

MAO ZEDONG:

‘Marxism consists of thousands of truths,
but they all boil down to one sentence,
“It is right to rebel”.’

NEW TEXTBOOK FOR **VCE REVOLUTIONS**

China Rising
A Study in Revolution

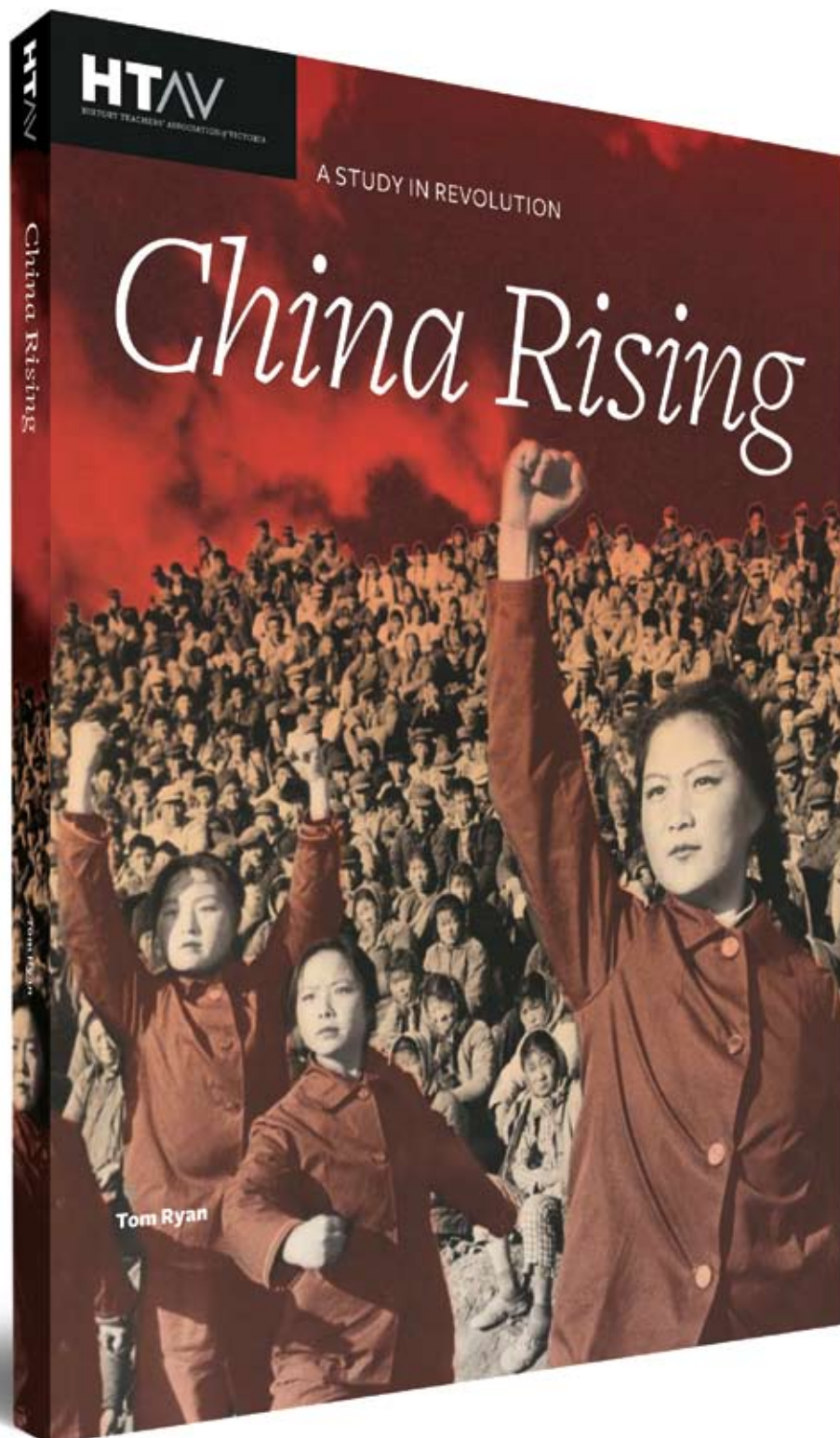
By Tom Ryan

ISBN 978-1-875585-90-8
RRP \$43.00

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 2009

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China Rising

A STUDY IN REVOLUTION

By Tom Ryan

AUTHOR'S APPROACH

One of the challenges of teaching Generation Y is the reluctance of many students to read academic texts: to quote Ross Smith from Parade College in 2008, 'They don't read!'. They will, however, read sizable Harry Potter and Twilight novels. I don't think 'big' necessarily puts them off – boring does. I've tried hard with *China Rising* to give justice to complex historical developments in a way that engages students with 'the story'. It is the human element – in all its inspirational, weird, tragic and gritty realness – that students connect with.

China Rising is a sustained narrative punctuated by challenging activities. Students are asked to analyse documents and images, reflect on historians' views, create maps and diagrams, interpret figures, use their creative flair, debate issues and prepare exam responses. Unlike many student textbooks, however, the activities emerge from the narrative, not the other way around. Students are also given thorough explanations of ideologies, leaders, movement and events in the Chinese Revolution and beyond.

There are many 'Did You Know?' boxes throughout *China Rising*. While these are often not much more than an interesting anecdote – a moment of 'random', as kids would say – these snippets are similar to the non-linear sources, such as hyperlinks, that students use in their own online communities. A quick moment of 'random' will encourage students to read on and ask questions.

And questions should be asked. China's history, as is its culture, is so wonderfully rich and complex that it raises profound political, social, cultural and moral questions. Why did the royal empire collapse? Why did people want a unified China? Why didn't Chiang Kai-shek's republic last? Why were people attracted to communism? What did leaders like Mao offer them? How did the Communists keep control? What happened when people didn't do as Mao wanted? *China Rising* will give students and teachers the answers to these and many more questions – even better, it will get them asking questions of their own.

TOM RYAN is Head of Humanities at Woodleigh, Baxter, where he teaches senior History. He is a presenter for a number of VCE revision programmes and is the co-author of *Reinventing Russia: A Study in Revolution* (HTAV, 2008). In January Tom made his third trip to the China as a participant in an Asia Education Foundation study tour.

