

This gorgeously illustrated book not only pleases the eye but also teaches photography skills.

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EVERYONE loves to take photos when they are travelling, of course. And thanks to the increasing accessibility of good and easy to use digital cameras as well as phone cameras, more and more people are snapping away. But while everyone is taking pictures, not everyone is producing great photos. In fact, despite the countless blogs and tumblr posts full of images, great travel photos are not at all easy to find.

What we do have are lots of “how to do it” books, and the latest is *Travel Photography: Capturing The Sense Of Place* by Teoh Peng Kee.

The author has more than 18 years of experience promoting the EOS system for Canon Malaysia and Canon South South-East Asia, and has also been selected as an EOS Master, Canon Asia-Pacific; he is an EOS pro seminars speaker nationally as well as in South South-East Asia and India. At present, Teoh is widely known as a “walking dictionary” on all matters Canon EOS.

Thanks to the extensive travelling he has to do for his work and his access to a huge array of cameras and lenses, Teoh has been able to put together an impressive collection of great travel photographs.

At a recent interview, Teoh, 48, shares that photography has been his passion since secondary school.

“And this passion has kept me occupied throughout my 20-year career in photography-related matters. In the last two years, I have travelled extensively and conducted photography seminars and workshops in South-East Asia, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal.”

Teoh discovered that many seminar participants were keen to share their images with each other. “And I was happy to share mine in return. These photo enthusiasts really do enjoy looking at high quality images, especially when they are printed.

“With the realisation that photography is a true international language among photo enthusiasts, I decided to produce a coffee table book featuring my best images to share with



Making magic: Work that requires him to travel has given Teoh Peng Kee the chance to build up his travel photography collection, which he shares in *Travel Photography: Capturing The Sense Of Place*. Find out how Teoh nailed this image – entitled *Prelude To The Big Bang, Mount Bromo, Indonesia* – in his book where all the images are explained with detailed technical data. – Photos by TEOH PENG KEE

photo enthusiasts,” says Teoh, who is now the chief imaging consultant at the Canon EOS Boutique in Subang Jaya, Selangor.

Though *Travel Photography: Capturing The Sense Of Place* is lavishly illustrated with 170 colour photographs, the book is not just about pretty pictures, as Teoh also generously shares exposure and other technical data of his pictures with readers.

“This publication

is not merely a coffee table book – I have included simple shooting tips to help readers improve their quality of travel photography. With this book, I hope everyone can take up photography to record our wonderful world and share the images with others.”

According to Melvyn Ho, president and CEO

of Canon Marketing Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Teoh's work caught his eye with its incredible sensitivity to composition and lighting: “It is this vision to see and capture photographic opportunities within complex environments that gives Teoh the ability to create such an astounding body of photography works through his travels.

“As an amateur photographer and an admirer of Teoh's work, I hope that this book will serve to inspire future photographers to continue shooting high quality work. And we hope that this book by Teoh will continue to inspire generations of photographers out there to capture their own interpretations of our world.” Ho writes in the book's foreword.

The 152-page hardcover book is divided into different topics, such as low-light photography, landscape, people at work, and so on. What I particularly like about it is that it comes with a list of tips to help enthusiasts understand how to create similar images or obtain the effects you see on the page.

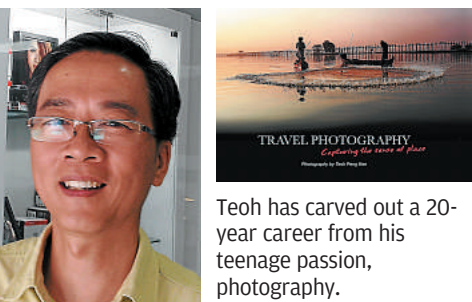
Using easy-to-understand diagrams, the



The Three Novices, Heho, Myanmar: Teoh masterfully balances the background light with the foreground in order to render all the relevant details.

author generously shares how he integrates the various elements in the final picture by understanding the interaction between the subject and light in a scene.

For Canon fans, this is a good opportunity to see in print the marvellous results that can be obtained with high ISO (sensitivity to light) settings in cameras. This book gives solid evi-



Teoh has carved out a 20-year career from his teenage passion, photography.



Me And My Shadow, New Delhi, India: The perfect balance between shadow, light and form is captured using the manual mode on the Canon EOS5D MkII at ISO250, 16-35mm f.28L at 1/160 and f6.3. Get the full details on this shot was made in the book.

dence that stunning results can be seen even when ISO 6400 is used – usually, photos taken at that level can appear grainy.

But what is laudable about this book is that it is useful even if you are a non-Canon user, as Teoh expounds on the broad principles of good travel photography. Good principles are universal and it doesn't matter which system you use. Thus, a Sony or Olympus or Pentax (or whatever brand there is out there) user will also benefit from this book. Basically, if you wish to improve your travel or “snapshot” photography, then this is the book for you.

■ *Travel Photography: Capturing The Sense Of Place* by Teoh Peng Kee can be ordered from the author's website, teohpengkee.com. You can also call the author at the Canon EOS Boutique (in Subang Jaya, Selangor; closed on Mondays) at 03-5612 0337.

Fierce instinct for quality

LISTEN. I have this uncanny power. It will benefit you if you read on. And for those who have benefited already, spread the word!

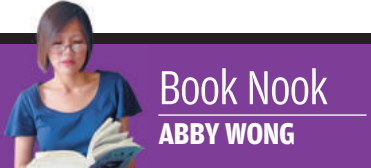
You see, I know a good book when I see one. Really. By the cover, I can tell if a book is promising. And once it's in my hand, all I need to do is to skim the blurb and the first sentence or the first few lines. If it is a good book, my mind will quickly conjure up the image of me relishing it, immersing myself in it. My instinct hardly ever fails me.

Whence comes this flair? From years of reading and from my immense love for books.

When I was young, I dreamed of working in a library. Because I was merely 11 then, I couldn't. I asked the librarian, a Malay man in his late 20s with a well-tended moustache, if I could push the trolley for him. He winced at the idea but succumbed to my pleading eyes. And for the next two years every day after school, I would push the trolley and shelve the books in my hometown's library. So you can imagine the number of books that passed through my hands, be they in the Chinese, Malay or English language. I would make passing judgements about them, and would even talk to them. “You are quite popular, aren't you,” I once said to a Chinese translation of Sherlock Holmes. I took it home and devoured it within hours.

“Gosh, I wish I could understand you 'coz you are so pretty.” That was me talking to Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*. I couldn't read it because my English sucked, but I knew it was one of the most popular books among teenagers, most of whom were chauffeur-driven to the library. These girls with their hair tied neatly in a bun and in their Sunday dresses looked more like Alice than I. Like Mock Turtle, I was a pathetic character who – just as Mock Turtle fails to understand Alice's meaning of school as an institute of learning – was unable to comprehend the English language Alice uses in the book, though I discerned that the sound of those words were lilting.

I ploughed on, and in the books went and out again they went from between my bruised fingers, at times bandaged after a volleyball match or after bungling in the kitchen in an attempt to make a meal for myself. All these bookish characters, fiction and non-fiction, I had come to know them all. I was particularly intrigued by Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, wondering if he had a Chinese father, hence the Chinese family name. The names of all of Stephen King's books remain etched in my mind from those days, so it is no surprise that I know about *Rage*, one of King's earlier works that one can no longer find in modern libraries or bookstores. It must be out of print.



Those days when happiness found in a library was watered down by the helplessness of not being able to enjoy English classics remain vivid. But I digress, for a past can no longer be so called if visited too often.

As I said, I know a good book when I see one. And I found one yesterday when I was browsing a bookstore with a mundane display. While searching for William Golding's *Lord Of The Flies* for my at-home book club, which consists of primary age students, I chanced upon John Lanchester's *Capital*. On the shelf, it was displayed meagrely, with just the spine out, but the title was glaring, and the bright yellow colour was striking. The publisher's (Faber & Faber) logo looked like the book's two little feet waiting to flee away from the stifling music in the bookstore. My hand inevitably grabbed it, and I swear I heard, there and then, a faint round of cheers coming from residents living in the houses that adorn the book cover.

The writer's language is fluid, funny, simple, and descriptive. No sooner had I turned the first page than the characters came even more alive, and I was particularly thrilled to see names other than your typical Mary or Patrick. There are Komo, Ahmed, Shahid and Kamal, and they are just as hilarious as Roger and Mill. A writer should be cosmopolitan, and this author is. And the book, as far as I can tell so far, is not contrived with a seemingly important worldly coda. On the contrary, it gyrates around the lives of small people affected by big global matters. When written with that take, the book is more than promising, as in it empathy abounds and humanity is overflowing.

The residents of a so-called Pepys Road in London have been receiving an anonymous postcard with a simple message: “We Want What You Have”. What is it? I don't know yet, for I am only 20 pages into the book, and I must say, so far, it has what we want – all the good elements aforesaid, and when coalesced,

Never again?

WHEN you hate the protagonist of the novel you are reading, what do you do? When the plot bores you to tears, when the typeface is not aesthetically pleasing, or when the author makes the characters do stuff that's just too strange for your taste, what do you do?

Grit your teeth and plough on through the pages, because you never leave a book unfinished? Or banish the book to the deepest, darkest recesses of your bookshelf and swear never to touch it again?

Just as there are many reasons why people pick up a book, there are just as many that cause readers to abandon it.

We want to know what book you have abandoned and why. And whether you are

willing to pick that book up again and give it another chance. Tell us your tale of woe and (book) abandonment.

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AFTER I recently read Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's latest novel, *Americanah*, I decided that I would make it a point to read more books by African writers. I've mentioned before that I read mainly British and American authors – mainly women, mainly white, mainly dead. It doesn't make sense. It's like eating food from only one culture when there is much more available.

I can count the number of African novels I've read on the fingers of one hand. It's shameful. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* certainly (who hasn't), but it's been few and far between since then – in fact, I should most certainly revisit that book as I read it when I was 13 and I don't think I quite got it.

Maru by Bessie Head was an A-Level text. I read it countless times, as one does novels one will be tested on. I loved its strangeness and some 20 years later, reading Ngugiwa Thing'o's *The River Between*, with a student, I loved its strangeness too.

Off on a new adventure

I hesitate to use the word strange now, though. While it describes, to an extent, the sensations evoked when I read *Head* and Ngugiwa Thing'o, it could also be misleading: Just as I dislike Asia being exoticised in books, I wonder if I am projecting my own ideas (or at least, my ignorance) when I read African literature. I know so little of the continent and I have my impressions of it, gleaned from natural history documentaries and Hollywood portrayals, so I believe my ideas of Africa are superficial, and perhaps, sensational, and could be offensive.

Authors like Achebe, Head and Ngugiwa Thing'o would not exoticise their own countries and cultures, but I fear that I, as a reader, am able to do that quite independently.

So ... obviously I need to read more African literature. And Asian literature. For a bit at least, I need to change my diet. Fewer (or no) dead white women. Isn't it ridiculous that when I went to study in Britain, I felt that I had returned home? I'd read more British books than my British classmates and I spoke and

wrote better English than they did. Nothing wrong in that, but there really is more to the world than Britain and the United States. Africa and Asia are huge continents. If reading is, at times, described as armchair travel, I have been shamefully limited and timid in my outlook, and it's about time I made more effort to explore the world.

I have made a list. Achebe, Head, Indira Ganesan, Xiaolu Guo, Ahmed Alaidy, Naguib Mahfouz, Aminatta Forna, Leila Aboulela, Nadifa Mohamed, Stella Kon, Chika Unigwe, Andrew Koh, Kabelo Duiker, Kim Young-ha, Lee Kok Liang, Isa Kamari, Goh Poh Seng ... I will add to the list as I go along.

My aims: To read more and to read more diversely; to learn to appreciate styles and content other than what I've grown up with and got used to; to read about African and Asian lives, cultures, experiences, as described by those on the inside, rather than someone looking in.

I was struck by an article in *The Guardian* newspaper in which journalist Saffraz Mansoor talks about how white

authors are not questioned about the accuracy of their portrayal of non-white experiences. He says that if you're Asian, or African, and writing about your own culture, there seems to be an obligation that what you deliver must be a product of first-hand knowledge. Creating something imaginary, simply telling a story isn't allowed. “If you are white and middle-class, it seems, you are allowed to be an artist; if you are Asian, you must be authentic,” says Mansoor.

Authenticity is a plus, but I don't think it's about having lived through the experiences you write about. A good writer is able to convey a sense of depth and honesty simply by virtue of being a skilled wordsmith, and perhaps, depending on the scope of the work, doing sufficient research.

My belated interest in African and Asian authors is not so much about looking for authentic portrayals of the worlds they write about (how could I even judge?), although windows into these worlds would, of course, be desirable. My interest is mostly fuelled by the desire to learn how living in these worlds that are not American, not British, not European, has shaped these writers' voices, and

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their perspectives. How different are their worldviews, their responses to life, their take on love and death, sex and politics? I want to experience the way they choose words, construct sentences (although, in many cases, I will be reading translations), build metaphors. I expect to struggle. I expect to be thrilled. I expect to be frustrated. Maybe even bored. It will be adventure. I shall proceed recklessly.

■ *Daphne Lee is a writer, editor, book reviewer and teacher. She runs a Facebook group called The Places You Will Go for lovers of all kinds of literature. Write to her at star2@thestar.com.my.*