Suggested Texts for Asia/Australia Studies

Year 7 & 8

**A Single Shard**
Author: Linda Sue Park  
Text type: Novel, historical  
Setting: Korea  
Set in 12th century Korea, this is the story of a journey beginning in a celadon pottery village. Male protagonist. Newberry Medal winner.

**A Step From Heaven**
Author: An Na  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Korea, USA  
Heroine character and universal migrant family experience. Teacher notes are available online.  
Award for Young Adult Literature.

**Angels of Kokoda**
Author: David Mulligan  
Text type: Novel, historical  
Setting: New Guinea  
Set in WW2 Papua New Guinea with adolescent protagonists. Easy to read dialogue, narrative, letters and maps.

**Bend it like Beckham**
Author: Narinda Dharmi  
Text type: Resource  
Setting: China  
Novel, from film Indian – UK context Female protagonist, daughter of orthodox Sikhs, is a gifted soccer player; themes of equal opportunity, clash of cultural and generational values.

**Bound**
Author: Donna Jo Napoli  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: China  
Based on Chinese Cinderella tales set in the Chinese Ming Dynasty. Female protagonist.
Break of Day
Author: Tony Palmer
Text type: Novel, historical
Setting: New Guinea
Powerful, insightful novel about love, war and duty set in WW2 Papua New Guinea. Explores notions of courage.

Broken Glass
Author: Sally Grindley
Text type: Novel
Setting: India
A story of brothers Suresh and Sandeep surviving on their own in the streets of an Indian city.

China: Land of Dragons and Emperors
Author: Adeline Yen Mah
Text type: Resource text, nonfiction
Setting: China
An insight into China's history, from the terracotta soldiers to Chairman Mao, from the Silk Road to the invention of gunpowder.

Chinese Cinderella and the Secret Dragon Society
Author: Adeline Yen Mah
Text type: Novel, historical
Setting: China
Set in Shanghai, China in WW2 it is the story of a pilot rescue.

Chook Chook: Mei's Secret Pets
Author: Wai Chim
Text type: Fiction novel
Setting: China
A heartfelt tale of love, loss and the power of kindness set against the backdrop of rural China.

Film Asia: New Perspectives on film for English
Author: Juanita Kwok & Lucinda McKnight
Text type: Resource text
Setting: Asia region, Intercultural knowledge
Provides stimulating background information and activities for fifteen films from Asia, including films listed here. Combines critical perspectives with teaching and learning ideas and supports teachers making links to Asia in creative and relevant ways in the English classroom. Films featured for these levels include:

- Spirited Away (Japan)
- Sumo Do, Sumo Don't (Japan)
- The Cup (Bhutan)
Foreign Devil
Author: Christine Harris
Text type: Novel
Setting: China
Set in 19th century China, the main character, Tyler, goes out on the Pearl River, Guangzhou, on a boat. Aurealis Awards for Speculative Fiction, Winner Best Horror Novel 1999.

Grass Sandals
Author: Dawnine Spivak & Demi (illustrator)
Text type: Picture book, biographical including Haiku poetry
Setting: Japan
A simple retelling of the travels of 17th century Japanese poet, Basho, across his island homeland. The book includes examples of the haiku verses he composed.

Grave of the Roti Men
Author: Geoff Havel
Text type: Novel
Setting: Indonesia, Australia
Set in Indonesia and northwest Australia, this is the story of an Australian boy who visits his divorced father in Indonesia. The novel includes information about the economic and traditional influences related to Indonesian ocean fishing.

Hana’s Suitcase
Author: Karen Levine
Text type: Novel
Setting: Japan, Europe
This novel is based on a true story about a suitcase with a European girls’ name on it, which arrives at a Holocaust Centre in Japan. The Japanese students unravel its story. Canadian Librarians Award: Best Book of the Year (2002).

Kaimira–Sky Village Book 1
Author: Monk Ashland
Text type: Novel, fantasy series
Setting: China, USA
The main character is Mei and action takes place in the sky over China. The plot involves a Kaimira code and strange genes. Teaching notes are available on the publisher’s website. The writer, Chris Rettstatt has taught in China and is writing as Monk Ashland.

Kampung Boy
Author: Lat
Text type: Graphic novel, autobiographical
Setting: Malaysia
This is a funny and endearing autobiographical book by Malaysia’s favourite cartoonist, telling the story of his childhood in rural Malaysia. It is full of social, cultural and environmental observations.
**Kensuke’s Kingdom**
Author: Michael Morpurgo  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: South Pacific region  
One of the protagonists is washed overboard in the South Pacific near Papua New Guinea from the family’s yacht. He survives on an island with a Japanese WW2 survivor named Kensuke. The author was appointed Childrens’ Laureate in the UK in 2003. Winner Childrens’ Book Award, 2000, UK.

**Land of the Morning Calm: Korean Culture then and now**
Author: John Stickler; Soma Han (illustrator)  
Text type: Picture book, nonfiction  
Setting: Korea  
This book has Stickler’s informative text about Korea accompanied by Soma Han’s beautiful illustrations. The writer lived in Korea for 13 years. Information about the Korean alphabet is included.

**Mao’s Last Dancer**
Author: Li Cunxin  
Text type: Autobiography  
Setting: China  
This is the Young Reader’s Edition of Li Cunxin’s memoir of his origins in rural China and journey to become an international ballet dancer.

**Moonshadow: Eye of the Beast**
Author: Simon Higgins  
Text type: Novel, fantasy series  
Setting: Japan  
This novel is set in Japan’s Tokugawa Era, and a boy spy is the hero. The author has immersed much of his life in things Japanese and practices martial arts to black belt level.

**Night Singing**
Author: Kierin Meehan  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Australia, Japan  
This novel is set in Brisbane and features Mrs Murakami reminiscing about Japan and the war era. Winner Patricia Wightson Prize in the 2004 NSW Premier’s Literary Awards.

**One Whole and Perfect Day**
Author: Judith Clarke  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Australia, Asia-related theme  
Includes Clara Lee, a character who provides one Asian perspective through her role as the girlfriend of the main character. A multi-award winning book.
**Peak**
Author: Roland Smith  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Tibet, China, USA  
The main character, Peak is the son of two mountain climbers. The story involves a Nepalese boy named Sun Jo who also has climbing ambitions. Much of the story is set on the Tibetan side of Mt Everest. Male readers review this novel very positively.

**Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes**
Author: Eleanor Coerr  
Text type: Picture book  
Setting: Japan  
This is the classic story of Sadako who was aged two when Hiroshima was bombed. Ten years later she was diagnosed with leukaemia. She resolves to fold one thousand cranes to defeat the illness.

**Spilled Water**
Author: Sally Grindley  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: China  
This tells the story of a girl named ‘Spilled Water’ but she triumphs over this label.

**Spirited Away**
Author: Hayao Miyazaki (Director)  
Text type: Film, 2002 animated feature film  
Setting: Japan  
This environmentally themed fantasy animation has a chapter for teachers in Kwok and McNight’s Film Asia. Rated PG (Australia).

**Stitching Stories: The art of embroidery in Gujerat**
Author: Nina Sabnani  
Text type: Non-fiction photo/art story  
Setting: India  
This is a beautiful book giving us an insight into a traditional art and the way it has become narrative art and a new creative way to tell stories.

**Sumo Do, Sumo Don’t**
Author: Masayuki Suo (director)  
Text type: Film, 1992 feature film  
Setting: Japan  
This film is a comedy that examines modern Japanese youth attitudes to practising the traditional sport of sumo wrestling. Appeals to both male and female students. There is chapter for teachers in Kwok and McNight’s Film Asia. Rated PG (Australia).
Tev
Author: Brendan Murray
Text type: Novel
Setting: Tonga, Australia
Tev is raised in Australia by his Australian mother and Tongan father, but goes to Tonga aged 14. The writer lives on Christmas Island.

The Cup
Author: Khyentse Norbu (director)
Text type: Film, 1999 feature film
Setting: Tibet, India
This entertaining film is about soccer and Tibetan monks. There is a chapter for teachers in Kwok and McNight's Film Asia and more information at Buddhist film foundation Rated G (Australia).

The Rage of Sheep
Author: Michelle Cooper
Text type: Novel
Setting: Fiji – Indian – Australian context
This novel is set in 1984 Australia with references to 80s music. Hester, of Fijian-Indian descent experiences life in Year 10 and its ups and downs. Explores themes of racism.

The Rainbow Troops
Author: Andrea Hirata
Text type: Fiction Novel Also available on DVD
Setting: Indonesia
This beautifully written Indonesian rite of passage novel in the narrative voice emphasises themes of overcoming adversity and taking a stand for what you believe in.

The Running Man
Author: Michael Gerard Bauer
Text type: Novel
Setting: Vietnamese – Australian context
This is a contemporary story of a boy artist with a portrait assignment. It involves a Vietnam veteran and a silkworm metaphor.

The Secret Life of Maeve Lee Kwong
Author: Kirsty Murray
Text type: Novel
Setting: Australia, Hong Kong, Ireland
This novel follows Maeve, who has Chinese grandparents, in a search for belonging. Themes include the world of dance and music.
Throwaway Daughter
Author: Ting-Xing Ye
Text type: Novel
Setting: China, Canada
This is the story of a Chinese baby girl named Winter Plum Blossom adopted by Canadians. They ensure she learns Chinese which helps her eventual identity quest.

Ties That Bind, Ties That Break
Author: Lensey Namioka
Text type: Novel
Setting: China
Set in 1922 in China, third sister Ailin works out her place in society and observes 'big noses'.

Year of the Tiger
Author: Alison Lloyd
Text type: Novel, historical
Setting: China
This novel is set in ancient China and located near the Great Wall of China. It is history, action and adventure in a plot about archers.

Year 9 & 10
Across the Nightingale Floor
Author: Lian Hearn
Text type: Novel, series
Setting: Japan
One of a trilogy set in feudal Japan.
Lian Hearn is a pseudonym for Gillian Rubenstein.
Alive in the Death Zone
Author: Lincoln Hall
Text type: Autobiography
Setting: Tibet, Nepal
Lincoln Hall's survival story of being left presumed dead after summiting Mt Everest in 2006.

Amaryllis
Author: Craig Crist-Evans
Text type: Novel
Setting: Vietnam, USA
A tale of two brothers set against backdrop of the Vietnam War in the 1960s – 70s.
Anila’s Journey
Author: Mary Finn
Text type: Novel
Setting: India
Menace and mystery lie in wait for Anila Tandy who secures a job drawing birds for an English naturalist, travelling on a river boat up the Ganges River. Anila will use this journey to search for her father, missing for years and presumed dead. Anila must test herself in the man's world of India, in the late 1700s.

Chalkline
Author: Jane Mitchell
Text type: Novel
Setting: India
Set in Kashmir, India, this is the story of a Muslim boy, Rafiq, who becomes a child soldier in the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir. The author was born in Ireland.

Chenxi and the Foreigner
Author: Sally Rippin
Text type: Novel
Setting: China, Australia
At eighteen, Anna defers her university studies in Australia, to visit her father in Shanghai and falls in love with a Chinese painter.

Chinese Cinderella – The secret story of an unwanted daughter
Author: Adeline Yen Mah
Text type: Autobiography
Setting: China
This is an abridged version of Falling Leaves, Yen Mah’s autobiography of life in war-time Shanghai.

City of Ghosts
Author: Bali Rai
Text type: Novel, historical
Setting: India
This novel is set in Amritsar in north India’s Punjab region in 1919. It places young characters amongst events that resulted in a British military atrocity, hence the title. Listed for the 2010 Carnegie Award. The author is British of Indian decent.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
Author: Lee Ang (director)
Text type: Film, 2000 feature film
Setting: China
This film is popular with students for its juxtaposition of ‘aerial martial arts’, a sacred sword quest, and an unrequited love story all set in stunning landscapes. It has parallels with Romeo and Juliet. Teacher activities can be found in Film Asia by Kwok and McKnight. Rated M (Australia).
Film Asia: New Perspectives on film for English
Author: Juanita Kwok and Lucinda McKnight
Text type: Resource text
Setting: Asia region, Intercultural knowledge
Provides stimulating background information and activities for fifteen films from Asia, including films listed here. Combines critical perspectives with teaching and learning ideas and supports teachers making links to Asia in creative and relevant ways in the English classroom.

Films featured for these levels include:

- Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon (China)
- Not One Less (China)

Hanabi
Author: Geoffrey Ainsworth
Text type: Range of text types including: Poetry, comics (manga)
Setting: Japan
Presents a variety of texts from or about modern Japan (including poetry, narrative comics, examples of different forms of language, etc) accompanied by full-colour photographs and learning activities designed to promote intercultural understanding.

Hey Joe
Author: Michael Hyde
Text type: Novel
Setting: Vietnam, Australia
This is set in the Vietnam War era but is unusual because it explores the viewpoint of counter-culture. The title is from the Jimi Hendrix song. It is also about father-son relationships. Consider this text if you are looking at Australia’s current role in Vietnam. Popular with male students. Listed as a ‘Notable Book’ in the 2004 CBC Awards.

Indo Dreaming
Author: Neil Grant
Text type: Novel
Setting: Indonesia, Australia
A contemporary surfing odyssey incorporating Indonesian geography and culture, set in Indonesia and Western Australia.

Japan Diary
Author: Trudy White
Text type: Novella, diary format
Setting: Japan, Australia
The personal journeys of two exchange students, one Australian and one Japanese presented in diary style.
**Little Paradise**
Author: Gabrielle Wang  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: China, Australia  
Set in WW2 this is a love story set amongst Chinese and Western cultures. Mirabel follows her love from Melbourne to Shanghai. The author is of Chinese-Australian descent and has won awards for her previous books.

**Mao’s Last Dancer**
Author: Li Cunxin  
Text type: Autobiography  
Setting: China, USA, UK, Australia  
This is Li Cunxin’s memoir of his origins in rural China and journey to become an international ballet dancer. He lives in Australia with his family and is also a stockbroker. This novel can be supported by the film version of Mao’s Last Dancer. Winner Australian Book of the Year (2003).

**Marrying Ameera**
Author: Rosanne Hawke  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Pakistani – Australian context  
A love story centering on Ameera, the 17 year old daughter of an Australian mother and Pakistani father. The Australian writer draws from her teaching experience in Pakistan and explores arranged marriages.

**Not One Less**
Author: Zhang Yimou (director)  
Text type: Film, 2000 feature film  
Setting: China  
The village mayor appoints a 13 year old girl to be the substitute teacher. The film is visually stunning. Film Asia by Kwok and McKnight includes a chapter on this film. Rated G (Australia).

**Only the Heart**
Author: Brian Caswell  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Vietnam, Australia  
This novel was written in collaboration with film maker and refugee David Phu An Chiem. It presents two stories about the same Vietnamese character ten years apart.

**Photographs in the Mud**
Author: Dianne Wolfer, Brian Harrison- Lever (illustrator)  
Text type: Picture book  
Setting: Japan, Australia, Papua New Guinea  
This book of photographs presents the story of the Kokoda Trail in 1942 from two viewpoints – one of a Japanese soldier and one of an Australian soldier. It explores commonalities as well as differences.
**Sold**
Author: Patricia McCormick  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Nepal, India.  
This novel explores a taboo subject of child prostitution. The 13 year old main character, Lakshmi, comes from a poor rural family. McCormick travelled to Nepal and India to research the book and interviewed women in Kolkata's red light district, as well as girls rescued from the sex trade.

**The Rainbow Troops**
Author: Andrea Hirata  
Text type: Fiction Novel Also available on DVD  
Setting: Indonesia  
This beautifully written Indonesian rite of passage novel in the narrative voice emphasises themes of overcoming adversity and taking a stand for what you believe in.

**The Spare Room**
Author: Kathryn Lomer  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Japan, Australia  
Akira's family send him to Australia from Japan to learn English. He also learns to live between two cultures.

**The Swap**
Author: Wendy Catran  
Text type: Novel  
Setting: Japan, Tonga, New Zealand  
This novel takes place from WW2 to the 1950s. It is a tale of two girls and their experiences of internment and inter-marriage.

**Two Pearls of Wisdom**
Author: Alison Goodman  
Text type: Novel, historical fantasy  
Setting: China  
Set in ancient China, this tale is based on the ancient lore of Chinese astrology and Feng Shui. The protagonist, a girl dressed as a male, is called Eon and is training to be a Dragoneye.

**Unpolished Gem**
Author: Alice Pung  
Text type: Autobiography  
Setting: Chinese - Cambodian - Australian context  
This is Alice Pung's memoir of her Chinese parents' post-Cambodia migrant experience, and her subsequent life in Melbourne. A great story telling voice, funny and poignant. For further information, go to: [Book reviews–The Age](http://www.theage.com.au/breaking-news/education/unpolished-gem-reviews-20230412-pgs0p.html).