
Jin, H.G, D. B. Xu, S. Cui, S. Y. Chen, and Y. Zhang. *Shifting Tides: Culture in Contemporary China*.

Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company. 2003. ISBN: 0-88727-372-6.

Learning a target language can never be separated from learning a target culture. *Shifting Tides: Culture in Contemporary China* is a language-culture integrated textbook for intermediate Chinese language learners. It is written so that students can learn the language through culture and understand the target culture by learning the language. This approach enables students to learn language and culture together.

There is a wide array of topics covered in the textbook: social and cultural issues in China, the economy, and science and technology, as well as literature and the arts. Since all of the selected topics are based on factual reports drawn from a great variety of media sources, learners are more likely to feel that learning occurs in an authentic language environment, making learning meaningful.

The book consists of twelve lessons, each with a specific theme. Each lesson is divided into three major parts. The first part consists of a main text that is then subdivided into shorter texts, grammar points, and exercises. There are normally two texts in each lesson, with the first serving as a background introductory passage and the second being topic-related TV reports, excerpts from newspapers, adapted readings, etc. It is also worth mentioning that the texts vary in type and style from first-person narratives to interviews and formal news reports. In addi-

tion, a vocabulary learning list is an integral part of the text, and vocabulary items are listed according to the order in which they appear in the texts.

The second major part of each lesson consists of key grammar structures. Detailed explanations are provided in English, including sample sentences to reinforce understanding.

Finally, the third major part of the lesson consists of exercises that can be divided into two types: linguistic pattern practice drills and language-function exercises, with the former paving the way for the latter — the communicative free practice stage. Communicative practice is presented in both oral and written form, which includes oral discussions, structured-paragraph writing tasks, compositions, and a language practicum consisting of field interviews conducted by students themselves.

Audio recordings are adapted to the content and are read at a normal speed in Mandarin. In addition, supplementary listening passages along with comprehension questions are provided. The book, therefore, makes it possible to practice multiple language skills: reading, speaking, listening, translating, and writing.

In addition to the salient feature of skills integration (which is strongly advocated by the communicative language teaching [CLT] approach to learning a foreign language), the textbook offers ample opportunities for learners to practice in real-life or quasi real-life communicative settings. It is undeniably true that all these communicative output activities in the form of function-oriented tasks constitute the later learning stage in a step-by-step, form-oriented tasks approach. In other words, the textbook situates traditional grammatical drills and practice exercises in authentic situations.

Despite the fact that the level of difficulty from one chapter to the next does not progress in a natural way and despite the relative lack of cultural explanation, *Shifting Tides: Culture in Contemporary China* is particularly appropriate for intermediate Chinese language learners who wish to acquire more sophisticated grammatical structures and achieve a higher level of cultural competency.

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Publisher's Response

We would like to thank Professor Rong Yuan for an insightful and balanced review of *Shifting Tides: Culture in Contemporary China*. With its focus on cultural topics selected from a variety of media sources and written in different styles, *Shifting Tides* aims to give students exposure to authentic materials that make learning interesting and meaningful. The reviewer correctly notes that the book is suited to students at the intermediate level who seek to master more challenging language structures and who strive for a higher level of cultural competency. We would like to add that with the emphasis placed on culture in the

new AP[®] Chinese Language and Culture Course, this book is also perfect for high school students preparing to take the AP[®] exam. Cheng & Tsui is pleased to offer *Crossing Paths: Living and Learning in China*, a companion book to *Shifting Tides* written by the same team of lead authors that focuses on study abroad preparation for high school and college students.

Cynthia Shen
Cheng & Tsui Company