



Editor's Note: Although published several years ago, Primary Source's *The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China* text and accompanying CD-ROM have received accolades from teacher users and remains in publication. Art Barbeau, a China specialist who has worked with teachers, and Richard Marsh, an experienced social studies teacher, contributed the review that follows.

The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China

PRIMARY SOURCE, INC., EDITORS

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Reviewed by Arthur Barbeau and Richard C. Marsh, Jr.

Art Barbeau: Teachers seldom look forward to examining a textbook that is new to them. By the very nature of the beast, one does not anticipate finding anything new or surprising in such a work. After all, textbooks are almost inherently superficial. In my personal case, I had served two multi-year sentences on the state textbook adoption committee earlier in my life. Still, I felt that I owed it to *Education About Asia* to wade through *The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China*.

What Michael Puett, professor of Chinese history at Harvard University, said in his forward almost applied to my own academic career. I did get through twelve years of school with, so far as I can remember, not a single mention of China. There, our careers diverged. For personal reasons, China had always fascinated me and was one of my fields when I chose to major in history. But another text? Still, I got through the introduction and began on the rest of the book and the CD that is part of the packet.

Lesson one stopped me at the beginning. The idea of stereotypes gave me something to think about. It made me remember some of my own childhood stereotypes about China and the plethora of them, even today, that one finds on the evening news. On a number of trips to China, I have also had to spend time trying to correct some of their stereotypes about the US. It was a great place to start the book, and it was with some anticipation that I went on to the subsequent lessons.

Rick Marsh: When Art asked me to look at *The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China*, I found it difficult to refuse, and I didn't think that it would take long. He stressed that the editor of *Education About Asia* felt that the materials were appropriate for middle school/junior high. The most likely classes would be world geography or world cultures at the middle school level or introduction to world history at the ninth-grade level. For any of those three classes, I feel that the language is appropriate to the reading level and understanding of the targeted students, though it will challenge many of them. In fact, it is usable at any level from middle school on. As Art once jokingly remarked, if it is appropriate for middle school students, I didn't have to "dumb it down too much" for his college-level introductory course.

With the primary sources including visuals, documents, maps, and other useful materials, *Enduring Legacy* is a great resource for teachers. These resources are enhanced by suggestions for their use, student objectives, key questions, and the introduction of new vocabulary. The student activities are both pertinent and thought-provoking. For the teacher, as well as those students who develop further interest, the supplemental bibliography is a good place to start. The preliminary work has already been done.

Art Barbeau: Alas, the problems of the teacher are not completely solved. For the three courses mentioned, state-mandated standards see China as just one of the areas to be covered. Although *Enduring Legacy* does an outstanding job of providing resources to teach about China, it also illustrates the limitations the K-12 educational system places on curriculum developers who

create in-depth materials for school use. It would be ideal to take a comparative approach to any and all of the courses mentioned. But, facing a work schedule that is already overcrowded, teachers would have to create the materials on the other areas on their own. They would also be tied to a primary text that someone else has selected for the class and grade level. Thus, I see *Enduring Legacy* as primarily a great resource for the teacher.

Rick Marsh: I have to agree. This book cannot be the stand-alone text for the courses that are required, at least in public schools. I'd have to fit it in with materials on the other cultures and their histories. The state standards do encourage more use and analysis of primary sources, and *Enduring Legacy* shows me how it can be done. As it is now, teachers would have to decide how to modify materials from other areas. Lacking a course devoted entirely to China, which is not likely to be possible at the middle school/junior high level, it cannot serve as the primary text. In addition, this focuses on ancient China; there is still a second term on more recent periods of history to consider.

It is not reasonable, at this time, to see Chinese history, culture, or geography as more than a single segment of a world-based class. There are too many other constraints on class time, and states are mandating more and more emphasis on standardized assessments. Even at upper levels of secondary schools, it is unlikely that most public schools could offer a course that devotes itself to China, even for a single term. Nevertheless, I have garnered some new ideas and approaches from *Enduring Legacy* that I will incorporate into my future teaching. In fact, I already tried some of those ideas out this year.

Art Barbeau: *The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China* is an excellent start and offers a provocative way to consider the teaching of world cultures. It offers a useful model that needs to be expanded. Perhaps the next step is a companion book on modern China. Beyond that, or in companionship with it, there needs to be a reaching out to those who specialize in other world areas to see what can be accomplished in creating a world course based on the outstanding beginning that has been made here. The result needs to be integrated to meet various state assessment standards. And it needs to be done in one text that meets the needs of existing courses. Yet, if you teach world geography, world cultures, or world history, this is a book that you really need as a resource for some exciting ideas. ■

ARTHUR BARBEAU is Professor Emeritus of History and Anthropology at West Liberty State University in West Virginia. He has made fifteen trips to China and taught there for more than two years, including one year as Fulbright Professor of American Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

RICHARD C. MARSH, JR. has taught at the middle school/junior high level, and he is currently the Social Science Department Chairperson at Wheeling Park High School in Wheeling, West Virginia. Among his other responsibilities, he teaches ninth-grade World History, as well as the AP section of that class.