their background in Chinese philosophy. It is well-composed, edited, and laid-out, with pleasant graphics and clear lessons that build on each other. While the energetic teacher may feel compelled to create additional hands-on activities to bolster the reading and group work involved, the curriculum can easily stand on its own and is a welcome addition to the growing supply of materials designed to teach American (and other) students about China and the Pacific Rim. ■

Raymond Stein

RAYMOND STEIN teaches Chinese, Japanese, and Pacific Rim Cultures at Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, Alaska. He received his M.A. in Asian Studies/Chinese from Washington University after teaching around the Pacific Rim for seven years.

Teaching About India

A South Asia Curriculum

BY HAZEL SARA GREENBURG
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 212-742-8232
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Teaching About India is a comprehensive study guide for secondary teachers planning either short units or in-depth courses on South Asia. The author has taken great pains to avoid a one-sided perspective or a Western bias, and has devised a variety of interactive strategies which will engage students of all levels. Each detailed lesson plan is guided by a "Focus Question," which appears on each page of student readings, and includes extensive background notes for teachers who may not already possess knowledge about India, questions and ideas for getting started, and clear learning objectives. While not all lessons will appeal to all teachers, there is a wealth of material here suited to a variety of learning and teaching styles. Some of my favorite activities were designed as "jigsaw" style cooperative learning exercises to cut down on the reading load for students. These can certainly be completed in a single class period, but could also serve as extended lessons.

The curriculum is divided into five chapters or themes. Theme I contains twelve lessons on "The Physical/Historical Setting," from an introduction to geography and historical periods to an exploration of the *Rāmāyana* and Indian folk art. I liked the jigsaw approach to "Water: A Key to Understanding India" which has students read and analyze the effects of the monsoons. The historical lesson "Contacts and Conquests" is overly complex, though it has good material about the early Indus River valley civilizations. Likewise, the issue of "Hinduism as a Way of Life" is not likely to be understood by my 9th graders, though I think the material here on caste and dharma may be

helpful. I have to assume that teachers will have other materials to supplement this discussion of Hinduism. The last lesson deals with Akbar's attempt to build a pluralistic society. Students work in groups to compare Ashoka and Akbar, and then evaluate subsequent Mughal rulers. This exercise can lead to a discussion much closer to home about the value of a multicultural society.

Theme II, "The Dynamics of Change," consists of five lessons dealing with British rule. In "Two Views," students contrast statements excerpted from American and Indian textbooks with strikingly different points of view. This leads naturally to questions about the writing of history and the necessity of reading critically. Other lessons deal with the effects of colonization, the Nationalist movement, and a case study of Gandhi.

Theme III, "Contemporary South Asian Nations and Cultures," contains nine lessons which analyze problems as well as successes since independence. These are difficult lessons due to their complexity as well as the lack of experience of younger students. Readings challenge students to assess the Partition, India's success both as a democracy and in unifying its people, and social issues such as the population crisis, the treatment of women, and education reform. These are each topics worthy of lengthy research.

The fourth theme, "Economic Development in South Asia," consists of six focus questions. Again, these are weighty issues, such as whether India can become an industrial giant, and examining poverty in the South Asian context. I fear that the average 9th grader will have trouble with much of this material. However, the author has suggested ways to frame the questions and structure group work to reach a wider audience. For example, a lesson on environmental problems assigns a case study to each of five groups, and students analyze the problems and suggest solutions.

The last theme, "South Asia in the Global Context," is perhaps the most ambitious of all, for it consists of a role play simulation, "ATOMIC," in which representatives from countries attempt to reduce nuclear proliferation in South Asia. This game was developed by Martha M. Keys for the Moorhead Kennedy Institute in 1994. It is designed for eighteen to thirty-two students 9th grade and up, though younger students may benefit also with additional preparation, and will take three classroom periods. Students are assigned roles of real people and work as a delegation while they deliberate. It is preferable that they remain in character to better understand the nuances of international diplomacy. As with any project of this type, the teacher's role as a facilitator requires knowledge and command of all materials and a cool head to anticipate and resolve conflicts which may arise.

On the whole, *Teaching About India* is an outstanding collection of source material, student readings, and activities. Obviously, a teacher will never be able to use all of these lessons, but may dip into this rich well for a four-to-six-week unit or a full quarter. Its strength is in the thoughtful design of interactive strategies to involve students in the process of learning while tackling challenging topics. ■

Jody Granatir

JODY GRANATIR teaches World History to 9th graders in Seattle. He earned his M.Ed. in Social Studies Curriculum from the University of Washington in 1992.