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Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Stephen H. Sumida, eds. *A Resource Guide to Asian American Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2001. 345p.

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In the preface to *A Resource Guide to Asian American Literature*, editors Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Stephen H. Sumida recall the moment in 1987 when Lawson Fusao Inada, after being asked, “What is Asian American poetry?” by a reporter, responded by writing the following poem:

From Live Do

*Asia* is where  
my people  
are *from*.

*America* is where  
I *live*.

*Poetry* is what  
I *do*.

So there it is:

Asian American poetry:

*From Live Do*. (2-3)

Throughout *A Resource Guide*, the editors and contributing writers build upon Inada’s playful certainty in answering the larger question, “What is Asian American literature?” It is clear in this text that generations of Asian American artists and scholars have established a literary identity rooted in experience and memory. This book draws upon this tradition as it seeks to explore insightful approaches to teaching this literature in a classroom.

Because this volume includes many well-known Asian American writers, including Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Frank Chin, David Henry Hwang, and others, it should prove to be an excellent resource for those teaching this material at any level. It covers book-length prose narratives and drama comprehensively and includes some selections on poetry, short fiction, and anthologies.

As the editors point out, “the literature profoundly does not represent identity, culture, and groups of Asian American peoples. But it does present strategic fictive bases for apprehending and analyzing historical constructions of American culture in relation to Asian American histories, cultures, and racialization”

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(4). This is exactly the manner in which the material is presented. Primarily, this volume features background information on book-length prose narratives and drama as these provide the “most ready access” to an understanding of this literature (1). There are twenty-one units written by individual contributors, and each one includes publication information, an overview and discussion of the work’s critical reception, a biography of the author, historical contexts for both the narrative and writing of the text, a discussion of major themes, an outline of critical issues, teaching suggestions, and a comprehensive bibliography which often includes films, videos, and websites. While this information is densely packed into this resource guide, it remains very accessible. It is clear in each unit that this material has been classroom-tested. The pedagogical suggestions are both practical and provocative.

While I understood the editors’ decision to focus primarily on book-length nonfiction works, I found myself wishing this resource guide included more units on poetry and short fiction. This is not a weakness in the text; it is, in fact, a testament to just how useful and informative this volume is. I wanted more.

In addition to Wong and Sumida, contributors include Leslie Bow, Cheng Lok Chua, Rachel Lee, Jinqi Ling, Roberta Uno, and Traise Yamamoto. In addition to those mentioned previously, the units cover a good range of authors, including Meena Alexander, Bharati Mukherjee, Le Ly Hayslip, Jessica Hagedorn, Philip Kangotanda, Momoko Iko, and Wakako Yahauchi. The discussion of short fiction and poetry are classroom-oriented, providing reviews and bibliographies of Asian American anthologies, short fiction, and poetry.

Overall, the depth and practicality of *A Resource Guide to Asian American Literature* have made it indispensable to me already as an instructor in multi-ethnic literature survey courses. It is much needed. Now we can only hope for Wong and Sumida to take the same comprehensive approach to Asian American short fiction and poetry. ❀