

claim that it is rare “that such a conversation as that which follows would take place in China today” (p. 43) undermines the efforts of this unit and points out the need for specific citations for material drawn from autobiographical accounts. Visual images in Lesson Three lack sufficient contrast and definition for quality reproduction.

Of more concern is an apparent assumption of depth of knowledge of the contexts in which the documents in Lesson One were created, bound, or delivered. The historical notes for the 1930s do not address the fact that groups within the three nations held divergent opinions; nor do they discuss intended audiences or political affiliations of the writers. These primary sources are not parallel in nature. An official speech delivered by the Premier of Japan is contrasted with a “speech” from a Publishing Society in Shanghai.¹ Background information about the political affiliations of the Society, an important consideration in 1930s China, is missing. Using a *Life* magazine article and Blony bubble gum “war cards” to represent U.S. accounts glosses over debates on internationalism and isolationism which played a part in depictions of this event. A fuller picture of the complex historical contexts in which these documents emerged would add an important dimension to this lesson.

Other suggestions reflect my desire to capture the full teachable potential of this rich curriculum resource. Lesson One notes that various Romanization systems result in different spellings of Chinese words. A brief explanation of systems commonly used in historical texts (postal codes, Wade-Giles and pin-yin) and common transliterations of well-known personal and place names would be useful. Terms such as the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact and Nine-Power Treaty, which may be unfamiliar to high school students, could be explained in a more extensive glossary of terms. Despite these suggestions and criticisms, this curriculum unit offers a valuable addition to, and a useful resource for, meeting the aims of the National Standards for World History. ■

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NOTE

1. In the byline for the Cheng Zung Publishing Society in Shanghai, Zung, which does not appear in Mandarin Chinese dictionaries, probably reflects an incorrect Romanization.

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The Examination

BY MALCOLM BOSSE

NEW YORK: FARRAR, STRAUS, AND GIROUX, 1994
296 PAGES

During this past fall a friend who specializes in young people’s literature steered me toward an intriguing novel of traditional China—the year 1448, to be exact! This story focuses on the functioning of the exam system in a way which is suspenseful, historically accurate to a reasonable degree, and conveyed through the eyes of teenagers. I think the book is appropriate as supplementary reading for students in grades eight, nine, and ten (depending on reading level, of course).

Bosse’s adventure tale follows two brothers: the older, born under the sign of the Tiger, was “strong, if reckless; loyal, but hot-tempered; compassionate, though with little respect for authority.” Younger brother, “born under the sign of the ox [was] patient and stubborn [and had] demonstrated a wonderful gift for language.” Younger brother embarks on an attempt to pass all examination levels, from district to county, province, and eventually the pinnacle of civil service advancement, Beijing. Older brother accompanies and protects his scholarly brother along the way. Of course, they make it, but not without some hair-raising skirmishes with flood, famine, and pirates along the Yangzi River, as well as members of the White Lotus Society.

In reality, younger brother seems almost too brilliant to be believable; and both young men seem to lead charmed lives as they journey from Sichuan to Beijing. Another distracting aspect of the book lies with Bosse’s mistaken use of “Lao” as a surname instead of using it to designate the older brother. However, the ultimate point of the novel rests with the contrast between Chinese scholars’ excessive emphasis on Confucian moralism and book learning as opposed to the stark realities of most people’s everyday survival. Surely, this is an essential issue of Chinese history and culture. The author does an excellent job of accurately describing the grueling examination process and explores many facets of Confucian and Daoist thought. *The Examination* may be just the book to draw young adolescents into a serious inquiry into the values of Chinese society. ■

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