



Resources: Cultural Understanding

China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power, by Nicholas Kristof
Up to date account of the issues of life in modern China. Highly recommended by a Chinese friend as being accurate and complete

The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng, by Harrison Salisbury
A fascinating account of the history of modern China based largely on interviews and eyewitness accounts. Explains the background of many of the institutions and attitudes of today.

China in Our Time, by Ross Terrill
History of modern China by a veteran journalist and China-watcher.

China, Alive in the Bitter Sea, by Fox Butterfield
A well-written and thorough description of life in China. Not always positive in tone, but realistic in outlook. This is the updated version of one of the first complete looks at daily life in China.

Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China, by Jung Chang
A biography of three generations of Chinese women from the last dynasty, through the Communist Revolution, the Cultural Revolution and into modern China. Widely read and highly recommended as giving an accurate and human picture of what the Chinese people have lived through in this century. Many feel this is among the most moving books on modern China.

Legacies: A Chinese Mosaic, by Betty Bao Lord
Personal observations of how the Chinese people view the turbulent events of the last few decades. The author was born in China and is the wife of the former U.S. ambassador to China, Winston Lord.

Life and Death in Shanghai, by Nien Cheng
A personal account of the author's experiences during the Cultural Revolution, including imprisonment and the aftermath.

Iron and Silk, by Mark Saltzman
The author's personal experiences while studying martial arts and teaching in Changsha, Hunan. Has been made into a motion picture. The author has also written at least one novel set in China.

Riding the Iron Rooster, by Paul Theroux

Vividly written description of China from moving trains, as the author criss-crossed the nation by rail. Excellent descriptions capture much of the essence of modern China.

Son of the Revolution, by Lian Heng & Judith Shapiro

An excellent book for understanding events of the 1960's and 1970's, especially the Cultural Revolution. Gives good insight into what Chinese people have experienced and how it has influenced their thinking. It is the autobiography of a Chinese student who married his American English teacher. Chinese young people who lived through the Cultural Revolution find this book "unremarkable, because his story is so typical," which makes it all the more compelling. The authors have another book that chronicles their return to China in the late 1980's.

Daughter of a Thousand Pieces of Gold, by Peg Helminski

An excellent novel about the experience of orphans in China.

Films/Videos

In recent years a number of excellent documentaries and films have been released. Here are just a few we recommend:

- China: A Century of Revolution (Three Disc Set) (2007)
- Found in China (2007)
- Nanking (2007)
- Up The Yangtze (2008)
- Wild China (2008) – BBC Documentary
- Young & Restless in China (2008)
- The Last Emperor (1999)
- The Soong Sisters (1997)