



Fiction

Group 2

A Journey of Economy of China

A.D. & F.D. of Pok Oi Hospital Mrs Cheng Yam On School, Man, Mandy – 13

Owing to economy of China was on the decline. Xi Jinping gave an order to the celebrated navigator, Cheng Ho to lead his fleet and travel around Atlantic Ocean. Also, they needed to advocate of their culture to other countries so that Cheng Ho decided to set off Atlantic Ocean in Christmas. Also, they would bring some Chinese food such as mooncakes and rice dumplings to sell.

In Christmas's morning, they boarded Cheng Ho cruise ship and stepped on their trip excitedly. They waved their hands and started their trip. They used an hour and they neared the first destination. Their first destination was Korea. But when they tried to near it, they were locking by radar of Korea. They were scared so they left there immediately.

Their second destination was the USA, but before that, they must cross the Pacific. While they were crossing the Pacific, they saw some rare dolphins jumped out water happily and lively. They were amazed by it so that they took some photos for it. After they arrived the USA, they sold some high technology and had a meeting with some businessmen in the USA. But unluckily, the USA president Donald Trump locked Cheng Ho and his fleet in a secret forest because he thought that Cheng Ho might improve the economy of China. They tried to ask for help but there wasn't anybody. Luckily, Cheng Ho and his fleet carried on their GPS and phone so that they could ask China for help. Then, they escaped and they were saved by China. They left the USA eagerly because they were scared of it.

After they left the USA, they arrived France with breeze and spray. When they arrived, they shook hands with French president Macron. Also, they had a meeting and they advocated of their Chinese food to French businessmen. They were intoxicated by local snacks so they stayed there for a whole day. They left there reluctantly because time was of the essence so they arrived Africa quickly.

They taught local residents there how to be more cheerful to enjoy their life and improve their quality of life. When they saw that they helped them a lot, they were satisfied so they left. Then they asked Cheng Ho, 'Where will we go?' Cheng Ho replied, 'We will go to Australia and this will be our last station in this trip.' When they arrived Australia, they were excited and played with kangaroos and koalas. They held them in the arms and took photos with them. Also, they talked with local residents there and advocated of their culture to them. They let Cheng Ho and his fleet know more about their daily life and what they need. Cheng Ho and his fleet recorded some notes and they left.

At last, they were back to China and they explained that what they had done immediately. They had a happy and unforgettable memory from this trip. Also, this was a lesson for them.

A Passion for Voyages

A.D. & F.D. of Pok Oi Hospital Mrs Cheng Yam On School, Wong, Brianca – 12

Long time ago, there was an administrator who called Cheng Ho. He was the greatest seafarer in China. His life had half the time to travel around the world. One day, the emperor told Cheng Ho to find the precious because the kingdom outward appearance was too monotonous. The emperor wanted the kingdom to be more colorful. Therefore, Cheng Ho started his journey. He called 27,000 people to come with him. They used 48–317 vessels to travel around 30 Asia's country.

They just recently started. They got a big crisis. They did not plan where they go. Therefore, they lost in the middle of ocean. The crew member started embarrassed and at a complete loss, but Cheng Ho slept on the prow of a ship. The crew member awoken Cheng Ho. Cheng Ho woke up impatiently. He took out the map and said, 'Well, well, well. Now we are in the middle of ocean. We just have to detour this gable and go throw this village. Then, we will arrive India.' After his explanation, he went back to the prow of a ship to sleep again. The crew member was astonished.

When they arrived India, they sent to the leader of India who called Mawee. Mawee said, 'Why do you come here?' 'It is because I wanted to get the precious which called beryl. I know it is a rare gem. Therefore, would you mind have a battle with me? To let all the people know who have the status to have the beryl!' Cheng Ho shouted. Mawee said, 'Ha! It is my first time to see a person who has a courageous to have a battle with me. Yeah! Let's have a battle behind the castle.' Mawee accepted the challenge. Their confrontation lasted for a long time. They still could not distinguish the winner from the loser. Finally, Cheng Ho won. Mawee gave the beryl to Cheng Ho. Cheng Ho said, 'I cannot take things away like this. Therefore, I want to give you a present because you are a good opponent. This book is about China. Hope you like it.' Mawee said, 'Now, we are friends.'

When Cheng Ho travelled around Asia, he gave some presents to the leader of that place. He made a good impression to the leader around the world. He also got a lot of things back to China. When he died, he was on the vessel. Although he was sick at that time, he still loved to travel. His ocean exploration successfully opened up a new sea route. Also, he was promoting East–West trade and cultural exchanges and promoting cultural exchanges between China and the West.

The Eighth Voyages of Zheng He

A.D. & F.D. of Pok Oi Hospital Mrs Cheng Yam On School, Zhu, Ryan – 9

On the twenty first of December, Zheng He left China to Indonesia. On his way, there was a huge storm, so his ship fell into the dark sea. Then, a huge man came and saved him. Zheng He said, 'Thank you!' The huge man said, 'You are welcome. My name is Peter. How about you?' Zheng He said, 'My name is Zheng He. I need to go to China.' 'Okay, I'll help you.' The man said, 'Thank you, Peter!' Zheng He said.

Then Peter made a big ship for him. Zheng He said, 'Bye!' Peter said, 'Bye! Good luck' Zheng He said, 'Thank you for your ship!'

After that, Zheng He left the island, there was a huge storm again. He went to England. And a small man said, 'Why are you so big?' 'Because I am from China!' After that he lived there for two nights and he went away. On his way to England, there was sunshine! And then he went home. He had a good day.

When he was at home everyone came and asked, 'Where did you go?' 'I drove to Indonesia but there was a huge storm on my way! Then a huge man saved me. Then I drove to England. There was a huge storm on my way again! When there was sunshine I drove back home!' Zheng He said, 'Wow it's amazing!' Everyone said, 'Maybe we can try it tomorrow.' Zheng He said, 'Wow thank you, Zheng He!' Everyone said.

The next day it was sunny so they could go voyages with Zheng He. Everyone had a ship so they could have one person one ship. Again Zheng He said loudly, 'Follow me. We will go to Thailand.' 'Okay! We will follow you.' Everyone said.

Then a very huge storm came. 'Hey that is Peter!' Zheng He said 'Peter, Peter, Peter, help us!' Zheng He said, 'that is Zheng He! He needs my help! I am coming!' Peter said, 'Help! We all need your help! Fast!' Zheng He said.

After that, all people were safe. 'Thank you, Peter!' Zheng He said.

Finally, they drove Zheng He's ship home.

Zheng He's Bold Adventures

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Ton, Law, Joy In – 11

Spools of golden silk thread rolled back and forth in a wooden trunk as the ship rocked violently in the howling wind. In the stores, crewmen were busy tightening ropes to fasten the porcelain urns in place and covering other treasures with an extra layer of oilskin cloth. "Admiral Zheng, water is gushing into 285!" shouted General Wang as he scrambled onto the deck. "Do not fear. Abandon 285. Drop the sails and separate the ships," replied Zheng He, the young leader appointed by Yongle Emperor. His steady command offered the only calmness at that turbulent moment. Wang, who was second in command, nodded trustfully and quickly got to work. By the time all the sails had been reefed, the crew was exhausted. While the men laid down to rest in their cabins, their nine-foot tall admiral stood alone under the mast, waiting for the first light of dawn.

The fleet of nearly 300 treasure ships drifted about in the dark for another hour. The storm finally subsided. The sky turned from black to grey, then grey to gold. A while later, coconut trees along a coastline were spotted from a distance. "Land ahoy!" yelled the excited Zheng.

The fleet sailed towards the shore. Anchors were dropped. Five ambassadors were sent to survey the island. Two came back, badly injured. "Admiral Zheng, Ma, Zhou and Hu were killed. The ruler and his men were fierce beasts. We were lucky to have escaped." Zheng was shocked, saddened and angered by this report. He was still thinking over the next step when General Wang rushed in to report the fleet was by now confronted by a vast troop which hoisted a huge flag that read "Ceylon". Zheng knew there was no choice but to rage a war. Bombs were fired from the Chinese ships. Twelve commanders then led eight thousand elite soldiers to fight the enemies on shore. The Ceylon soldiers had the fright of their lives. Vira Alakesvara, the ruler of the island, soon surrendered to the Ming army. Taken captive, the defeated ruler was sent to the Chinese Emperor along with some peacocks, Sambar deer, junglebows and other exotic animals.

The name of the Great Ming Empire began to reach far and wide. A few years later, another expedition took Zheng He and his crew to India. The local king there was amazed by the size of the ships. A splendid banquet was served to the visitors. Looking at bowls of brown and yellowish mixtures, one general whispered to Zheng, "How are we supposed to eat that?" "Not with a pinch of salt," the Admiral joked lightheartedly. He liked this country very much, finding it a lot better than Ceylon. Towards the end of the feast, upon the command of the Indian King, barrels of herbs, spices and dyes were presented to the guests as gifts. In exchange, Zheng also offered the Indians stacks of delicate silk fabrics, barrels of tea leaves and a chest of golden coins. Drinking to the newly established friendship with the Indian ruler, the young diplomat had never felt more proud of his country.

Zheng's ships were on their way back to China when they were met by a fleet of four vessels carrying armed pirates. "We can smell treasures from miles away," shouted the tallest of the pirates. "Now, tell me, shall we take the gifts or your lives?" To this, the Admiral replied, "You won't take anything, but take care!" His generals promptly bombed all of the four pirate ships and captured the leader Pirate Chen. They tied him up and took him to Zheng. "I won't allow you to keep on robbing ships anymore. You will be taken back to China and executed," announced the great leader triumphantly.

Back in the Captain's cabin, Zheng was drinking a cup of hot tea. A map had been laid out on his desk. He dipped his writing brush in the black ink and put a circle around East Africa.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Yung, Lok Yan – 12

“Captain Cheng, I, the activity manager, am going to hold a ball for all the people on this ship, any problem?” “No,” Captain Cheng answered. After I got on board the ship and reported to the Captain, the ship started a new journey. In this round of Ming Treasure Voyage, we were sailing to India to give out precious items from our Emperor for business opportunity and cultural exchange.

As we had just completed the tour to Japan building up relationship with the Japanese during the last voyage, I decided to organize a ball to celebrate. While I was planning the programme activity, I heard somebody shouting “Quick! Get ready in thirty seconds! There’s an Indian ship within 200 metres heading towards us! It’s a pirate ship! Army, get ready A.S.A.P.!” “Yes Sir!” someone replied. I felt frightened because I learnt that Indians were going to eat human alive if we lost the battle with them.

Battle started very soon! First I heard the Captain yelling “Stop the attack! We want peace! We just want to give out embroidery and other gifts from China!” However, the war went on disregarding the Captain’s announcement. I was hiding in my cabin, peering through the window. Our ship kept on firing bombs and got nearer and nearer to our enemy’s ship. They were throwing bombs too but we were well prepared to defend ourselves. Our ship then sailed in parallel with theirs and some enemies got onto our ship immediately. Still “Boom! Kaboom Boom!” sounds were non-stop. After that, there were hundred of battles of sword fighting on our ship. Once, I saw an Indian young man was stabbed and his leg was bleeding. He felt like very painful. So I rushed out of my cabin, carried that man, and then rushed back into my cabin again swiftly. At once, I helped him to bandage the wound with Chinese medicine. The wound stopped bleeding instantly and the man was getting better. After that, he left my cabin quietly. Finally, my team won the battle and the Indians on the pirate ship were invited to join our party.

When I was dancing happily in the ballroom, a young man walked towards me and said, “thank you! I’m the prince of Indian. Thanks for saving me and I want to reward you.” Then he gave me a big diamond which I had never seen before. We shook hands and made friends with each other. When the ball was close to its end, there was a gift exchange ceremony. I changed into a white Cheongsam to see off. An Indian saw me and cried “Ghost! A ghost!” The Captain explained to him and gave him one piece of Cheongsam too! The Captain of Indian brought us some spice and jewelry. We gave them Chinese Calligraphy in return. We not just won the battle, but also their friendship.

What a memorable moment on the Ming Treasure Voyages!

A Mysterious Voyage

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Liu, Tsz Wing – 12

One fine summer morning, I woke up to the sway of the ship. I sat up and rubbed my eyes, not accustomed to the bright sunlight pouring in from the lower deck windows. I looked around at the crew and saw that Captain was not in his hammock. I quickly ran up the stairs to the upper deck. I saw Captain sitting there, staring out over the ocean from his chair. “Good morning,” Captain said. “Morning Captain,” I said respectfully and saluted. “Where are we heading now?” I asked curiously. “We are going back home! It’s almost time to go back to celebrate the King’s birthday and everyone in the kingdom needs to attend.” Captain said excitedly. “Great!” I said enthusiastically. I quickly ran down to the hammock room and started packing up for the trip to return home.

A few days later on a quiet evening, everyone was sleeping except for the sailor on his night shift steering the ship. Suddenly, we heard a thunderous yell of horror travelling down from the upper deck. Everyone immediately sprang awake and rushed up the staircase in their pajamas. “What? What happened?” A crew member asked in a deep state of confusion. “I...I went in the wrong direction. We are now heading towards... The Dead Sea.” Everyone instantly broke into a nervous murmur. Rumor has it that no ship that has went into the Dead Sea has ever returned.

“Silence!” Captain yelled suddenly. “Everybody go change, then load the cannons, gather your weapons, and report here after fifteen minutes. Go!” He ordered. Everyone immediately sprang into action, and fifteen minutes a group of well-dressed crew stood on the deck, ready for battle.

“Ok,” Captain said, pacing around in front of us, “Let’s say there is a crew of...evil people standing on a ship in front of us. If this happens, we will first fire the cannons at their ship. If they manage to board our ship, we will all pair up and have a sword fight. Ok, possibility number 2. Let’s say.....”

We continued discussing possibilities and strategies through out the night and when morning came, all of us were exhausted but didn’t dare to sleep. Suddenly we heard a thunderous noise and huddled together. A loud rumbling noise echoed around us for miles around. Out of nowhere, an enormous wave unexpectedly rose in front of us, and a gigantic sea monster appeared. It had eyes the size of a small table, body the size of twenty elephants, and teeth as sharp as razor knives. “Ok, the answer is strategy number two hundred and seventeen. Peter, you first!” Captain yelled out. Peter immediately ran around in circles on the deck, yelling, “Get me! Get me!” The monster immediately bent down to try to scoop Peter up, but failed as Peter was so tiny he could slip between its fingers. “Will and Jake, you’re up!” Captain yelled. Will and Jake immediately jumped up the monster’s arm and ran up to its eyes, took out a knife and stabbed it once in each eye, then slid back down to the ship. The monster yelled out in agony, clapping his eyes. “Everyone, last step!” Captain yelled frantically. All of us immediately aimed one of the cannons at the monster’s head and fired, once, twice, thrice! At the third time, it finally froze, then fell down towards the ocean floor, and it never resurfaced. All of us cheered in victory, and gathered around and yelled in celebration. But before we could react, an enormous whirlpool appeared right beneath us and swallowed our whole ship up.

We were swirling in blackness, and we clutched to each other in confusion. After a few minutes, we finally slowed down and the sun’s warm rays shined upon us. I opened my eyes slowly. We were bobbing up and down on a very blue ocean, and we can see land just a kilometer ahead of us! “Straight ahead!” Captain ordered. The sailor immediately steered the ship towards that direction. Once ashore we can see roads, large carriages without horses moving, and tall buildings looming above us. Everyone also stared at us peculiarly. Everything was just so...strange. An innocent little girl came up to us “Excuse me, can I help you? You look lost.” She was looking at us curiously. “Can you tell us where this is?” I asked bravely. “Why, sir, you’re in Hong Kong.” She answered me. “What year is this?” I asked again. “The year 2019!” She answered, looking at us in bewilderment. “We went in the future...” Captain said absentmindedly.

“Who are you?” She asked us. “We are a group of sailors from the Ming Dynasty. We were setting sail for home but went in the wrong direction and entered The Dead Sea. “Oh!” She said, excitement lighting up her eyes, “Do you have a map?”” What’s that?” We echoed, “It is a piece of paper with the whereabouts of different places in our world!” She said, “I am a student and we are now being taught geography, the study of different whereabouts in the world, at school now. We are required to buy an atlas at the start of the year.

How about I give it to you!” She rummaged in her backpack and took out a book. “Here, you need this more than me!” “Thank you!” We said. We went back to our ship and investigated this map. Suddenly an enormous whirlpool engulfed us again and brought us back to our time. Once we returned home and set sail upon a new voyage we followed the map, and successfully found out different places in the world. We traded a lot of different goods back to our country for example silk, and China emerged to become one of the prosperous countries in the world.

Jong, 964 A.D.

Bradbury School, Atepolikhin, Lea – 8

964 A.D.

In china a little girl called Jong was born. Her father, King Yu, wanted to sell some stuff like bowls, plants, plats, chopsticks, cups, spoons and some watermelons.

When Jong was 8 she told her whole class how she wanted to become an explorer. When Jong was 14 she got through and she was welcome to join the Academy. In the Academy she met Jang, Weiwei, Li, Ding and Bing. At 10 they started the journey.

Frist Jong wanted to go to the poor parts of China. The first stop was Henan. When they got there it looked so gloomy that Jong could not see herself living there. The first stop was a family of four with grandparents. They wanted everything they had. After 10 houses the boat was starting to leave and thankfully they got on the boat.

“Next step Shenzi!” cried Jong.

When they got there it was a world of delight and they didn’t know where to start. They knew that they needed to go to the countryside. When they got there it looked so gloomy they did not know where to start.

“There were about 20 houses here but our budget 10 houses” Wei Wei said surprisingly.

“ There are 15 houses– we have knock on people’s doors and ask if they are poor or not”, said Jong boringly.

When they finish knocking on all of the doors the boat was about to leave but they didn't want to miss another one so they just left it and none of those people got to have gifts. They ran finally got on the ferry.

“Next Shandon!”, said Li excitedly.

“ I'm so excited to go to Africa, India and Arabia!”, said Jang excitedly.

When they Arrived in Shandong it looked just an ordinary city. They walked across this big mountain and found some poor people. The first stop was an old man and his name was Xingdong. He wanted everything but he wished he had some fresh water to drink instead of discussing water from the –river side. When they finished the tenth they all walked peacefully to the ferry.

“Next, Africa, which is going to take a week. Luckily we have rooms”, said Jong after the boat ride.

When they got there it looked like a zoo. They walked down the river Nile. When they got there they went further down the town and Jong thought that there would be poor people but there were no poor people, just a pack of lions. So they walked up the river and got on the boat.

“Why did the king of Africa, King Jack, let there be poor people?” said Jang. No response.

Next India.

When they got off the boat it was near the poor side so they did need to go anywhere. So the first house there was a grandma shouting at them. The grandma said, “ Don't go here, you know that you’re not supposed to.” So she slammed the door.

“So there only 9 house I guess”, said Li. When they finished all 10 house they walk on the boat.

Next Arabia.

When the boat was boarding the dock the king Mohammed could see that the boat was from China and he does not like china so Jong said. “ Guys,get ready for a war quietly!” .

When they got the ferry they were all ready and king Mohammed shouted and the war began. They were able to give some stuff. So Jung and Jong sneakily went up a mountain and when they were half way through they saw a poor man’s watermelons and plants and they asked if there were any poor people. A bow and arrow shot at Jang and Jong they both had to sit out and Shu helped them. After Shu helped them he went back to the war.

The Arabians won so king Mohammed said, “Give all the goods!”. He chuckled at the end.

So Jong said, “ We only have bowls, plates, plants chopsticks, watermelons, cups and spoons.”

King Mohammed said, “ Bring it all to me!”, so they passed it on.

When they got back all the parents told them to tell what happened. And Jong was the best at explaining it.

Christopher's Big Dream

Bradbury School, Cheung, Charlize – 9

Christopher had a big dream.

It was to ride on a boat.

Every night he dreamed of it, and finally, unexpectedly, his chance came.

You might think, “ Why does he want to go on a boat so much?”

The reason was that his father was a fisherman. Every night, when he came home, he would tell Christopher about all the things he saw when he was fishing for sea animals on the King's boats in the sunset.

Christopher was always fascinated by the king's boats. That's why he wanted to be on a boat so much. One day his father came triumphantly home early from work and said, “ The king wants me to be his personal fisherman to catch fish for his meals. And, I got a private boat for us to use!”

“Can we go on it now? Please?” begged Christopher. His father, startled by his enthusiasm, hid it by saying firmly “Not now Christopher, it's late.”

The next morning, his parents were startled awake by the banging on the door. “Come on!” Christopher shouted, “ Let's go and see the boat!” So they hurriedly set off to have a quick glance of the boat before his father went to work.

After having a quick look, he convinced his parents to let him stay a little longer to have a proper look of the ship, his father wrote down the rules and left him with his mother. Christopher explored the four corners of the ship. It was amazing, everything they needed and wanted was in the ship, and each one reminded him of a happy memory. The fake jewels reminded him of the pirate stories his father used to read to him before bedtime and, the cannon reminded him of his old toy castle with toy soldiers and weapons, etc.

That night, Christopher had a weird dream. First it was of him and his parents on a ship, peacefully sailing out sea. Suddenly, out of nowhere, came a giant dark whirlpool, crushing the boat and sucking him in. He screamed and screamed till he could shout no more and woke up panting with sweat dripping down his back. Then, he rolled over, went back to sleep and totally forgot about the dream.

Early in the next morning, Christopher followed his father to work. He jumped up and down and ran around impatiently as they slowly made their way along the street. “Hurry up!” He shouted, as he ran towards the pier.

It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, the birds were singing and the fish were jumping, their colourful scales reflecting on the water. It was all very peaceful until

BOOM!

A rumble of thunder shook the boat off course into the dark, rolling waves on the cold, salty water. Christopher hung on for dear life but he was still flung around the cabin. Then, it was all still. Christopher crept out of the cabin and onto the deck. He had misunderstood the stillness, the waves had eased but the wind was as worst as EVER!!! He was thrown around the ship as he desperately tried to grab on to something solid. He slid down to the edge of the boat and grabbed onto the edge, then he got sucked into the whirlpool, he screamed and screamed like in his dream. Then, he knew no more. As he spiraled deeper and deeper into the abyss, a pod of dolphins carried him gently to a concealed magical island where they laid him on a bed of blossoms and feathers.

Meanwhile, his parents were frantically looking for him. They screamed and shouted but he never came. They even hunted for him around the ship but couldn't find him. In the end, his parents soberly gave up and kept on sailing forward.

When Christopher woke up, he found a strong, young Morgan mare with big, soulful eyes looking at him. Then it said in a musical voice "My name is Autumn and this is my story."

"Long ago, when I was a little foal, my family, friends and I lived on a happy, peaceful island named Calypso. One day, a huge storm struck our island and pulled us into the sea. We tried to swim but couldn't keep our heads above the water. A huge wave came down on us and everyone drowned except me. I was washed up on this island and have lived here ever since that day."

"That's strange" said Christopher, "I fell off the ship and lost my parents too! Maybe we should be friends!"

"I'd love to be friends with you; it's been so long since I spoke to anyone except animals on the island. Everything is very cozy here and I'm sure you'll settle in."

"I know I will. But I'm quite homesick and I miss my parents!", said Christopher sadly. "I know how you feel," said Autumn softly. "I miss my parents too, but you'll just have to cope until they find you."

So the days went by. Every day they played and explored the island together and every night he slept on a feather bed. Christopher had so much fun that he didn't realise that almost a month had passed.

One night, Christopher had a strange dream, he dreamed that his parents were on the shore of the island calling to him and embracing him. Tears of joy were streaming down their faces.

Then he saw them building a big farm and living there.

The next morning, he saw two figures on the beach. His parents ran towards him, happiness and tears of joy shone on their faces as they hugged him. Christopher asked them a question he had been thinking about ever since his dream, "Can we live on this island please?"

"I don't see why not," replied his father. So they sailed back home to buy supplies and built a large farm for the animals to take shelter on the island.

How come everything I dream about comes true? wondered Christopher. As they settled down safe and sound for years to come.

The Magic Sword

Bradbury School, Ho, Jocelyn – 8

It was Zheng He's seventh voyage. He had spent most of his life at sea on special missions. He was a strong and courageous boy, ever since he was separated from his family, he had looked after himself. Zheng He was an amazing Chinese explorer who had visited many countries and was fortunate enough to have seen fascinating places. He even saw animals he had never seen before, making new discoveries every day. He had traveled as far as the African coast and built relationships with over twenty countries and had even visited Arabia. Zheng He had many wonderful experiences, trying many foods, herbs and spices for the first time which he brought back to China to share with his people.

One of Zheng He's most favourite places that he had visited was India, the smells, colours and warm people really made him happy. India is where he saw an elephant for the very first time and he couldn't believe his eyes, he remembers it so well. He was on a tour with Sukayna, a local girl that was looking after Zheng He and his crew became good friends with Suka, as he called her, and he plans to find her again if he is lucky enough to return to India one day.

"It's HUGE, what is it?" exclaimed Zheng when he saw the elephant.

"It's an elephant and this is his trunk." Said Sukayana, matter-of-factly, while stroking the giant beast's huge floppy ears.

"It is incredible", whispered Zheng He as he stared at the elephant in awe.

"Elephants are very peaceful animals and they have the largest brains in the animal kingdom," informed Sukayna.

"Wow, they are smart and beautiful. I cannot wait to tell my country about this magnificent animal." Zheng He and Suka rode the elephants and it was one of Zheng's best days.

Zheng woke from his daydream and looked around the deck. He had better get to work. There were always a lot of jobs to be taken care of on the ship and the crew had a busy day ahead of them. Zheng knew how lucky he was to have seen such amazing things on his adventures and he always shared many stories in China. However, Zheng and his men had some dangerous experiences too, on his many voyages. They had fought against mighty typhoons, rough seas and even pirates!

It was a fine morning at sea when without warning, looming ahead in the distance Zheng He saw a pirate ship heading their way. Zheng warned the other members on the ship by sounding the horn but the ship was still approaching, they started to head away from the pirate ship, but the pirate ship was too fast and caught up to them. The crew were crazily running around like they were on fire, shouting in every direction, "PIRATES, PIRATE ATTACK!" The crew were securing the treasure and handing out weapons. However, the pirates got on to Zheng He's boat. Zheng and his crew hid along with the treasure. Suddenly, the pirates heard some mumbling at the bottom deck where the treasure was and headed towards it.

"Where are our other ships? We need help here, they are going to attack" Mumbled Zheng He. He thought he had seen this pirate ship before from his fourth voyage when they were attacked. The crew had defeated the pirates and ended up finding a very special sword covered in precious gems that had a special symbol on it that none of the Chinese could understand. However, they had kept the sword as no typhoon, tragedies or rough sea seemed to happen when the sword was on the ship with them. This could be a coincidence but Zheng He didn't think so, he knew the sea well and believed the sword was magic.

"We would like to talk to the captain, we mean no harm!" shouted a pirate.

Zheng He looked around in disbelief. Were they trying to trick them? Why would a pirate mean no harm!?

“We would like our sword back, we are sorry for attacking you and have had nothing but bad luck since”, the pirate stated. They want the sword because it protects them. They tell Zheng He and his crew that they have had the sword for many years and if the pirates do something bad the sword will do something bad to them. Zheng He talks to the pirates and discovers that the magic sword is very important to them and has been for many, many years and it also ensures they do good deeds. However, since the fourth voyage when the pirates fought with Zheng He and his crew, which is a bad thing to do, the pirates had lost many men and experienced very bad typhoons. They also said that they live on the sea and need the sword to protect them and others.

Zheng He gave back the sword but not before making the pirates promise to protect the men at sea rather than attack other boats. The pirates were very thankful. “If we bump into you again and the weather is bad then we will make it nice again and we will not harm you.” They all agreed. The pirates asked if they can be friends, and Zheng He said yes. The pirates also told him that the sword had saved thousands of shipwrecks over the years and losing the magic sword had proved how much it protected them, and taught them the lesson that we should always be kind and caring to others. The magic sword knows if you are bad, bad things will happen but when they show love or kindness, good things happen for them, they would never forget this again.

They celebrated with a bottle of beer, pak Choi and salty fish. They gave each other a cheer. “You have shown us great kindness Zheng He, thank you.” shouted the pirates as they sailed into the sunset.

Diary of a Ming Dynasty Voyager

Bradbury School, Kalidindi, Anwita – 10

July 11th, 1405

Today is the day. We set sail to brand new regions on Earth. There is a man on this ship named Zheng He and apparently, by the looks of things, is now in command. I surprisingly am not too stressed! But, in a few hours, we will be on a ship, with others around us, and we will finally have to say our goodbyes to the warm, fresh grass...

We have finally set sail, not only our ship but a fleet of ships. Our ship's Captain, Zheng He, is giving us orders left and right! Still, my heart is pounding with excitement! I am happy to be setting sail, but I am missing my homeland. I just hope that my family will be safe without me. There's always danger in the territory that we live in, and I do not know if wondering off of land will help with the situation. What if something happens to them? I will constantly be worried but I need to leave them behind. But, I have to focus on the journey ahead of me.

July 23rd, 1405

It has been a few days since I have been off of the main island, and life on board has been exhilarating. My eyes are practically running in circles. Am I meant to feel this way so early on in sailing? As a voyager? The others do not look as pale as I am and I do not understand why that is, but I am clearly seeing it with my own eyes. For protective measures I might stand near the edge of the ship. I do not feel well.

I cannot stand being on this foolish, creaky moving invention anymore! All these people are mad here! They are not showing any expressions, emotions, nothing! Captain Zheng He is doing a horrible job of sailing in a straight line, Navigator is doing an alright job. I on the other hand, as Quartermaster, am doing an exceptional job of being in charge of carrying out the captain's orders, the Bosun is doing a cruddy job of keeping this ship in shape ready for longer and harder travels. The Cooper is doing a cheap job of keeping all the barrels with our ships valuables safe! I wish I was a carpenter; I wouldn't have to do anything right now! Our ships are supposedly "just fine" so we would not need to polish them up. Whoever is currently the carpenter is having the most effortless life! We have a few healers here in their sleeping quarters if needed. Our goal is not to get into any sorts of violence while we are out here, but, if someone has surely caught an illness, we will have people who know what to do.

August 1st, 1405

I am missing my family. I miss talking to my brothers and I miss the flavourful aroma of fresh dumplings that my mother made. I believe I am homesick. I am sore from previous chores, and there seem to be more and more as the days pass. I tend to feel isolated at times. I attempt to converse with others but they steer clear of me. What shall I do? I might as well request Captain Zheng He for any new chores that need to be done. I can only hope that it will not be something that gives me more pain.

August 13th, 1405

The skies have darkened in the past few days, and I feel a slight uneasiness. Is trouble arising? I do not have much knowledge about the weather but there has been news from others saying a storm could arrive. I hope it will not affect us harshly. The weather looks like it is going to change rapidly, and that surely isn't acceptable.

The weather is not getting better by the second. The storm is just getting stronger, and stronger, from every wind it blows. The crew and I do not know what to do. Do we just sit the storm out? By camping on nearby shore? Or do we keep going, risking our lives by sailing across the dangerous waters...

"Long, long ago, there were many, many ships that had set sail, trying to conquer the world." Was that the beginning of a story that was going to be told to the young and to the old, once our fleet of ships travel across the waters together, and discover new places? I think so!

August 15th, 1405

The weather has gotten better, so I am starting to relax a little bit! My heart has stopped pumping at literally the speed of lightning! Get it? I made a little joke! Storm, lightning, haha...

Again, the weather has cleared up! So, I will not make a big deal of it anymore! But, I still do not understand how it could just clear up so quickly! Not that I want it to come back again, but..

August 17th, 1405

The scenery around us has still not changed these past few days, which I expected before setting sail. Now, away from the talk about scenery, is there an evil in the waters? The ship is going, UP, AND DOWN, UP, AND DOWN. I do not wish to fall overboard!!

Rock, are hitting our ship. Sadly – a few people have fallen off the ship, and I feel I am to soon join them in meeting my end...

The ship has suddenly tilted to the right, and all the members on the ship have slid across the deck, all falling right into place next to me. I am right on the edge; there is so much weight on me from the others in the crew. The sea has prevailed.

I am giving you to the sea. I might never see you again..... but, I will miss you ver- ry much...

An Adventure Never to Forget

Bradbury School, Sekhri, Anika – 8

Have you ever had a hard time in life?

Andrew's life was full of hard times. He was an only child and he only had a mother as his father died three years ago when Andrew was four years old. His mother was not very caring and that's what made Andrew's life hard. He had always wanted to get away and have an adventure.

One misty, chilly evening Andrew and his mom were walking home from the market when Andrew noticed a large, wooden ship that he had never seen before on the dock. He wanted to explore it and pleaded with his mother to let him go closer but she refused. She clutched onto Andrew's arm.

"Mother let me go!" He exclaimed.

"Walk, you foolish child!" His mother shrieked.

"No, let me go!" He grabbed her hand and yanked it off his arm, and then ran as fast as he could towards the mysterious ship. He reached it and clambered on board just as the plank rose off the glittering sand.

He could hear his mother's voice calling after him and pleading for him to come back. But it was too late; the ship was gliding away from the dock.

"Everyone here?" Andrew heard a man holler at the other end of the deck. He could see five men standing in front of a tall skinny guy with long brown hair and wearing a navy blue vest and white pants. This must be the captain and his crew, thought Andrew.

"I'd better not be found by them." So he ducked down some stairs going to the hull of the ship. Down he went. Luckily the men did not see him. He was a castaway on the ship!

"Hopefully no one will come down here!", Andrew thought, his heart was pounding very fast. He felt nervous yet excited about the adventure that awaited him.

"Where are we off to this time?" said one of the crew above on the deck.

"We're off to India," another voice shouted back.

Andrew could hear more voices.

"Time for a chore run through! William, you're on cleaning detail with Alexandre. Harold, you're on cooking with George. Big Harry you're with me on lookout!" That must be the captain.

Andrew could hear everything that was going on. He was very thrilled that he had gotten away with being on the ship without anyone noticing him. But his luck didn't last. Suddenly he felt something fall on his head and down his shoulder. Without thinking, he screamed. What could it be?

"Ahh! A rat! Yuck, help me please!" Andrew pleaded. The sailors heard him yelling for help.

"Who's that!?" called one of the crew.

"Yeah, who is that?" another one said.

"It came from the hull, let's check there." So they all went down to the hull and can you guess what they saw? Poor Andrew!

"Who is he?" They all asked each other in confusion.

"Please don't hurt me, I didn't take anything! Please spare me, I beg of you, please!"

"Look kid, we ain't gonna hurt you, ok? What are you doing here though?" The men asked suspiciously.

"Well...umm...I came here to...umm. Can you help me get rid of this rat first?" There was a brown, ragged, furry rat nibbling at the edge of Andrew's shoe. Boom! One of the sailors stomped his foot in front of the rat and it scurried away.

"Now tell us why you're here or we will do the same to you," they warned.

"Well, you see my life isn't very nice and I wanted to explore something new," the boy said.

A New Feeling

Chinese International School, Cheung, Cassandra – 8

Meiling carried the cargo up to the massive ship that she called home. “Come here, Meiling! Can you help me clean the wheel? I’m too buff and muscular to squeeze between the gap.” The captain of the ship shouted.

Meiling hastily replied, “Dad, wait a minute, okay? I have to carry these silk scarves up to the storage room.” She heard her dad grunt in agreement.

“Whoa, my baby sis is standing up on her own two feet defending herself! How nice for her.” This line was said by Meiling’s older brother Muling, with just a hint of sarcasm on the last line.

Meiling’s family ancestors were famous pirates from the 1300s. This legacy was something her dad was very proud of. So now where do you think this brought Meiling’s family? Yes, back to the seas, the place where her ancestors fought countless battles and lost thousands of valuables.

The one difference between Meiling’s family now and her ancestors is that Meiling’s family *gave* valuables. Her ancestor stole valuables and fought with enemies from all over the globe, making rivals wherever they went. I think you can understand that growing up knowing that your family has enemies waiting to fight you is a pretty harsh living environment.

‘Meiling, hurry up! We need to depart at 11:00 PM sharp.’ Captain Li hurried her up. ‘Remind me again why we need to leave so late?’ Meiling asked. ‘Because we are pirates. We need to travel unseen.’ Captain Li answered.

Meiling slipped through the narrow gap which led to the steering wheel. ‘Quickly! We leave in 5 minutes.’ Li reminded her.

‘I’m doing it right now, okay? Stop being so impatient!’ Meiling hastily replied. She grabbed the steering wheel and started wiping it down forcefully. She was done in a few minutes and pushed the cargo stopping her father from crossing aside. ‘Dad, I’m ready!’

‘I’m ready, too!’ Muling shouted from across the ship.

‘Good, because I’m ready! Let’s go!’ Li bellowed.

They all ran to the ship’s bow and watched as Li grabbed onto the steering wheel and turned it to the starboard side. Meiling and Muling studied his movements carefully, as they would need to do the same when they grew up. As the ship moved, the wooden boards creaked under the weight of the cargo and the strain of actually sailing after a few weeks of being stranded and parked in the same spot near the port.

‘Dad, it’s getting late. We should probably go to sleep.’ Muling stated.

‘Yeah, okay.’ Dad replied.

Meiling turned around, about to walk into the cabin that she shared with Muling. ‘I call dibs on the bed tonight!’ She said.

‘Hey, no fair! You had it for two weeks already! It’s my turn now.’ Muling called, running after his sister.

‘Those two! I don’t know what I should do with them.....’ Their father muttered, smiling slightly. Then, he turned around and looked at the water ahead of the ship. Whistling, Captain Li grabbed the wheel and readied himself for a night on the sea and beneath the twinkling stars.

Next morning, Meiling woke up and rubbed her eyes sleepily. Then, she realised she was sleeping on the floor! ‘Muling! You sly dog, get back here now!’ She shrieked angrily. All she got in reply was a chuckle coming from above decks. Groaning, she got up and changed clothes. At last, she trudged upstairs to see the crew.

‘Hey, sleepyhead! Did you have a good night’s sleep?’ One crew member asked Meiling.

‘What do you think?’ Meiling replied grouchy, pointing at her eye bags and glaring at Muling.

‘Haha! You look like a panda.’ Muling said, bursting with laughter.

‘Pandas are cute and chubby. Kind of like you, just without the cute part.’

‘Well, at least I have a fully grown body, unlike you.’

‘Oh my gosh, please just let us eat breakfast in silence!’ This voice belonged to their father, looking at them, amused. my gosh, please just let us eat breakfast in silence!’ This voice belonged to their father, looking at them. Li looked amused because they were arguing about such a small matter.

After breakfast, someone started steering the ship in the direction of Africa. Of course, Meiling did not know the name of this exotic land. All she knew was that Africa was the home of unique animals and was filled with all sorts of woven goods. She was very excited because she needed new clothes.

'Land Ho!' The captain's first mate shouted as soon as he caught a glimpse of the cliff side and a small village in front of them.

'Yay! We're finally going to meet more people and make more friends!' Meiling shrieked.

'Not to mention establish new friendships and trade more goods.' Li added.

'That's the boring part.' Muling said.

They tethered their ship to a palm tree they saw on the white sands. Then, they continued their journey to the little village, bringing along porcelain, riches, and silk.

As you can probably imagine, the Africans were delighted at the sight of the valuables and immediately rushed into their houses to grab whatever they thought was appropriate for trading — fabrics, necklaces, baskets.....

When Meiling caught sight of the necklaces, she took some silk cloths and ran to the owner. 'Is this enough?' She asked breathlessly.

'No, no. You want this, you give me vase.' The villager replied with broken Chinese.

'Negotiating, huh?' Meiling heard a voice behind her.

'Yeah, dad. *Totally.*' She said.

As a red ball of fire played hide-and-seek with the moon behind the mountain, the pirates walked back to their ship. 'Good day, huh?' Li said.

'I guess so.' Muling muttered.

As the trio walked towards their awaiting crew, Meiling felt something she never felt much of before — love.

It came in different shapes and sizes, but she loved her version the best.

Zheng He's Command

Chinese International School, Keswick, May – 8

It was 1414. Captain Zheng He and his crew went to the emperor to ask about their next mission and were totally surprised by his command.

“Take my gold and give it to the pirates. Please don't harm anyone! No people should get hurt. And remember... you all have courage and kindness. Even if they fight, you can fight back – but in a kind way. Never give up!”

This was the first time the emperor had made such a request. The crew loaded as much gold as they could onto the boat. Zheng He was with the crew as they put the gold away inside a treasure chest. After careful planning of the route, the crew put up the sails and set off to sea.

Zheng He shouted, “Ahoy crew! First, we will be setting off to the Indian ocean and will be going across to the Bermuda Triangle.” The crew were a little worried by this as they knew it was a dangerous place.

As they entered the Bermuda Triangle, they saw so many unusual things. Enormous sharks, crashed boats and airplanes surrounded them. A huge tornado circled around them.. When suddenly, out of nowhere appeared a massive ship. It was owned by their old enemy Cheng Tang. Straight away, the crew ran to get their weapons but then remembered they could not fight.

Zheng He murmured, “Cheng Tang. We come in peace. Please can we just give you some gold and then we will go away?”

After a long time of giving away gold, they realized they had very little left. The crew started to panic. They had no gold and they weren't allowed to fight. They had to come up with a plan and make sure no one could hear them.

“What do we do?!” Zheng He asked, feeling very stressed. All the crew felt panicked.

“What do we do, what do we do?!” Zheng He suggested that they should trade ships.

“But we can't. Our ship cost so much more than their ship!.” the crew yelled,

Zheng He cried, “We just have to get on with it.”

The crew jumped off the ship. “We surrender..... but we will give you something. There is some gold on our ship but it is not much. So we decided to give you our ship but you have to give us your ship because we can never go back.”

All of the pirates on the other ship shouted, “We don't trust you trying to trick us.”

They raised their guns and shot two of the crew. The bodies sank to the bottom of the sea and the fight began. Zheng He and his crew could not fight back. Their emperor had given them the order and they had to obey. Instead, they swam to the pirates boat. They took them by surprise and tied all the pirates together.

”Now, do you trust us or not!” they asked the pirates. “Do you want our ship and gold or not? We are just trying to help you!”

The pirates captain replied “Okay we trust you!”

Zheng He and his crew went to the pirates' ship. It was ugly with scratched off paint and cracks in the basement but it would get them to where they were going. They were sad with what had happened to the two crew members, but knew that they had a good life. No one would ever forget what they did to help other people.

All of a sudden, Zheng He saw a rainbow parrot. It was beautiful and even said HELLO. The parrot travelled with them to Cape Town.

Zheng He messaged the emperor and said "We have given 100 pirates gold but we had to give away our ship because we did not have enough gold left.. Sadly pirates shot two of the crew."

The emperor proudly replied "It is fine. At least you are safe and you learned how to be kind."

Zheng He and his crew went back to Nanjing. They had a funeral for the two crew men called Tao and Yan. Zheng He had to explain what happened to all their friends and family. He kept the parrot for company and taught it how to speak Chinese. Zheng He planned his next mission with his new friend, the parrot.

The Generous Pirate

Chinese International School, Lau, Isabelle – 8

Kapow! came from the wooden ship, floating close to shore.

What was that? I wondered, almost dropping my fishing line in shock.

“Arrr, matey!” a man yelled across. It was a pirate! I felt a little scared – although he seemed friendly enough.

“This is the most exciting part of my life” the pirate screamed. “Today is my seventh journey!”

I wondered where they were going and what he meant by the seventh journey.

“We are going to India” the pirate told me. “The people there use all their gold to buy things they need. But they have so little and need more!”

While they were in India, when the pirates were walking.....

“Wahhhhh!!!!!! Mommy doesn’t have enough gold!” a baby suddenly cried out.

“Oh, you poor little baby! I will give you some gold. Well, maybe even some silk!” the kind captain said.

“Thankyou! Thankyou! We don’t have enough silk to make shirts!” the baby’s mommy said, suddenly feeling relieved.

The pirate gave the woman gold *and* silk and said “You’re welcome!”

She felt so happy when she heard those words and wanted to thank him again.

The pirate went to more houses to give gold and silk to the villagers. Now they could buy whatever they wanted.

“All right, everybody who is with me..... let’s go back on our ship and celebrate!”

There was cake and fruit for everyone to eat. Everyone felt so happy and free to *FINALLY* have a party on a pirate ship.

Suddenly, in the middle of the celebration, somebody accidentally pressed the “Explode” button and there were colorful things flying through the air. They were curly and wavy, with many different colors on them.

The captain stopped. He looked angry but curious. His face was red but his eyes were wide open.

“Why did you press that button?” the captain asked.

“Uhhh....., it was an accident sir! I accidentally pressed that button and now things are floating in the air” the crew member who had pressed the button answered.

“I *LOVE* IT!!!!!! It is *AMAZING!*” the captain yelled out to his crew. “*THIS IS THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE!*”

The captain became known as “*THE SEVENTH JOURNEY CAPTAIN.*” When he passed away, his crew would put flowers next to his grave. They missed him very much.

Saving My Father

Chinese International School, Marsh, Megan – 8

Isn't it ironic that I'm literally fighting against pirates and my own father? And yet the whole reason I joined this treasure fleet was to get away from the pirates and what they did to my family.....

Just to let you know, my father didn't want to be a pirate! He had no choice but to work for Chen Zuyi as he had to repay a debt. His bakery business had failed so suddenly he found himself feeding pirates. This brought shame on our family so the rest of us left Guangdong and went north looking for work.

After 12 days of walking, we arrived in Nanjing. We had been told that there were jobs there because Emperor Ha Gao was constructing The Ming Treasure Fleet. Over one hundred ships needed to be built for trading, making international voyages and expanding the community.

My father had taught me well when he owned the bakery. I was an excellent cook – especially with making sweet pastries. So I found work in the shipbuilders cafeteria while my brother worked in the shipyard. We worked hard and when the fleet was finished, my brother and I were lucky enough to gain jobs on the fleet. In fact, on the Admiral's very own ship!

Admiral Xui Mai had travelled a long way from the palace to the shipyard to inspect the ships. When he arrived, the chefs were summoned to cook the finest dish for him. I decided to make the admiral a slightly spicy slow-cook lamb rack with an extra dessert on the side. It was a citrus tutti frutti jelly. He absolutely loved my dish and he offered me a job on the voyage. My brother got a job too – working on deck. My brother and I decided not to tell anyone that our father was working for the notorious pirate, Chen Zuyi. It was too risky.

The Admiral always enjoyed my pastries and encouraged me to be creative. He really supported me and eventually promoted me to be Head Pastry Chef. I think he saw something of himself in me as he used to be a poor boy until war came and he had to fight. He fought so hard that the emperor promoted him and eventually he became an admiral.

We visited many cities on our voyage. These included Champa, Java, and Malacca. We gave gifts to the people in every city we visited. For example, we gave porcelain, calligraphy scrolls, and copper coins. We too got many gifts in return. We even got given exotic animals – including a giraffe.

Our route home took us through the Malaccan Strait which was a shortcut. Many pirates lurked around here because many merchants used this passage way to go to their destination.

On our way we met Chen Zuyi's fleet and we did not expect an ambush attack from Chen Zuyi. Admiral Xui Mai was quick to start planning the attack strategy. I told him I had heard that the pirate was paranoid about sticky sweet stuff. I suggested to make a dough bomb filled with sticky corn honey slime with food colouring.

Our fleet started attacking Chen's boats with the dough bomb. The minute it landed on them, the bombs splattered all over oozing out the most stickiest green slime.

One bomb crashed onto Chen Zuyi's face. He stumbled backwards as liquid burst all over his body. He screamed as he tasted the sweet corn honey and turned green with anger!! It was terribly sticky and awfully sweet but quickly hardened. He was stuck and could not move.

The other pirates hated these sticky sweet bombs too.... except for my dad. While the other pirates were powerless, he was surprised by the sweet bomb strategy. It felt familiar because he was reminded of his daughter who used to make sweet bombs during her childhood.

The pirates struggled, unable to move. After another round of attack and they finally surrendered. We locked the pirates in the dungeon. My father was one of them. He wondered if this could be the work of his sweet lovely well missed daughter. Would he ever see her again? And I needed to start thinking of a plan to save my father.

On the way back home everyone was raving and laughing about the pirates. My brother hugged me and gave me a wink!

When the ship arrived in China, the Admiral reported to the emperor about the victory. Emperor Yong le was very impressed with my clever plan. I was promoted to be the personal chef for the emperor, because my cooking was delicious.

Of course I remembered this was my chance to save my father. I explained the whole story to the emperor and begged him not kill my dad. The emperor discussed the situation with the court and finally they agreed to let him go because I had contributed to the victory.

Without my father, I wouldn't have been able to make the dough bomb. It was my childhood boredom that had turned into a fantasy of dough balls. I squealed with excitement. Finally, after all those years, my family was back together again.

The Ming Treasure Fleet

Chinese International School, Wells, Amelia – 8

“WOOSH! CRASH!” Waves smacked against the Ming Treasure fleet as they voyaged across the coast of the Caribbean. I woke with a start. There was obviously a mighty storm going on.

“Close all the doors, exits and trapdoors!” the captain barked. “Roll up the sails!”

“Captain Bossypants” I murmured. I was still groggy from sleep as I pulled off my covers. I took my PJs off and blindly reached into the drawer. As I put on my dirty sailor clothes and climbed out of the bottom of the ship, I was splattered with rain.

“Another day stuck on the the same boring old tattered boat” I thought, as I pulled myself up the creaky old stairway. I stared at the ocean. Waves were crashing and bumping against our ship.

Suddenly, I heard the captain scream at me” **WHAT ARE YOU DOING RYDER ?! THE WAVES WILL BE HERE ALL DAY, HURRY UP AND PATCH THE HULL WITH TAR!**”

“But——” I began.

“Not buts except your’s in the hull working! Now get to work!” he screeched.

I stomped down to the hull and began to patch up the leaks with tar. By the time I got back up to the deck, the storm had passed and I was totally covered in sticky, hot black tar.

“Ryder! Go patch the sails. They have rips that won’t sew themselves!”

“But—— “ I began again, feeling like the captain didn’t care about me.

But before I argued back, I thought about losing my job on the ship and dealing with my brothers and sisters stealing my toy ships.

“Fine“ I moaned. I climbed up the chilling metal poles that lead to the tattered old sail with the Yin and Yang on it.

“Careful up there! If those sails break you’re paying for them!” the captain ordered.

“Yes Captain” I mumbled. I gazed at the horizon, I saw another ship. It looked like a ship from the fleet but this one had black sails and a mossy green body. I looked at the ship again just as a cannon flew towards us from the ship.

BAM! The whole ship shook as the cannon hit us. I felt unsure on the mast so I went down to main deck. As the ship drew nearer and nearer, I saw pirates swing across to our ship. As the pirates swung across and shot our newly patched hull, it caused our ship to sink. Before I had time to run to the getaway boats, I noticed half the crew were repatching the hull with the tar. More and more enemy pirates swung over to our ship and started stealing the precious treasures which were meant to be delivered to Malaysia.

Suddenly, their captain swung across and landed with a THUD. He was evil and wore a mossy green trench coat, black tunic and dirty leather boots. I screamed and screamed but my desperate screams for help were drowned out by a booming voice

“OH!! QUIT BEING A BABY, YOU REALLY NEED TO LEARN HOW FIGHT.’

I gulped. I had never ever fought a pirate before, so I ducked under some water barrels.

Suddenly, the evil captain swiped ferociously at me with his cutlass. I ducked just as the blade came and landed inches away from my hiding spot. I wearily pulled out my sword. The metal felt icy against my damp skin. I drew up my sword and lunged at the captain from behind my hiding place. But the captain was ready. He simply drew his sword and knocked me off my feet.

“HAHAHA” he cackled. “You fight like a baby!” As he was saying that, I got to my feet and tried again. But this time, luck was on my side. The captain had just put away his sword when I knocked him on the head super hard.

He got up, I could see rage and fury etching over his gaunt yellow face and down his ugly neck.

“Uh oh.” said a voice inside my head, I should have not done that at all.”

As the captain towered over me, I thought of what my mom had said just before I boarded the ship. “No matter what happens to you always believe in yourself.”

The evil captain began to pull his sword out as these words swam through my head. “Believe in yourself... believe in yourself...”

BAM!! I lunged at the captain with all my might, causing him and me to topple over. Before I knew it, WHAM! The captain’s sword smashed against my cutlass. We started dueling.

He swiped.

I ducked.

And this went on for ages.

Until the racket of blades hitting blades was deafening.

“Oh, you’ve really done it now, Kid” warned the captain glowering at me.

“Oh yeah?” I said confidently for the first time in my whole entire life “Why don’t you look at your ship?”

The captain turned his head and saw his ship sinking into the depths of the ocean. And while the captain was distracted, I bonked him over the head one more time, successfully knocking him off our ship. We never saw him and his crew again.

As the captain came up from the deck he walked up to me and said “ Remember when I was so harsh to you?”

I nodded.

“It’s because I wanted to see if you would stand up to people some day, and you did, you stood up to the evil captain. And only a real pirate would do that.”

“Thanks” I said bashfully.

“It’s fine” replied the captain. “ I want you to have this.” He held up the gold medallion that he wore to tell everyone he was captain and he placed the medallion on me.

“And I just want you to know that wherever you are, always believe in yourself” were the captain’s final words after he delivered me back home to my beloved family and friends.

Auntie Meng's Story

Chinese International School, Wu, Andrea – 8

“Auntie Meng! Auntie Meng! Tell us a story please!” The excited voices of her grandchildren brought a smile to her old, wrinkled face. The children clustered around her feet, their rosy-cheeked faces turned up to her. “Very well,” she smiled. “I will tell you a story...”

“Long, long, long ago, I was sailor girl, a strong – willed one, in the Ming Treasure Fleet. We travelled the seven seas to give away treasures so as to make alliances with different continents. However, during our voyage, we would often encounter difficulties. This might including natural disasters or problems on board the ship...”

At this point, the boys jumped up and said, “We want a story about heroic sailors! A great battle!”

The girls grimaced, and replied, “Can it not be a heroic sailor battle, Auntie Meng? We’ve heard battle stories too many times!”

Auntie Meng nodded wisely, and searched within her mind for a story that would satisfy both the boys and girls. At once, a story popped into her brain. Straightening up, she started, “For all of you, I have a story about a battle and something else.”

“According to the maps that our crew had drawn,” she went on, “We had reached the biggest ocean around. That day, I woke up to screaming. I did not particularly enjoy it. The reason why everyone was screaming was because the volcanoes were exploding. Hundreds and hundreds of volcanoes were erupting around us.

With the molten lava and meteorites of lava stone flying around us, the crew panicked. The captain was the only one who didn’t fear the calamities happening around him. He ran around the ship’s deck; not yelling orders, but flinging fellow sailors off the ship into the water to save them. The sailors trod water frantically, choking on seawater with surprise at our brave captain’s actions. The captain didn’t have time to care that he was getting absolutely covered in burns from the lava’s sparks. He just wanted all his crewmates into the water. When the volcanoes finished erupting, we all realized that it was only because of selfless captain’s act of bravery that we all survived. Our poor ship, however, did not fare so well.....Story ended for today. Go back home, you rascals.”

“Auntie Meng! No! Don’t leave us at an end like this like last time! Please continue !” the girls begged.

“We want a—” the boys started. But the girls shot them a poisonous glare.

Auntie Meng looked at the clock and gave a firm nod of her head. Continuing, she said, “Our ship did not fare well in the volcanic incident. So the Captain decided that our first priority was to fix up the ship until it was as right as rain. He started us on mending the crater holes in the ship with new wooden planks. We hammered and nailed until the crater holes were to his satisfaction. Then, he got us to deal with burns that scarred the ship using oil. He made us scrub until the burn marks were completely gone. Some sailors who were handy with a needle were sent up to the main mast and foremast to mend the sails.

I was one of the unfortunate sailors ordered to go up the main mast. The foremast was so high, and I had to swing from rope to rope to reach my designated mast. Straddled on the bowsprit, I started my mending. When gusts of wind came, I was the only one not shaken, as I was on a solid item. One sailor fell overboard from his mast into the ocean. Luckily, the crew got him in time, but soon I was thrown off my post as well. A strong hand caught me from falling into the ocean’s murky depths.

‘Can you swing from my hand to another rope? I’m not strong enough to pull you back up.’

I looked at my crewmate and the rest of the sailors down below. They looked at me dubiously, worry showing plainly on their faces.

I suddenly realized why my crewmates’ faces were laced with worry. There were a pair of sharks swimming right below my dangling feet! I judged the distance between the ship and the bowsprit. It wasn’t very far, but if I was to jump far enough...

I grasped my crewmate’s hand tightly and started to swing, generating motion with my legs. At the highest point, I let go and leaped for my life. As I jumped, my crewmates looked on with their mouths agape, marvelling at my marvellous jump. I stretched toward the ship’s railing, and snatched it with both hands, relaxing as my hands hit solid wood. My crewmates pulled me up at ease, rescuing me. I lay on the deck floor, looking up at the familiar faces of my fellow sailors. I was happy to be alive, and to be able to embark on these wonderful journeys.

Leave me in peace now, ask your Grandfather for any further questions. He knows each and every bit of the story. Because the crewmate who saved me on the bowsprit... That was your Grandfather.”

“Wasn’t that a touching story of sailor friendship.” A voice came from the doorway. The children swung around to see Grandfather standing there, eyes twinkling mischievously, a smile lighting up his face.

Zheng He's Secret Eighth Voyage

Chinese International School, Young, Ethan – 8

Swish! Swish! The sound of the waves colliding against the ship's hull woke Zheng He. He peered through the iron bars. It was dark and he was alone. Zheng He knew his crew would devote their entire lives to rescuing him. But he feared that would take too long – as he was already on the Tasman Sea and they were back in China.

That night, he managed to pick the lock. He quietly slid open the bars of the gate. Carefully creeping around the ship, he was amazed to find that half the crew was dead. He thought a battle must have been waged, but soon realized that the captain had got drunk. This was a great distraction. Zheng He wanted to take the ship for himself but realized he couldn't kill the remaining crew by himself. He needed a plan.

First, Zheng He stole some gold and silver bars from the captain's cabin. He stowed them aboard a sailboat and went to the gunpowder room. Using a piece of his shirt as a fuse, Zheng He carefully placed the fuse in a keg of gunpowder. He lit the fuse, ran for his life. He leaped overboard and swam to his sailboat. He quickly rowed away from the ship and watched it explode. It was like watching a fireworks performance. Splinters of wood were sprayed in the sky, while cannon balls randomly fired and a dead body shot up into the sky.

Out of nowhere, a hunk of metal got fired into the sky landing dangerously close to Zheng He's sailboat. He realized those were the iron bars that had held him captive in the brig. Looking at the scene, Zheng He chuckled with delight. All he wanted was to return to China.

Navigating by the stars he set sail for home. The days were long and nights were cold. He looked up at the starry sky and wondered if he would ever return home. He saw storm clouds gathering. As his sailboat moved towards the storm, it started rocking violently back and forth in the high winds and choppy seas. As Zheng He frantically secured the sails, he didn't notice an enormous wave looming over the boat. It came crashing down on the deck, sending Zheng He sprawling and knocking him out in the process.

When Zheng He opened his eyes, he found himself in a busy circular chamber. He saw people rushing by and could smell a fishy odour hanging in the air.

“Where am I?Where is my sailboat?” he asked?

One man with big curly hair, sunken black eyes and a lopsided grin walked towards him. Zheng He could smell a taint of whisky on the guy's breath.

“Namaste! This is India! You are in the presence of the greatest fisherman who has ever lived, by the way. My name is M'Baku. You have been sleeping for weeks here in the fish market. Your boat is tied to the pier just next to mine” the man said animatedly. Zheng He sat up in disbelief but was too weak. He doubled over coughing.

Weeks passed and with the help of his new friend, M'Baku, Zheng He regained his strength. It was now time for him to make a move. This time, he knew he needed a big boat and a crew. Zheng He said a grateful goodbye to M'Baku and sauntered off to the market. He sold his sailboat and all the silver and gold bars to buy supplies, weapons, and a bigger boat. He also hired John Cena and his crew of mercenary strong pro wrestling sailors to escort him back to China.

But returning home was hard, the journey was long and dangerous. Zheng He needed to cross the Triangle of Death where villainous pirates. As they did, a ship approached them from afar. Zheng He recognized the colors on the ship. The pirates were in the same league as those who had captured him. This pirate ship had been hunting Zheng He to get revenge for blowing up their comrades' ship. It was too late for escape. So they had to ready for a fight. They attacked Zheng He and his crew mercilessly.

Zheng He was fighting like a demon and John Cena was throwing pirates overboard and singing "The Time is Now," his theme song. Zheng He found this quite funny.

With the enemy crew occupied, he confronted the pirate captain. Sword and spear in hand, Zheng He tried to pierce the enemy with the spear. But the captain parried and returned fire. Zheng He couldn't believe it, he had been wounded. The captain dived overboard and Zheng He followed. They fought fiercely in the water.

After what seemed like a never ending fight, Zheng He delivered a strong blow to the captain who sunk beneath the waves. Seeing their captain defeated, the pirates threw down their weapons and surrendered. The pirates' weapons, valuables and ship were now Zheng He's.

After a long hard journey, Zheng He was finally home. The Ming Emperor and Zheng He's crew greeted him with cheers and smiles. They were even more excited when they saw all the treasure and fine silk he had brought home. The emperor held a feast in his honor. Zheng He persuaded him to invite all the community, rich and poor, warming many hearts around the villages.

Thus is the tale of the Secret Eighth Voyage of Zheng He.

A True Hero

Chinese International School, Zhou, Hanyi – 8

It was a bright Sunday morning. The air was crisp and clean. I lay on my bed and opened the book *The Ming Voyages* for the hundredth time: “China’s sea ban policy, which was first issued by the Hongwu Emperor to defend China from pirates, was counterproductive. Fortunately, Zheng He, with the support of the visionary Yongle Emperor, embarked on seven voyages across the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, traveled as far as to East Africa and covered a total distance equal to three times around the world.”

“Wow!” I stared at the page and sighed in admiration.

Suddenly, a blinding flash of light whirled into a tornado, turned bigger and stronger, and lifted me off my feet. I tried to pull myself down, but the tornado spun around and whisked me into nothingness.

I slowly opened my eyes, my whole body aching. I scanned my surroundings. Men with long hair and buns walked around on the streets, wearing beizi and strings of jingling coins on their silk belt. *Neigh!* A troop of soldiers paraded through the streets on horseback.

“Who are you? Where are you from?” a tall, old man with deep creases on his face leaned over and asked. His voice was kind but authoritative. I didn’t know what was happening. I didn’t know where I was. All I knew was that I was not where I was supposed to be.

I plucked up my courage and asked “Where am I?”

“Liu Jia Harbour” the old man replied with a brief puzzled frown.

“I–I’m Li–Ming. Uh–um, and who are you?” I asked hesitantly, still trying to figure out why the name of Liu Jia Harbour sounded so familiar. His reply pulled my eyebrows to the top of my head.

“I’m Zheng He.”

My jaw dropped. Zheng He? Liu Jia Harbour? How could it be??

“My men found you unconscious on the street. Looks like you are fine now. I gotta go.” Zheng He gave me a gentle but firm pat on the shoulder, smiled, and walked away.

Still in shock, I looked around. Red and yellow flags on the streets waved in the clear blue sky. People crowded the streets, cheering and grinning from ear to ear. In the distance was a fleet of huge wooden ships with staggered towering masts and bamboo–battened sails flapping in the early morning sea breeze. Sailors in white uniforms blew vibrant red conch shells in a ceremonial tune. A flag embroidered with the Chinese characters ‘Xuande’ rose higher than all the other ones.

Xuande. It rang a bell... *Xuande*.

Abruptly, I remembered Xuande was Yongle’s grandson. He was the one who...

I instantly knew what was happening. Zheng He was about to embark on his seventh voyage. Seventh voyage... *Zheng He got seriously ill and died on his seventh voyage.* The line from the book flashed before my eyes. I couldn’t let him go! I had to save him!

“Excuse me! Sorry! I need to get through!” I yelled as I shoved through the sea of citizens. I saw disapproving glances as I rushed through the crowd, but I kept on going. At long last, I caught a glimpse of Zheng He.

“Zheng He!” I called out in desperation. “Don’t go!”

Zheng He heard me. He stopped and strode towards me. “What is it, kid?”

I didn't know how to explain. How could Zheng He believe me? "You... can't go...! You... will die." I muttered.

Zheng He raised an eyebrow. "What are you talking about?"

I took a deep breath, gathered all my courage and said "I know it sounds bizarre, but I know what's going to happen. You will die on this voyage. You can't go!"

Zheng He seemed more amused than annoyed. "I know kids love making up stories, but this is not the time."

It was only then that a light bulb went off in my head. I remembered his name – *Ma He*, his real name before he served the emperor. "I have to persuade Zheng He not to go," I told myself. This may be my only chance of convincing him.

I screamed out the words: "Ma He. Don't go. Please, listen to me!"

Zheng He froze. He slowly turned back. "How did you know my real name? I... I've never told anyone. The emperor ordered me not to tell anyone when he gave me the new name."

I crossed my fingers, wishing Zheng He would believe me this time. "Ma He! I know this sounds absurd, but you will die on this voyage! You can't go!" I was half shouting, half pleading, hoping Zheng He would stay.

Zheng He peered at me with a curious look, chin propped on his hand, trying to make sense of everything I had just said.

After what it felt like an eternity, he slowly uttered the words "I have traveled enough to know strange things do exist. Maybe you know something I don't know. Maybe I will die on this voyage. But no matter what, I have to go. As long as I am still breathing, I have a purpose to serve — to spread the glory of China to the whole world." His chiseled face looked a bit tired and weather-worn, but his voice was firm and his eyes sparkled with hope. With that, he turned around and walked toward his ships, slowly but determinedly, each step putting another strain on his body.

I opened my eyes and found myself lying in the comfort of my own bed again, still grabbing tight to the book. The sight of Zheng He walking away stuck in my mind: An old man with a slightly hunched back, in an arduous gait, along with all the hardship that comes with years at sea. My tears came rolling down. Then I remembered a saying: *A true hero isn't measured by the size of his strength, but by the strength of his heart.*

Trespassing

Clearwater Bay School, Chen, Daisy – 9

My stomach flutters. But I have to appear strong; I have to be seen by the King of Skyland as someone that he wants to make friends with.

People bowed, lining up beside my two companions, Yu Dong, Chang Shuai, and I. Yu Dong clutches the gift of the finest China Sea pearls. As we walk to the palace I catch sight of the locals, the people are well fed and their clothing suggests that the Kingdom of Skyland is small but strong. As we approach the palace the king stared at us, his beard hiding his expression.

“Mighty King of Skyland, we come before you to extend the hand of friendship, please accept our gift as a token of friendship.” I said in a loud and clear voice, handing the gift to the King’s representative.
“Who are you, and where did you come from?” boomed the king. “I am Zheng He, from China.” I answered with a confidence I don’t feel. “My emperor has tasked me to form trade relations with other countries, relationships that will...” the king’s hand rises, silencing me. “LIAR!” the king bellowed. “You dare trespass on my land and come to my palace pretending to offer friendship? Do you think I haven’t seen the number of ships and men outside my kingdom waiting to attack? You insult my intelligence by your very actions. But you are the one who has been tricked, if I have their leader then they won’t attack and destroy us.”

The king’s soldiers come closer, circling us as they try to catch us. Yu Dong uses his martial arts skills to escape the circle and grabs the king from his throne. The king yowled for help.
“Stop, before you do anything silly.” I call as the soldiers move uncertainty, I thrust a hand in front of me
“We are not going to harm your king.” The soldiers stopped. Glaring at us with hostile eyes, they reluctantly let us go. As we leave, all the villagers glared at us, eyes red with fury.
“I’ll get you.” The king rasped outside, “I’d get you if it is the last thing I do.” His voice was getting weaker, less sure of himself.

Like a diving peregrine falcon, I sped into my ships with Yu Dong and Chang Shuai on my tail and we leave Skyland. Inside the main ship, I pushed the king into a small room and set him on a small bed. Looking around, the only objects seen were a small table, a bed and a large bench.
“We are not going to harm you king, but we have to take you back to our home, China. Our intention was always to make friends, but you left me with no choice.” I sighed and left Yu Dong to guard him.

I met my men to update them, when suddenly a cry came from outside.
“Admiral Zheng! Admiral Zheng, there is trouble outside!”
“Wait here.” I said to the other sailors. “I’ll be back.” Outside, there was a fast, but small boat.

We only took off when an arrow struck the deck out our boat. I looked up and saw another person shooting arrows from the same boat. Quickly I summoned Chang Shuai to get my bow and arrow—fighting crew “fire but do not hit the men” they were all confused but did as I asked as I pulled out the arrow from our deck to study later, the two people was gone, hiding under their deck and almost the whole deck was covered with arrows. Don’t come back out, don’t make us fight you I thought, but a person makes mistakes.

I commanded Wang Tie to pull off the arrows and this time to hit them if they fire again, I summoned the whole fighting crew and waited there, ready for any attack. Suddenly a group of boats appeared.
“Not soldiers.” I thought. Knowing there won’t be any trouble. The crew attacked, causing the people to flee with fear.
“That was easy,” I thought with a proud, triumphant smile on my face. Not knowing any other trouble would occur to us.

I looked out from the deck. Everything was fine, until I heard the noise of men pulling on oars. Gasping, I realized that the whole army had come to fight, to defend their beloved king.

“Good thing they are far away.” I thought. But as soon as I saw their cannon, I started to worry. “Ou Yang, Stay away from the cannons.” I called. “Navigate the ship well.” Finally it was time. The first cannon blasted. Luckily Ou Yang dodged just in time. The rest of the cannons blasted sending red sparks everywhere but we dodged all of them in time. This time we took advantage and got far away. I didn’t want to fire back as we would have destroyed them.

If we survived 10 bombs, we will certainly survive bullet guns, and that is what came next. This time I didn’t even bother to call any fighters. It would be useless and of course we survived all that.

I believe me and my crew is getting stronger, braver, and mightier. Whoever tries to fight us will lose. we didn’t run away because we were weak, but because if we fought it would have been unfair and we would never be able to be friends.

Further and further out to deep sea I thought, Finally it was time to prove the king, to prove Skyland, that we really only wanted friendship! I hope the king understands that we could have destroyed them but didn’t so we could one day really be friends.

The Epic Journey

Clearwater Bay School, Damodaran, Mohini – 10

26 June, 1410, 8:30 AM.

Ah. I wake up and rise peacefully in my bed at home. I can't wait for today. Our fabulous journey on one of the 7 great treasure ships starts today! I am 21 years old and an English immigrant to the majestic country of China. This is my first journey as a cook overseas. I can hardly contain my excitement for our voyage on the magnificent treasure ship. Ow. "Stop it Fluffball!" I scold the ball of hair scratching at my clothes. Oh, I forgot to mention. My Chinese name is Cheng. In English, I am simply Tom. This is my diary. I will get dressed and prepare my favourite English breakfast, scrambled egg and toast.

26 June, 1410, 10:30 AM.

I am ready to go. Breakfast was delicious. I will miss it ... and Fluffball. I walk through the streets, heading towards the port. I will miss my house, but this will be an amazing new adventure. The weather is perfect, not a single cloud in sight the sun shines bright in the sky above. Ah. The port. This is where my amazing adventure will start. I look in front of me at the enormous treasure ship we will be travelling on. I see my friend and shipmate Mike, waving at me. I run over to him. "Ready?" He asks me, his eyes shining. I nod. We both take a big breath and step on to the gangway. We walk up and step onto the ship. I suddenly realise I left my bag on the street. Silly me! I run down laughing, grab my bag, and run back up. I am shown to the cabin. This is where I will spend the next 7 months.

26 June, 1410, 1:00 PM.

The ship has set sail. The sea is calm, so I do not feel as seasick as I usually do. I hope I do not get THAT seasick. I am lying in my bed, reading a book and writing my diary. This is what I will do till 6pm when I will make dinner. That is probably what tomorrow's afternoon will be like. And the day after. And the day after. And the day after...

26 June, 1410, 8:00 PM.

Dinner tonight was a seafood fried rice. Everyone said it was delicious which made me feel warm inside. I had a look through the food supply. They have eggs! Eggs, eggs, I like eggs.

27 June, 1410, 10:00 AM.

Breakfast today was porridge. Tomorrow I will make scrambled eggs. Yum. This is a surprise breakfast. Everyone is happy and we are sailing smoothly. The day after tomorrow we will land in Vietnam. Apparently, Vietnam is a wonderful place and it is there that we will make our first trade.

28 June, 1410, 8:00 AM.

My heart is pounding in my chest. I don't exactly know why. Today is when we will make the trade in Vietnam. When we get back I will tell you all about it! Oh, I forgot. Today for breakfast will be my specialty, scrambled eggs on toast! Mmm. I used to think it was different kinds of eggs all mixed (scrambled) up.

28 June, 1410, 8:00 PM.

That was awesome! We made lots of magnificent trades including jewellery and food. Perfect! They gave us lunch and dinner. It was absolutely delicious. I got hold of some recipes. Time to sleep!

29 June, 1410, 1:00 AM.

There is a storm outside. I need to go up and help on deck. We did not expect this. There are waves as tall as the mast. It is havoc. I will update later.

29 June, 1410, 5:00 AM.

No! We are sinking. I am packing my bag with some flasks of water, tins of food, and some belongings. Write later!

29 June, 1410, 10:00 AM.

I am currently sitting on a table, floating on the ocean, writing this. Ok, wow. I sound super calm. The reality: ahhhh. My plan worked. Ish. The storm is over and I am sitting here on this floating table, hoping for the best. I must ration my food and water. I DON'T WANNA DIE. I saved 38 tins of food (yuck) and 30 flasks full of water (not much.). I did not expect this. I am just going where the current takes me. Which is not very fast.

29 June, 1410, 5:00 PM.

A SHIP, A SHIP, I SEE A SHIP!!!!!!!!!!!! I am waving my hands and yelling because in front of me I see a ship. This ship is tiny compared to my treasure ship but this could save me (or not.). Luckily, someone notices. It heads in my direction. When it is close to me, I will shove everything in my bag and climb up the rope ladder they are holding down. Ok, time! Speak to you later.

29 June, 1410, 8:00 AM.

I woke up from a nap and found out some information. Turns out this is also a trading ship but from Vietnam. Their next stop just happens to be Nan Jing port, China which is where we left. Time to go home!

30 June, 1410, 8:00 AM.

My first day on this ship. I met the cook (I think I am a bit better than him.) I have all day on this ship. OOOOOH. I see another ship! This one is getting closer, and closer, and closer. Now they are connecting to our boat. Oh. They look angry. OH. They are angry pirates. OH. I am surrounded. Think. What can I do. Think. What can I do. Think. What can I do. Think. What can I do? Oh, I know! I can just throw myself off board and swim to safety! Yes. 3, 2, 1 JUMP!

The Wave Goodbye

Clearwater Bay School, Mao, Hitomi – 10

Grinning with delight, I smiled as I bowed to King Lozi. The last few days have been indescribably wonderful. King Lozi has personally shown me around his kingdom. The animals, the people, the culture, and even the ground we stand on. It is a color that no one could have ever imagined. Oh, the animals, the giraffes, the elephants, the lions! All of these fabulous animals are beyond a child's wildest dreams!

Tonight is my last evening here, and if my mission wasn't so important, I would stay here forever! But I really look forward to the feast King Lozi is holding tonight as a celebration.

"Welcome, to the farewell party of Zheng He and his team. We are honored to have them here, and as a farewell gift, we will give 3 giraffes to him and his team to remember us by. We will also need 3 people to take care of the giraffes. Who will be the one I choose? Yes, Kahfijazi, Staekkiiged and... Verjhcemeield. Now Savana..."

I turn my head, and instantly, there's this woman from heaven. Her soft, brown skin, kind chestnut eyes, I know that I simply cannot leave without her. At that very moment, she locked eyes with me, and starts blushing furiously. She then turns her head around in embarrassment just as an entertainment begins. King Lozi stands up to find a better place to sit, as I rush to the angel.

"Dearest woman, what is your name?" I ask, unsure what her answer would be. She giggles and says "Hello, Zheng He, I am Savana, the king's daughter,"

Breathtaking, I say, "Why don't we go somewhere to go for a walk?" She nods, uncertain. I pull her to her feet and kisses her hand. She leads me to a grassy field.

There, my heart quickens as I confess to her, "Beautiful Savana, the moment I set my eyes on you, I'm instantly in love. I don't know if I'll ever be able to leave you here and sail back to China," I could feel her steady breathing on my skin as she says in the most beautiful sound,

"I know, Zheng He, I'm in love with you too, but there's a problem,"

"What?" unable to believe what she just said.

"Yes, there is. My father says that I have to marry a man that is from my native country, which is here. Africa. Since you are Chinese, I cannot marry you," My heart stops. The woman that I fell in love with, I'm not allowed to marry!? A flame burst in my chest, extinguished by a single tear.

"Can't we persuade your father?" I asked her desperately, but she only shakes her head.

"He decided already, and there's nothing we can do about it,"

"No," I gasp, shutting my eyes and not believing it.

"Yes," She whimpers "I'm so sorry Zheng He," Then, I got the most brilliant idea, as a lightbulb lit up in my head.

"Savana, do you want to run away with me on the boat to China, there's loads of opportunities there you'll love it there!"

"Zheng he, that is an idea, but I'm worried about my father. He will be very unhappy if I run away without telling him, he'll think I don't like him or the country,"

"Oh, but Savana, this is our only chance to be together!" I try to convince her. "It's our only chance! I just can't imagine a future without you, Savana,"

"I really can't imagine a future without you too, Zheng," She pauses, unsure of what to do. We don't talk for a bit, and I'm afraid that I had just lost the woman I loved. Until...

"Yes Zheng, I'm going to run away with you, but I'm have to write a letter to my father. It just worries me what will happen if I suddenly disappear, and no one knows what happens,"

"Savana,... Savana..." What a brave woman, letting down her kingdom, her father, her people for me. I still feel a bit guilty, but it was worth it.

The next day, King Lozi and his people stood by the shore to wave us goodbye. I saw Savana's red scarf in the middle of the crowd. After King Lozi was sitting down on his chair, watching the farewell dance just like everyone else was, Savana pushed her way through and I let a rope down the side of the ship, as she climbed on the deck. There, I took her to the lower deck and then climbed back up. There, the show had just ended and everyone was waving us goodbye. After I let the praise soak into my body, I held up my hand for silence. "Dear people of Africa, you have been a wonderful host and a welcoming country, I would be honored to come back and visit you all again, farewell friends!" With that, we started our long journey back to China, with a hidden passenger under our decks...

Not long after sailing, a colossal wave roared ahead of us, ready to destroy everything in its path..... The people on the decks scream in horror as they face the upcoming danger, with nothing to prevent it..

The One Desire

Clearwater Bay School, Pratt, Maggie – 11

The brightest star in the cosmos was extinguished, but like a phoenix from the ashes it rises to vanquish all hatred. A wave of havoc rose about the city of Nanjing as the fleet set sail with Zheng He leading aboard the 400-foot Baochuan. With its seven sails and a hull four times the size of Christopher Columbus' Santa Maria, the Baochuan is the mightiest ship afloat. Zheng and his 62 vessels are heading for the South China Sea en route to the Indian Ocean and all the riches of the ancient trading ports.

Light, dark, thin, thick – all are opposites, yet all have one thing in common: a difference. I open my eyes not fully but just enough to see what's happening across the room. A shadow falls across my face and I feel a pair of eyes fixed on me. I try to sit up, but the pain cuts through me like a dagger in my side. Shackles weigh me down, hundreds of questions fill my mind. I remember the last time I was truly happy: at home with my darling daughter, Ayodele.

A cacophony hums through my ears as the harsh siren of morning chatter fills the air. The whip hand enters and unshackles my limbs. I shoot out of bed and get changed instantly. My roommate's belongings are gone, which can only mean one thing. I rush from the room, surrounded by men heading for the dining room. Crushed by the endless queue of people lining up for a plate I hear the sound of a bullet ripple as it cuts through the air.

Following the crowd, I hurry to the deck taking in the huge ship with its sails aflutter like beautiful wings. It is the most wonderful site I have ever seen. Just then I hear my name being called, it sounds strange and unfamiliar. A tall man towers over me, his piercing blue eyes cut into my very soul. Was it he who called my name? I move towards him and suddenly I am overcome by a sickening realisation. This journey could be my last.

The harvest moon is high in the night sky. It is a wondrous sight and momentarily makes me forget my many troubles, but with adventure looming there is no time to ponder its beauty.

For the first time, I take the staircase to the top floor. I run my hand against the wall as I read the room numbers as I walk along. Finally, I find the room and knock apprehensively. Preparing for the worst, I begin to tremble ...

She opens the door and orders me in. I follow her to the dining table. She sits and gestures to a chair opposite her.

"Lieutenant?" she doesn't reply, but instead shoots me a frosty glare.

"I do not believe I need a servant, but as you are here I will take advantage. What is your name?"

"Akin, Ma'am."

"Alright, return here at 400 hours precisely. And I expect breakfast to be ready. Do not be late. Now get out of my sight."

I bow deeply as I close the door behind me, dart down the hallway and scale the stairwell.

A hunched figure enters the bowels of the ship, studiously avoiding eye contact as he reapplies the manacles to the wrists and ankles of every man.

When he reaches me, he barks: "I shall return at 3 bells to take you to the galley."

I try to sleep, but it's no use as I lay upon what feels like a bed of nails.

Just as I finally do drift off to sleep I am shaken awake by a heavy boot and a harsh whip across my shoulders. Unshackled, I am dragged to my feet and led towards the galley. The room is small but bustling with servants and maids. I choose a counter in the corner of the room and begin to prepare breakfast. In 20 minutes I had made a bowl of congee and chao siu. I finished and began my ascent to the top floor.

The tray is heavy but when I finally manage to knock it swings open and the Lieutenant grabs it off of me, places it on the table, hands me back the tray and orders me to leave. I make my way to the main deck.

Bang!
The ship rocks violently back and forth.
Pow!
We all hit the deck.
Crash!
Shrill screams fill the air.
It's complete chaos.
Arrows rain down.

Captain Zheng stands in the middle of all the terror, out of instinct I dive, the tray before my face. I see the arrow pierce my plate and turn to Zheng He. It would have hit him in the neck.

Then just as quickly as it started, the battle is over. Our cannons score a direct hit on the Cheung Chau pirates' and their junk is sinking fast.

Captain turns to me.
"You've done good las, I'm assigning you to my personal cabin. Thank you for your bravery."

The Treasure Cave

Clearwater Bay School, Shi, Angela – 10

I press my ears against the cold stone floor, frantically hoping for any sign that indicates where Yi Long is. But I heard nothing, nothing except for the quick beating of my heart. Suddenly a little rat scuttled out from the darkness. Jumping out of my skin, I nearly fell over all the islanders who had come to wish me luck.

Cautiously, holding the fire torch in one hand, I inch a few centimetres forward before taking a deep breath and enter the cave. Slowly I watch the sunlight being swallowed by the darkness like a mouth snapping shut. My knees quivered and each step I take is heavier than the last. The darkness seems to be alive, swivelling around me, and jeering when I find myself in the same cavern. Several times I found myself in low rooms where it's not possible to stand straight. The shadows in the corners look like they want to jump out, I hear rustling sounds, but when I shine my light in that direction there is nothing.

A narrow tunnel appears. I paused, breathing heavily, thinking of Yi Long and the danger he might be in. At that moment, a bitter wind whipped through the tunnel blowing out the fire and plunging me into darkness and fear. I really didn't want to go on now. It was a dark snake-like tunnel, and who knows what danger there might be in it. I thought back to this morning where I had been chatting to Li Lin Fei, on Admiral Zheng's ship, putting up the double masts and the flag of China. It seemed like an aeon ago. I had only volunteered for this daring adventure in desperation to gain Admiral Zheng's praise. Oh why did a sentence of praise need to be so hard earned?

Gradually the tunnel eased into an open room and I breathed again. Since I no longer had a light I kept close to the walls, groping and forcing my legs to go on. Suddenly I tripped over something and scraped my legs onto the surface of a shard of rock. Blood gushed out and pain squeezed my heart into such a tight ball I didn't pay any attention to what I had tripped over until it shuffled and heaved itself up.

"Why is Admiral Zheng not waking us up," He murmured to himself

"Yi Long," I gasped, raising up my head and looking at the faint outline of my friend groggily rubbing his eyes. "Yi Long. Can you hear me?"

"Wei," he whispered, his voice barely audible "Where is Admiral Zheng."

"Yi Long," I limped over to him and shook him "We're in the treasure caves, remember, he asked us to explore the caves."

Suddenly, Yi Long jerked awake and gave a scream of fury that echoed around the room "Traitor," he hissed tugging my arm away "Traitor, Thief, Enemy. I know you stole the treasure."

A horrible thought jolted into my mind. What if Yi Long had gone mad in the caves?

"No Yi Long," I whispered "There is no traitor."

Yi Long looked at me with defiant eyes. "No traitor but treasure, treasure from the country. That is why we were asked to explore the caves. Admiral Zheng wanted us to find the sea pearls from Ning Duo Li palace."

I didn't want to believe Yi Long but it did make sense. Yi Long and Admiral Zheng had been talking privately for months now, not even letting Xiang Jing Yuen, the navigator into their private talks. Had they been they been talking about the hidden treasure? And then there had been the robbery of the sea pearls from Ning Duo Li palace, few days before the voyage had started. Had this voyage been to find these pearls?

"Stand up Wei." Yi Long stood and almost tripped over the same rock where I had hurt myself. "We will show Xiang Jing Yuen that he can steal all the treasure he wants. We will find them and rid the country of the traitor."

"Erm Yi, that's a very ambitious plan and if you might notice we're in a black cave with no light and no idea where the treasure is. And how did you know that the treasure is even in the caves?" I poured out my doubts in one breath.

Yi Long snorted. "I have been watching Xiang Jing Yuen 24/7. Have you yet realized that I am a very bad sailor? I never learned the art of sailing, I was meant for military and I have been educated in that." He puffed out his chest and boasted "I am the leader of the Emperor Yongle's army" before returning to the subject. "Xiang Jing Yuen has been sneaking around the island for days, carrying the box of ornate brass. Did that idiot think nobody would see him?"

Suddenly he stopped, besides the entrance to another cave. He ran his hand across the wall. Slowly his hand traced the Chinese word Bao: Treasure. "Yes," he whispered, his voice sounding like a little child, growing more and more excited. "This is the cave"

I entered, slowly aware that there was nothing in the the room. "Are you sure this is the right room," I asked cautiously stepping into the room. It wasn't a low room just a normal room. Like all the others it was so dark it was like looking through a blind man's eye.

Suddenly I tripped again. Yi long caught hold of me, preventing me from hurting myself again. When I regained my balance, Yi long bent down and slowly opened the box. The glistening pearls inside made me gasp in surprise. Xiang Jing Yuen really had stolen the treasure!

Yi Long slowly closed the lid and we stepped outside. But just then, we heard a faint growling sound. Something not human was angry ...

The Epic Voyage

Clearwater Bay School, Wan, Adrian – 9

In the third lunar month of year 1405, in the palace of Nanjing, the third Ming Emperor Yongle, gave an order that Zheng He would be the leader of a Chinese voyage to explore the outside world! To venture to the unknown areas, the Yongle emperor gave the order of 252 ships (62 treasure ships and 190 smaller junks) to be constructed. The treasure ships carried troops of soldiers and cannons just in case if they were attacked by armies or pirates. Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens* mentioned that Christopher Columbus's ships would be just lifeboats compared to Zheng He's Flagship.

Before Zheng He and his crew set off, they gave sacrifices and prayed to one their gods Tianfei, the guardian of sailors at sea, to grant them safety for the dangers at sea. The emperor gave them gifts to exchange with foreign countries. They first departed through the Wuhem passage. The treasure fleet first sailed to many different countries including Ceylon. When they landed into Ceylon, they were met by a hostile attitude with Alagakkonara, who was the ruler of Ceylon that time. On the way back home, the Chinese had to confront the Guangdong pirate Chen Zuyi. The pirates were confronted by a naval battle between each other. In the end, the winners were the Chinese navy. When Zheng He returned to Nanjing he was greeted as a hero. The emperor met lots of ambassadors from different countries that Zheng He had brought from.

On the second voyage, Zheng He and his fleet traveled to Champa; Siam; Java; Malacca; Semudera, Aru, and Lambri on Sumatra; *Jiayile, Abobadan, Ganbali*, Quilon, Cochin, and Calicut in India.

The imperial order for the third voyage was issued on the first month of the seventh year of the Yongle reign. It was addressed to Zheng He, Wang Jinghong, and Hou Xian. The fleet made stops at Ceylon, Quilon. Wang Jinghong and Hou Xian made short stops at Siam, Malacca, Semudera, and Ceylon. Arriving in Ceylon in 1410, the treasure fleet landed at Galle. On arrival at Ceylon, King Alagakkonara cut off Zheng He and his troops from the treasure fleet. In response, Zheng He and his troops invaded Kotte, conquering its capital. They took captive Alagakkonara, his family, and principal officials. The Sinhalese army of 50,000 hastily returned and surrounded the capital, but they were repeatedly defeated in battle against the invading Chinese troops. Admiral Zheng He returned to Nanjing on 6 July 1411. There, he presented the Sinhalese captives to the Yongle Emperor. Eventually, the emperor decided to free and return them to their country. He also requested someone to serve as the new king. However, the previous dynasty had already re-established themselves in Kotte by the time the Chinese embassy arrived. From then on, the treasure fleet would experience no hostilities during visits to Ceylon on subsequent treasure voyages.

Before Zheng He set off, he recruited some new people for his fleet. One of them was a Muslim scribe who was called Ma Huan. On the fourth voyage, the fleet sailed to many different countries including Java and Hormuz. In 1415, the fleet made a stop at Sumatra during the journey home from Hormuz. While the Chinese were there, they realised that the ruler Sekandar had usurped the Semudera throne from Zain al-'Abidin, but the Chinese had formally recognized the latter as the King of Semudera. Admiral Zheng He had orders to launch a punitive attack against the usurper and restore Zain al-'Abidin as the rightful king. In retaliation, Sekandar led his forces to attack the Ming forces and was defeated. He reportedly attacked with "tens of thousands" of soldiers. The Ming forces pursued Sekandar's forces to Lambri where they caught Sekandar, his wife, and his child.

On the fifth voyage, Zheng He and his fleet traveled to these places: Champa, Pahang, Java, Palembang, Malacca, Semudera, Lambri, Ceylon, Cochin, Calicut, *Shaliwanni, LiuShan* (Maladive and Laccadive Islands), Hormuz, *Lasa*, Aden, Mogadishu, Brava, *Zhubu*, and Malindi. The accompanied ambassadors arrived at the Ming court in the eighth lunar month of 1419. Their gifts included lions, leopards, dromedary camels, ostriches, zebras, rhinoceroses, antelopes, giraffes, and other exotic animals, causing a great sensation among those at the Ming court.

On the Sixth Voyage, Zheng He and his fleet was divided into separate squadrons at Ceylon, they separated for *Jiayile*, Cochin, *Ganbali*, or Calicut in southern India. The squadrons travelled from there to their respective destinations at *Liushan*, Hormuz at the Persian Gulf, the three Arabian states of Djofar, *Lasa*, and Aden, and the two African states of Mogadishu and Brava. On the return home, several squadrons regrouped at Calicut and all the squadrons regrouped further at Semudera. Siam was likely visited during the return journey. The fleet returned on 3 September 1422.

On the Seventh voyage, Zheng He split his fleet into different squadrons. One squadron went to Arabia and Mecca. Ma Huan turned out to be with the squadron that sailed to Mecca. In Mecca, Ma Huan got to do the Hajji. The squadron traded with the Sharif of Mecca and the Sharif also sent envoys to Ming China. Ma Huan wrote a chapter in a book that he was writing about the voyages about his experience in Mecca. The squadrons got together for the homeward bound. Sadly, Zheng He died on the journey back to China at the age of 62. When the treasure fleet came back to Ming China, the civil ministers of the Ming Court said that the voyages were a waste of the emperor's money, because Japanese pirates were raiding China and the money should be spent on land defences. And the ships should be left to rot and all the books and charts and maps of the ocean and places that Zheng He had crossed and carefully made by the scribe Ma Huan were decided to be burned. Thankfully, some stone tablets still contain the stories of Zheng He's voyages.

The Passage

Clearwater Bay School, Wen, Amy – 10

Lian skipped through her thoughts while she shouldered her way through the extremely crowded market, why couldn't girls learn Kung Fu? Why can't she learn archery like her brothers Qing and Long? "Girls are too weak to do things like that!" Qing will say, "Kung Fu and archery is for boys!" Long would taunt her and mama will say "Girls shall NEVER do things like that!" Running away from the crowd, Lian continued running. All of a sudden, a crate tripped her. She looked up and the majestic ships lay sitting in the bay. This was Su-Zhou Bay. A thought dashed through her mind. She stepped forwards, slowly onto one of the ships. Suddenly, a woman yelled behind Lian, "Step back Lian! Don't you dare even step on that ship!" The woman lunged for Lian. Lian dodged and leapt onto the boat "Bye mama!" Lian shouted triumphantly.

"Captain Zheng, we checked, all the goods are packed." A voice of a young sailor came from the deck. "Great job! Wang. It was right to choose you to come." Lian inhaled, exhaled, and slowly walked towards the deck, Zheng He was surprised that a 15 year old girl appeared onto his ship, "What is your name?" He kindly asked the little girl "My name is Lian, the only daughter of the famous Luo family!" Her proud introduction made Zheng He giggled and looked at this girl with her hands on her hips, "She is special." A voice deep inside him spoke.

Lian stared at the sun, sinking into the sea painted by the sky in the colours of pink, orange and red. She imagined herself as a fish, melting into the beat of the glittering waves, she turned her head and asked the Captain "Where are we going?"

"We are trading our amazing goods to foreigners, of course!" Zheng exclaimed, it was his turn to be proud, "And this ship is the best in the world!" He added with his head up. Lian wondered again, what was mama, Qing and Long doing? Admiring her because she could go on the ships of Zheng He? Her heart whispered to her "You want to go home, you miss home." Right, maybe she actually does, her stomach growling after dinner, sleeping on the hard deck, but she could not go back, or else she could never go out in her life again. The chill wind blew and blew, one harder than the other, little by little darkness has taken over the sky.

Lian opened her eyes, where was she? In the middle of the ocean? Where was land? She lay on her back and closed her eyes.

"We are here!" Zheng's familiar voice echoed through the majestic ships. When Lian opened her eyes, some people wearing some cloaks waited at their harbour, captain Zheng calmly walked down and showed them a piece of silk, and offer them to stroke it, they looked so surprised, and they handed a glowing ball to Zheng and whispered in his ear secretly, Zheng winked back and went back on the ship for an announcement, "We are entering their trading market and we are staying here for a night, everybody pack your things and get down!" Every sailor jumped down the ship except for Lian, she did not bring anything, she just jumped on the boat! Zheng looked at her and gave a sac, he winked at her. Lian took the sac and carried it on her back and walked off the ship with the other sailors. The market was filled with goods like pearls, coral, weaved fabric and some special things from all over the world, Lian eyes feasted on the goods while Zheng is trading goods in one of the stands. She wondered what her brothers were doing, reading? Eating? Sleeping on their soft beds with their silk blankets? She snarled in the cold wind, because snarling is better than moaning. They settled in a little hut, she shared it with five other sailors, the floor was covered in brown hay, it was too hard to get to sleep, Lian closed her eyes and forced herself to sleep.

Lian felt a push on her back, when she opened her tired eyes and looked behind her, Zheng stood there and said to her, "Don't be the last one again!" Hearing that, Lian jumped up realizing that all the other sailors were gone, she packed everything and ran for the ship, after all the sailors were on the ship, the giant ships sailed through the ocean, battling the waves. When one sailor shouted "Other ships!" Lian had a feeling that they weren't friendly ships, they had black flags and there was a dozen of them, something shot through the air straight to the ships. "Bang!" A big explosion happened two meters away from the ship, another one was fired, it flew through the sky and tore up the quiet night sky, "Fire!" Captain Zheng ordered, "Everybody

dodge!" All the sailors obeyed, all but Lian, she held on tight to her bow and arrow, she lifted the bow, aimed and let go of the string, the arrow launched, a wail, another arrow, another wail, all the sailors stood up and fired a cannonball. Cannonballs and arrows flew across the dark blue sea. "Bang!" A cannonball fired through, a little distance away from the ship and shattered by Zheng's cannons, some of the broken parts flew at Lian, in seconds, blood was leaking down her face, everything blurred up

When she woke up in her room, there sat Papa "You woke up, Lian!" He exclaimed, everything in Lian's head messed up: "Was I dead?" "Were all the things just a dream?" A maid came in, "There's a visitor Mr.Luo!" Before she finished, Zheng stepped into the room, smiling at Lian.

The Great Adventure

Clearwater Bay School, Williams, Florence – 10

Monday October 12th 1405

“Miyuki”

Ma Ma calls to me, trying to get me to go to her. We live in the gorgeous west province of China called Tibet. My father is a tradesman, he trades spices and silk to travelers from the west. Lately work has been poor for Ba Ba, we have been low on supplies for months now. Our only way we can survive and save ourselves is for me to work as a maid to Lady Chu on the ming voyage to Africa. I am to leave tomorrow morning to her house in Portola, I will miss my home and family but Ba Ba and Ma Ma have promised that I will be gone for no more than three years, I don't believe them of course. I know that the fleet is fast but not as quick as to get to East Africa and return in three years. I believe I will raise enough money for us to survive after my adventure but only time will tell.

Tuesday October 13th 1405

I'm beginning to have second thoughts about this, how could I raise enough money to support three people and their needs? Boom! The sound of the front door being slammed echoes through the house followed by anxious footsteps.

“Miyuki” screams Ba Ba, he's arrived early from work .

“Yes Ba Ba what is it”

“Miyuki it's time for you to go to Lady Chu's house, before you go say goodbye to Ma Ma”

“Yes Ba Ba”

Ba Ba is silent as we descend the stairs, it worries me, fortunately Ma Ma is at the bottom of the staircase ready to wish me my goodbyes. She turns to me her eyes flowing with water, I kiss her to see her bottom lip trembling, so I tell her I will be okay. She kisses me again and tells me she loves me. Then I turn to Ba Ba to kiss him, I say my painful goodbyes leaving, unknowing what awaits my future.

The next thing I know the door is closed and I'm driving off towards an uncertain destiny, it is an extremely overwhelming feeling to have. As I arrived at Lady Chu's house I was overcome with excitement and began to feel nauseous. A maid walked out of the house.

“You are late!” The maid says.

“I am only late by five minutes!” I reply.

The maid gives me a stern look and I quickly rethink what I had just said.

When in the car, Lady Chu turns to me her face was warmer than I had thought, she smiled at me briefly.

“Miss Miyuki I am Zheng Chu but to you I am Sir Chu, you will be working for Lady Chu as her maid for the voyage to Africa understand?”

I nod to him.

We arrived on the boat to be greeted by a policeman and an elephantine crowd, I was not expecting this.

The ship is covered in a deep red and sails that fluttered like beautiful wings. I have no words.

“It's amazing isn't it? It's the fastest boat ever made in history.”

Lady Chu is talking to me and I turn her way' stumbling a little.

“Yes it is truly magical.” I say.

When we are in our room I go to my bed to unpack my things, however being so tired I close my eyes and fall into a deep slumber.

Friday October 14th 1405

I wake up to another maid staring at me.

“Why aren't you awake, The ship won't clean itself you know!” She yells at me.

“I have never gotten up at 5 before”

“Well get used to it young lady!”

She thrust some clothes at me, then told me to be on deck in 5 minutes or I would be in a lot of trouble!

The sound of the sailors, and maids doing their business echoed through the thin walls of the boat.

Reminding me of my much beloved family. When I was finally on deck the maid from earlier was waiting

for me.

“Your late!”

She said arms crossed, staring at me.

“Sorry, It took awhile to find the way up here.”

“I will let you go this time but next time you won't be getting away so easily, go over there and scrub the deck with Ji Young.”

Out of the blue someone came up from the lower deck screaming about some of the gold being stolen! I back away, towards the staircase afraid to be suspected of taking the precious cargo,so scared I start running as fast as I can to the room. Oof!, I bump into Mr Chu!

“Hello Mr Chu honour to see you,sorry for banging into you.”

I stutter.

“It is nice to see you and it's quite alright.”

replies Mr Chu.

“Have you heard about the gold being stolen?”

I ask

“Yes it's outrageous some criminal would do such a thing”

He explained with enthusiasm

“Indeed”

I reply. The door of the room opens and out comes Mrs Chu.

“Hello Mrs Chu it's an honour to see you ”

I say curtsyng.

“Yes good to see you”

She says, obviously worried about something.

“Miyuki there is something we need to tell you.”

There is a look of great worry and sadness on her face as she speaks.

“Anything”

I say with more worry on my face then there is stars in the sky.

“This is going to be hard for you to take in but we need to tell you, you may not make the ship back to China.”

My heart sinks, I could not be going back to my family, I may be stranded in an unknown, sinister place,with no one speaking my language.How can I persuade them to bring me back? How could I change their mind?Then a crazy idea comes into my head, I will find the missing gold, that should persuade them to let me return home to my beloved family.

The Surprise Proposal

Clearwater Bay School, Studholme – Wilson, Minnie – 10

Mika's pale white hands trembled from the gust of icy wind that blew swiftly through her fingers. Icicles started to form under her cold, sensitive nose. Her tears slowly started to form into ice, then quickly falling and shattering into a million shards.

Suddenly a large wooden boat appeared in the distance and seemed to be floating towards her "This is my way out", Mika thought. Then she shouted "Excuse me I'm lost, can you help me navigate my way home?" A small boy around the age of 12 poked his head out, he glanced at her, then at her surroundings and then back at Mika. "Where's your companions?" he asked. She shrugged and took a step forward to take a proper look at the child. He turned and walked away, then a lady wearing a captain's hat emerged from below deck; the Captain rolled her eyes and announced "Tell me how to get China and we'll find you a way out of this horribly cold place". Mika thought for a moment then warily said "OK, but remember you have to keep your end of the deal". The Captain ferociously nodded, smiled and had a small laugh. She scrambled onto the deck, the pirates saluted her and said their names. Mika learnt their names were Ella, George, Hung, Meng, Hannah and Sophie and thought she would be a sailor now, so the new addition to the team would be Mika.

The Captain walked over to her and said "Greetings I'm Mary, Mary Shallow".

The boat sailed across the perilous Caribbean seas, making many stops along the way trading their finest silks for shining gems. Some tribes were aggressive, some welcoming and passive; we passed many countries and next was a capitalist country, my homeland America "Why are we trading lots of valuables?" Mika asked "To transport, trade and share different things also so we can get things that we don't have" Mary replied. They made their last stop before reaching China, but the traders were heavily armed, they had weapons more dangerous than lions, hyenas and all those dangerous animals combined in one, it was called a 'gun'. Mika walked in on the trade, she sensed it was going brutally wrong, you could hear gunshots from miles away, the weapons blocked out all the screams and cries of terror of the sweet, innocent citizens. Mary realized that she didn't tell America they were coming to trade not war, the guns just came out of the blue nobody was expecting it, America thought they were intruders. The crew escaped before anyone could get even more hurt, sighs of relief came from almost everyone on board. Next stop China.

It has been four months since they barely escaped America. The crew was starving and couldn't see anything resembling China, except the terracotta warrior sitting on the small round table. All hope was lost but Mary wouldn't give up no matter how much the crew complains that they have been on the sea for months she just blocked all the sound out of her mind. Days passed Mary kept on dreaming but was starting to lose hope, "Land!" Hung screamed, all of the crew woke, startled by all the screaming and ran to the edge of the boat. The captain jumped out of the boat and Mika steered the ship to the docks. The crew stayed aboard while Mika and Mary went to the powerful Emperor's beautiful palace; every step they took the more nervous they became. Emperor 'Khang Lee' would be tough sale, there were rumors that you would be lucky just to make a simple trade with him but Mary wanted to trade for sparkling pieces of gold for a life size terracotta warrior.

Approaching the emperors place the guards stopped Mika and Mary at the entrance

"names and why are you here?" The guard asked

"Mary Shallow and she is Mika- ..."

"Mika Hardenna"

"We are here to make a trade with the emperor," Mary continued The guard moved out the way and they entered the emperors palace. The sight was breathtaking, jewels and art covered the silver walls, Morning light shone through the glass roof, Mary and Mika couldn't take their eyes off the fragile furniture and the giant terracotta warriors. The emperor approached Mary "Ni Hao" The emperor said " sorry I meant hello long time no see Mary"

Mika giggled like a 8 year old girl even though she was 17 then she stopped because everyone in the room was looking at her. " Another trade? You know I Personally like the gold you brung last time" The Emperor laughed

"Yes, this time I need a life size terracotta warrior" Mary Replied "And I'm trading four of my shiniest pieces of gold"

“As you wish” He replied, Mika could see they were flirting with each other it was quite obvious she thought they had a ‘thing’.

“Mika I have something to tell you.. While you were thinking umm.... Khang he..... he..... Proposed to me” Mary told Mika, The shock made it so confusing it was just such a short time ago when they made a trade, now this it was all too much to take in. Mika had to be the new Captain she felt so ... responsible she needed to make trades learn new things and make mistakes along the way to be a Captain, She never thought this would happen but yet the day had come she knew Mary would have to lay back and relax one day and that day was today.

Perseverance is not Betrayal

Clearwater Bay School, Yan, Maya – 10

The young boat was trapped. Colossal waves started to crash his sides. From the deck, Zheng He saw waves covering every single inch of land. This was his 4th voyage, which may be his last. Trudging towards his wooden cabin, the sounds of mutiny started to spread into his ears, while his heart beat faster and faster.

He needed a plan. A plan that could give this mission another chance. He pulled open the laced curtain, and watched the room as it lit up. Climbing up the desk, he noticed the sailors crowded demanding: "MONEY!" At that moment, he devised a plan. Not knowing if it would work, he pushed the door open, and announced: "The first member of my ship who sees land will be awarded with half of the gold I find!" With determination everyone left the crowd and took turns using the lookout. At least he has a chance to bring gold back to China.

"Land!" A young boy shouted as he made his way down the ladder. Finally there was land. Finally there was food. Finally he could keep his word. As the ship slowly reached the shore, Zheng He ordered his men to prepare the boats and lower the anchor. Once everything was set, they climbed down into the boats and sailed towards the land. This place was rather unusual. He watched as the trees swayed from side to side and the flowers dancing in the wind. The tall mountains covered the sunlight, making everything darker than before. The steep trails of the mountain were covered in rocks, which made it ever so hard to climb. The consequences of attempting could possibly lead to death. He had a feeling there was something up there, hidden deeply. He ordered his men to climb it. The more they climbed, the scarier it became. By the time they were nearly there, he no longer regretted his choice.

Trembling, his arm reached up as he pulled himself towards victory. With the last of his strength, he stood up, looking down at the everlasting hills of the new kingdom. Before he could celebrate his victory, a shaking voice hit him, knowing it was only him who made it. The sky started to darken even more as water poured down from the sky, wind wrapped around them trapping them together on the top of the mountain. Just then, from the top of the mountain, you could see a black arrow spinning crazily out of control. Just as they estimated, they saw a tornado. It spun as fast as it could. It started to approach the mountain they were standing on.

A few short minutes ago, he was full of excitement. Now he was frightened and extremely scared. Zheng he looked into the distance as the wind spun closer and closer." Help!" a voice called towards him. Knowing it was one of his men, he let the voice go back with no answer. "Oh please help." whined a young girl as she forced her hand up, hoping someone would pull her. Zheng he signed. He grabbed her hand and anxiously pulled her up. Together, they collapsed on the mountain edge unable to stand.

Curiously, Zheng he asked: "what is your name?", as she looked towards he the sky,

"I'm Ruby and I came here for a new life." Ruby addressed "Life was really hard from where I came, No one had a proper home and we all ate food and water from the wild," as she stood up pointing towards the sky.

"One summer, there was a drought, millions died," Ruby looked down at her feet "Including my mother. I set off in a boat to find a home." Zheng He glared into the girl's blue eyes, and started the story of his life. "When I was small, my dream was to become a sailor. But no matter how hard I worked, it seemed to fade away. At that moment, the King needed more soldiers so I stepped up to join. I remembered the time I left my home and betrayed everything I had, also keeping words of importance locked in my head."

"What are they?" Ruby mumbled, noticing that the sailors crowded around to hear.

"Have perseverance, that's all we have left." said Zheng he, as he turned around, noticing everyone crowding around.

“What about your parents?” Ruby said pushing the soldiers out of her way.

“They’re dead. I killed them.” Zheng he mumbled, “For my glory. My power. Forgetting them.” All he knew now was to Never give up.

At that moment, the sky was as dark as a photo taken from a pitch black cave. Looking up, it seemed as if he was wrapped by wind. “Come, I know a way out!” Ruby announced as she pushed over rock and jumped the hole eyeing everyone to follow her. Although their knees shook from side to side, they knew she had no choice. One by one they climbed into the hole awaiting for the next step. After they got out they wandered into a deep dark and misty forest. They all felt as if there were thousands of eyes watching them in the dark, which made them all feel nervous. There wasn’t another path. At that moment, all the mist cleared. And there it was, a beautiful small village in front of their eyes! The song of laughter spread, as the frowns on their faces slowly disappeared. The trees swayed from side to side, dancing along with the wind. Something made Zheng freeze. It was gold. A lot of gold. The thing he needed to bring back. With all this perseverance stuck in his head, a plan formed. He didn’t care. He was going to kill Ruby.

He tiptoed into Ruby’s room, seeing a dead body lying there still. Picking up a letter wrote for him, and read: Perseverance is important. Glory too. But there is always a way around betrayal.

Zheng He and His Amazing Voyages

Creative Primary School, Cheng, Elizabeth – 10

Zheng He was one of the most successful and brave explorers in China's Ming Dynasty. He led the largest fleet and crew in the ancient world history, traveled on the enormous seas for 28 years, and made seven amazing voyages.

When Zheng He was young, he lost his grandfather during a dangerous voyage. Unfortunately, his dream of being a brave explorer and a fighter came to a halt with nobody teaching and supporting him. But Zheng He didn't give up and he learned by himself all the skills. His determination was appreciated by the emperor and the captain of a large fleet that would have great voyages abroad. The emperor decided to appoint Zheng He to command the voyages to the west, as he wanted to build good relationships with other countries and get richer by trading expensive goods with them. The emperor also gave Zheng He a very special ring that could bring him good luck.

After years of preparation, the day of the voyage had finally come. Zheng He and more than ten thousand crewmen stepped aboard onto over sixty-three gigantic ships full of Chinese silk, porcelain, jewels and many more goods for giving as gifts or trading with locals.

Three, Two, One.....GO! The emperor shouted. The ropes tied to the ships were released and the ships drifted away towards the beautiful seas. The crowd cheered and danced in circles while singing.

As the crowd cheered and happiness filled the ships, the sailors didn't know that there was an uninvited guest aboard, taking their every move under its vicious, cold-blooded eyes.

A few hours later, Zheng He looked at the sky, and he told all crewmen to turn south. It wasn't very cloudy, so he was able to observe the stars and figure out which way he should go. When the crewmen were sleeping, the sky started raining cats and dogs. This woke all the crewmen and the uninvited guest and they became very angry. Then a huge storm came. The ships swayed violently and it knocked a box of jewels into the sea. Zheng He and two crewmen tried to use a fishing net to salvage some jewels, but they just managed to find a few. A crewman called Chen Yi jumped into the sea to salvage the jewels but he drowned because the sea was rough.

As time passed by, the uninvited guest grew hungrier and hungrier. It locked its eyes on the crewmen. It went out of its hiding place and jumped at them, followed by terrified screams. A tiger emerged on the deck, "Sir, It's a tiger!" reported a soldier frantically. "Oh, no! What are we going to do with a horrible storm and a tiger on board?" Zheng He heard the men shouting, so he rubbed the ring super hard. He rubbed it so hard that his skin from his fingers peeled off!

All of a sudden, the sky turned bright blue and a rainbow appeared. The tiger became smaller and smaller and finally turned into a little bunny. Chen Yi was alive and all of the fallen jewels magically flew back to the ships. It just took a minute to make everything back to normal! It was a miracle! Zheng He was so thankful that he kissed the ring and hugged his crewmen then he went back to his work. Turned out it wasn't too bad after all!

After the terrible situation, Zheng He put his ring into a beautiful and secured box, then locked it up in case anyone would steal it. All of the crewmen danced in circles and enjoyed some delicious food to celebrate their survival from the storm and the tiger.

After a few days of sailing, Zheng He finally found a country called Rance, and the crewmen moored their ships besides the shore. Rance was a wonderful country. It had lots of colorful and fancy houses, beautiful antiques and many more. Although Rance was a beautiful country, its people were very rude. They shouted every time they talked, said rude languages and even kicked someone on purpose! They also spoke in a weird language that none of the crewmen or Zheng He could understand.

Like what Zheng He did in the storm, he rubbed his ring as hard as he could. He also prayed so the people wouldn't be so rude. Suddenly, the people stopped shouting and screaming and they started speaking Chinese, and they even said hello to everyone walking past! So Zheng He and his crewmen were relieved and headed for the queen. The queen's castle was enormous.

When the men stepped into the magnificent castle, they were quickly captured by a bunch of soldiers to pay a respect to the queen. The crewmen and Zheng He were tied up very tightly so none of them could escape. They entered a room where the queen was enjoying some cookies. She saw the men tied in ropes and asked, "What is going on?" One of the soldiers stepped out and told the queen what had happened.

At first the queen didn't want to build a relationship or trade goods with China, but Zheng He told her that they made the citizens very polite. The queen smiled and said happily, "I will fulfill your requests since you've saved my people! They've been so critical because they have different opinions about choosing a king and have been arguing for years."

The queen ordered some of her servants to take the expensive goods out from storage and they traded some jewels, silk, diamonds, gold, pearls and animal skins. It almost took three hours there.

Of course, Zheng He and his men still had some amazing voyages after the visit to Rance. They had shown to the world that Chinese people are brave, intelligent and caring!

Although Zheng He and his crewmen had all passed away years later, the magical ring was still hidden in the box on one of the ships and the magic may last forever!

Magic Hands

Creative Primary School, De'eb, Isabella – 9

I wake up to a soft thud, followed by what sounds like rats crawling up the side of the ship. I shake Xiaoling's shoulder and we frantically look around. Suddenly there are scuffles above us and muted screams. Xiaoling and I are paralysed with fear. I wish there was someone I could call for help. Why did we stow away on this ship anyway?

It was only three months earlier that I found my best friend Xiaoling sobbing in the street. Her father had beaten her yet again. In the year 1400, China was no place for a deaf and mute girl like Xiaoling. She begged me to run away with her. This was the last straw. I grabbed her by the hand and made our way to the docks where we found a fleet of ships being prepared to set sail. It was easy to make our way on board as the cargo was being loaded, little did we know that we had just boarded the Ming Treasure Fleet.

We were both petrified as we made our way onto the ship. Once inside, we found a small, dark corner behind baskets of food. We collapsed in a tired heap and fell into a deep sleep. When we woke we were greeted with the creaking backbone of the ship as it rolled over the waves. While Xiaoling could not hear the sounds of the ship, she did have her 'magic hands'. Some may argue that magic is not of this world, but magic can also be something far more real. Xiaoling could do the most amazing things, simply by using her hands as an extension of her soul. Just then a dark, lumbering shape came towards us carrying a chopper. We covered behind the baskets as the chopper rose and then plunged down. I screamed only to discover that it was just an old chef gathering food for that evenings' meal. Chef Lau did not report us to the captain, but instead became our friend and protector. He had daughters our age and he was grateful for our company.

As time passed the noises of the ocean blended with the noises of the ship like an orchestra. I tried my best to share these sounds with Xiaoling, while she in return let me into her world of magic. Somehow her soul could speak to me through her hands, and the longer we were together, the more I understood. On no special day the ship entered an angry storm. We tossed and turned for two days and two nights before we saw Lau again. He told us that the ship had been damaged and that we had become separated from the fleet. We were stranded in the bay of an unchartered island but safe.

But now, hearing those screams, our optimism has vanished. While cowering in our hiding place, we hear Lau whisper, "Don't make a sound, the ship is being attacked. They have captured everyone and I fear I am next." Just then Lau screams as he is grabbed and suddenly everything is silent.

Xiaoling and I squint outside through the cracks in the ship. We see many canoes carrying the crew, bound and gagged to the island. With the ship deserted we climb onto the deck and bathe in the glorious sunshine. Our freedom soon changes to guilt as we realise that our protector Lau is in extreme danger. Xiaoling's pure heart works through her hands and tells me we must save Lau! Before I have time to think we climb down the side of the ship and row ashore.

We think we have not been seen but in a flash the beach is filled with fierce islanders carrying spears. I scream as they grab me and tie my hands together. I turn to Xiaoling expecting the worst, but she is using her hands to explain that we mean no harm. I think it is useless, but to my surprise they don't touch her but rather gesture for her to go with them into the forest. As we enter the village we see our captain tied to a stake and the entire crew in a wooden cage. We are led into the chief's hut and come face to face with a

huge, tattooed man standing silently in front of us. Unexpectedly he starts gesturing with his hands without a single word and as he does so, amazingly I can see that Xiaoling understands. They continue to communicate while an old lady comes out of the shadows and joins them and it is like the three of them are in their own world. Xiaoling turns to face me and explains that all the people who have ruled this island are from the same family and are deaf and mute. Xiaoling explains to the chief and his mother that the ship has come in peace from China bearing gifts. The chief believes her because of her magic hands through which he can see her pure heart. After the conversation, the chief takes us outside to tell the captain that he will release him and his crew if he will learn to treat everyone as equals, including poor people like me and deaf and mute people like Xiaoling. The chief adds, "We don't treasure riches but we treasure a good heart."

The captain agrees that Xiaoling and I will be treated equally from this moment onwards. With that, everyone is released and a big feast is held until the early hours of the morning. The following day, we leave laden with fresh fruits, vegetables and all sorts of natural things. However, as we get into the rowing boats, I notice that my friend is not next to me. I see Xiaoling holding the hands of the chief and smiling. I realise that she has found the perfect home.

Deep in my heart I know I will return on a future voyage and see her again.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Creative Primary School, Lam, Katrina – 11

In the early 1400's, there lived a greedy king in China who wanted to rule China forever and not pass his throne on to his sons. To do that, he had to find the Potion of Youth so that he could live forever. So he appointed his minister Zheng He to find the potion.

Zheng He was a very loyal and humble person. Although he never liked the king, he followed all his commands no matter how ridiculous they were.

Zheng He worried about his voyage of getting the potion. He paced around his room, thinking about what would happen during the trip. What dangers might he face? How should he get the potion? At this moment, his servant came in and said, "Your Excellency, it is time to go." Zheng He stopped his pacing and put on a brave face before leaving his room.

When he went outside, he saw a fleet of ships waiting for him. He stared at the ship in awe. Although he went on the ship seven times already, he still couldn't help himself from getting so surprised about it.

After sailing for a couple of weeks, they arrived in Egypt. They sailed down the river Nile, and arrived to the palace where the pharaoh lived. When the soldiers saw them coming to the palace, they quickly blocked their way with weapons raised. Zheng He calmly said, "May I go and visit the great pharaoh? My name is Zheng He and I'm from China." The soldiers hesitated but then answered, "Very well, wait a moment please." The soldiers went into the palace and returned. They said in unison, "You may go inside the palace." Zheng He followed the soldiers and went into the grand palace.

"Welcome to my great palace! What brings you here today, minister of China?" said the pharaoh. Zheng He replied, "I am here to collect the Potion of Youth. And it happens to be in your famous pyramid of Giza, so can I get inside and take it?" The welcoming smile faded from the pharaoh's face. He said, "Of course you can but be careful." Zheng He saw the face the pharaoh was putting on and asked, "Is something wrong?" The pharaoh sighed and confessed, "I once had a son, who was very smart and caring. He tried to get the Potion of Youth for me. Unfortunately, he died trying. I have a weapon that might help. If you can get the potion successfully inside the pyramid, you will be the first and the last to do it!"

After days in the Sahara desert, they finally arrived at the Pyramid of Giza. Before letting the servants open the door, Zheng He checked on the things the pharaoh had given him. There was the Pendant of Life separated into two pieces. Zheng He put them back and..... BOOM!

Once the door opened, the soldiers backed out, hesitating to go inside and fearing something would pop out. Zheng He put on a brave face and told the soldiers to move. When they went inside, the servants slammed the door shut and waited outside. Zheng He grabbed a torch and went deep inside the pyramid. It was very cold and it shivered down the soldier's spine. Seeing the cobwebs and hieroglyphics, Zheng He knew no one had been in here for hundreds of years. They skipped through the booby traps, some of the soldiers disappeared. The other soldiers cautiously moved around the pyramid with weapons raised. After hours of wandering around the pyramid, they found a door made of pure gold. They pushed through the door and saw a large casket on the ground. Zheng He slid the lid off and found a mummified king holding a bottle of blue potion. Zheng He knew, it was the legendary Potion of Youth. He quickly took it, but suddenly, the door busted open and hundreds of mummified soldiers pointed their weapons at Zheng He and his soldiers. Zheng He took out the Pendant of Life and locked the two pieces together. The mummified soldiers fell on the ground and gave Zheng He and the soldiers plenty of time to escape. They ran away as fast as their tired legs could carry them. They bumped through the door just as the mummies caught up to them, they slammed the door shut and panted.

Once their hearts caught up to their brain, Zheng He and his soldiers were back to the steps of the palace. Once they were in the grand hall, the pharaoh stared at them in astonishment. He was speechless to what he was seeing. The pharaoh looked at the small blue vial like it was a ghost, he peeped, "Send the ... minister and his team ... to their ship, I am going to take a nap." The servants escorted them to the fleet of ships on the Nile, Zheng He and his team boarded the biggest ship and sailed back the China.

On the way back, Zheng He thought about the eternal life the greedy king would have with the potion. He quickly came up with a decision. He threw the vial into the sea and told the whole crew he had lost it. The whole crew was disappointed that all the hard work turned into thin air.

Back to the palace in China, the team reported to the king about their journey. Zheng He told the king how the vial had been stolen. The king didn't feel angry but disappointedly sighed. If the king was smarter, he would have asked the sailors too but he didn't. He sadly dumped away his dream.

Zheng He was proud of himself for saving the people in China from the harm the king would give. And his heroic action was known all over the world.

Medicine of Immortality

Creative Primary School, Lee, Jeston – 11

It had been a long time since I last set foot in a ship. But I had not forgotten the feeling of having the wind on my face and the salt in my hair. Fifty years ago, I was a cabin boy in the legendary Ming Treasure Fleet. I was a young man then and here is my story...

"Wong, the Naval Captain is coming in a minute, so be ready for his arrival." My master shouted from outside.

"Yes, sir." I muttered under my breath.

A man stepped into the room. Even without my master telling me, I would know that he was the Naval Captain, Cheng He, as he had that kind of gaze that would make people around him back down.

I quickly made way for him and bowed to him. Cheng looked at me for a long time. Then, he said, "Your master told me that you were smart, and recommended me to hire you as my cabin boy. Come and meet me at the Qiang Long pier tomorrow."

The next day, I went to the pier. I could see a group of enormous warships in the port. They were huge, with cannons and detailed chiselled dragons.

I saw Cheng standing on the deck of a warship, supervising the loading of goods. The deck was crowded with people, with some sailors heaving large sacks and some scrubbing the deck. Tremendous sails towered high above me. It was an extraordinary sight, with a hundred ships navigating together.

I was the youngest sailor on board and responsible for serving Naval Captain Cheng. Despite his stern look, Cheng was kind to me. He also served the Emperor with unswaying loyalty. I respected him a lot.

We worked day in and day out and very soon we were out in the Arabian Seas. The sailors were superstitious and said there were demons in the Arabian Seas. The demons would play tricks on you and lure you into drinking their wine. Once you had drunk their wine, you would come down with an incurable disease. The only thing that could save you was the Medicine of Immortality, which could only be found on Penglai Island in the East of the Bohai Sea. But no one had been able to find the Medicine of Immortality, so the best way to protect oneself was to avoid drinking wine during the whole sail in the Arabian Seas.

Cheng dismissed all these as nonsense, and he continued to have wine in his meal. One night, a heavy mist came hovering over our ship when Cheng was having meal in his cabin. I was serving him with wine.

Suddenly, Cheng's face turned pale and he clutched his chest. He began panting, gasping for air. I shouted, "Help! Help!"

The doctor did not know what caused Cheng's illness, but we could see that Cheng was getting very sick and might soon die. The rumour spread that Cheng had drunk the demon's wine. I felt responsible for it as I was the one who served him the wine. I decided to go to find the mystical Medicine of Immortality.

The other sailors thought that I was a fool, and no one wanted to risk the wrath of demons. So I set out alone. For seven days and seven nights, the seas were rough. The waves were soaring and twice I had been thrown out into the waters and almost got drowned. But nothing could stop me from finding the Medicine of Immortality. I continued to battle the angry seas and the unforgiving waves. But my boat was small and finally a huge wave came washing over me and I went under and lost consciousness.

When I woke up, I found myself on an island. The island was covered with lush trees, green grass and beautiful spring flowers. A girl came towards me. She looked strange when her face was illuminated by the moonlight and she said, "You have found Penglai Island. My father found you worthy and decided to give you the Medicine of Immortality. Follow me please."

The girl led me to a huge cave decorated with beautiful jewels.

"So you want the medicine for your immortality?" An old man with a long white beard asked me kindly.

I was lost for words momentarily. I then managed a smile and asked, "Can I have the Medicine of Immortality please? My captain is in dire need for this medicine. He is now dying!" I felt my throat tightened and tears came to my eyes.

The old man smiled and said, "Well, here it is. You have proved yourself worthy of taking the medicine, and it will give you immortality. Of course, if you take it, you can't bring it back to save your captain, but you can live here forever. However, if you give the medicine to your captain, he might be saved but he can't live forever. What a waste!"

“I’ve come all this way for my beloved Captain, not for me. He is a good man and I will do anything to save him!” I pleaded and begged him to give me the medicine for my Captain. At last, the old man seemed satisfied and handed me the medicine. Then he asked the girl to take me to a boat and showed me how to sail back to the Ship.

After a day’s sail, I saw our Ship. When I saw Cheng, he was in an even worse condition. Cheng took the medicine and after a while, he returned to his normal state and could even stand up. He looked at the now empty bottle and said, “This is unbelievable! We must find one for our Emperor!”

Cheng redirected the whole Fleet to search this Penglai Island. But no matter how hard we tried to find it, it seemed to vanish without a trace. I guess this place was either really magical, or nobody deserved to be immortal.

Discovery of Zheng He's Great Adventures

Creative Primary School, Leung, Theodore – 11

“I am so not happy.” Kelvin pouted as he stormed into his room after school. His mother could see something was wrong. “What happened at school?” she followed him to his room.

“We are studying exploration and Miss Michelle wants us to write a report on famous adventures. We all drew names from a box. Thomas got James Cook’s Easter Island exploration and David got the adventures of Columbus. And guess what I got? I got Zheng He’s voyages to the west. I don’t even know who this person is!”

“That’s why Miss Michelle wants you to do research for your report. You might learn something interesting.”

“Uh! I don’t think I will.” Kelvin rolled his eyes. “I don’t even know where to begin!”

“Start with this book. You will be impressed with his exploration.” His mom got a book from the bookshelf and left.

Kelvin took the book and scanned the back cover:

Go back in time with Fei Xin, when there were no walkie-talkies, no Google maps. Yet he traveled through the unknown seas with the famous Chinese explorer – Zheng He four times. Fei Xin documented the wonders of what he saw and heard throughout the voyages. He also recorded the hardships the crew experienced during the voyages. Discover the world with one of the greatest explorations of all time.

Kelvin had no idea how to start his project, so he took his mother’s advice and flipped through the book.

We had a great time in Quy Nhơn. When we arrived, the king came to greet us on the back of an elephant. He gave us a full ship of pearls, precious stones, elephant trunks and rhinoceros horns. We even signed a few trade treaties with him. I guessed the king really loved our gold, silk and porcelain. He even gave us a big banquet before we set sail. None of us had had so much food and wine in the past 15 days.

Our fleet continued southward. The weather was excellent. However, I could sense Admiral Zheng’s worries. He stood on the deck looking at the sky with a frown. Then suddenly, he gathered two hundred soldiers and told them to prepare some chopped ginger and dry citrus skins. He then demanded all of us to rub ginger on our stomach and then drink citrus water quickly. We did not understand why. After a little while, the wind suddenly blew very hard. I heard the whoosh from the waves as they crashed toward our ships. I could not believe we had a storm coming. It was sunny just minutes ago. The storm was getting stronger. Our ships tossed wildly and seemed about to go down. I closed my eyes, as the thunder and lightning were too much for me to handle. Luckily, the ginger and citrus water kept me from throwing up. Some of the crewmates on the treasure ship were tossed back and forth while checking for leakages. They felt really sick and wanted to turn back. However, Admiral Zheng told them to lie in bed and stayed in the compartments. The storm lasted the whole night. Twenty vessels had minor damages but we all survived.

Kelvin was impressed. He wondered how they got the fleet back on track. After all, the storm must have blown the ships away from their destination. He slowly found their trip quite interesting. He flipped to another page.

Almost everyone in Nanjing came to see us off. The sky was clear. The port was packed with thousands of people again. We offered sacrifices and prayers to the sea goddess, hoping a safe and successful journey for us all. Emperor Zhu Di came and offered us expensive gifts. I gave my gifts to my servants and then said my goodbyes. Then the firecrackers were set off. I boarded on the treasure ship with Admiral Zheng and Deputy Admiral Wang in the midst of the smoke. My friend Ma Huan also boarded with me this time. Ma Huan and I had been friends for a long time. We both enjoyed studying Arabic. I was happy he finally agreed to come with us on this journey. The rope that tied to the dock was released and off to our journey.

Diseases had been one of Admiral’s main worries during our first voyage. Luckily, nothing serious happened to the 28,000 members of the fleet. Some just got minor food poisoning. Others got mild stomachaches and some threw up. Nevertheless, after they got some rest and took some medicines from our doctors, they all got better. I supposed they were just not used to eating the unfamiliar food from the foreign countries we visited. The most ridiculous sickness I have heard from our last trip was what the doctors called the “tired” disease. The doctors prescribed “sleep” to these sailors and they felt much better afterwards.

But not long after we left Siam this time, a terrible thing happened. General Wu caught malaria. At first, we thought he caught the “tired” disease, but the doctors said General Wu’s case was very serious. We all were very scared because we knew malaria could be spread very fast. A sailor suggested throwing General Wu into the sea. However, many of us opposed. General Wu was a nice man, and had done many good things for us. After hearing a few officers complained, Admiral Zheng decided to leave General Wu on a remote island with food and water. That was the best he could do. He told us that he hoped General Wu would feel better and could board on the ship when we returned.

“Tired” disease! Kelvin thought that was funny. “I must have ‘tired’ disease all the time.” Kelvin found Zheng He’s voyages fascinating. He decided to read Fei Xin’s book from the beginning.

My name is Fei Xin, from Jiangsu. I was born in the year 1388. My family is poor. After my elder brother died, I became a soldier...

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Creative Primary School, Lu, Lisa – 10

Year 1418, King of Yong Le commanded the treasure fleet to set out the third voyage.

I joined the Ming Treasure Fleet taking the position of a translator, as I can speak and understand most of Asian and Arabian languages, which could be helpful for the voyage.

The whole journey was very exciting and successful. Our fleet went the longest distance ever. We fully loaded eighty cargo ships of goods. There were gold, silver, coral, various utensils, ivory items and other unusual things like five zebras and ten ostriches. For the most exciting part, we had a caged jaguar caught by our African friend. We planned to sail toward the port Malacca to have a two day rest before setting sail to our homeland.

As we settled, I helped the crew to refill fresh water for the voyage. When I was pumping water from the well, I overheard some local guys talking in Swahili language. “Hey, dude I just found out some other country weirdos came with lots of valuable treasures.” “And oh just look at their vessels. It must be the Ming fleets.” “Then let’s get the ships and cargoes. Tonight let’s gather our brothers and call Nathan.” Yes, let’s do it.” Uh oh, I panicked. I have to inform the captain. Now!

I ran back to our fleet and told Zheng He, “Sir, when I was pumping some water, I overheard a gang of local pirates’ talk. They said they are going to steal our treasure and vessels tonight!” Zheng He nodded and said, “That’s a very important message. Now we need to prepare a setup for these thieves. You’ll see.”

“Please bring Wang Yi to me!” Zheng He then said. A moment later, several people walked into the room. “At your serves, sir.” Wang Yi lowered his waist to Zheng He.

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Later this evening when it was starting to get dark, Zheng He gathered all the crew members and soldiers including me secretly. “Tonight, the pirates will try to rob our treasures and vessels. When it’s completely dark, put out all the fire torches and follow our plan.”

A moment later, the blue sky turned to completely dark. Carefully, we put out all the lights on top of the masts. Then we hid ourselves in the ships behind walls and masts. Then we silently watched at the sea water beneath us. No one made a sound. We scouted at the water as suddenly the water shook really hard.

Five small boats appeared in our sight. A moment later, the boats approached our ships and slowly stopped beside our ship. Around 20 shadows started to climb up the ship brim. I held a firestone tightly, getting ready to light a torch.

The shadows sneaked onto the flagship deck. Suddenly, as the leader, Wang Yi shouted out, “Light on!” We ran to the mast and climbed as fast as we could to light the oil lights on all the masts. The ships all got brightened.

After lighting the ship, I hid myself safely and watched from behind a wall. I have to admit, the pirates were astonished by our setup and they started to scatter around the deck. “We are busted!” shouted one of them.

The fully armored soldiers now rushed out with sharp sword on their hands, chasing the scattered thieves.

Out of our expectation, there was a tall man armed with a sailor scimitar standing still. My gut felt he must be Nathan. Nathan and the soldiers had a hand-to-hand combat. Following him, more pirates joined the fight. There was a “king kong kong kong”, sword versus scimitar. But not long, we had three men fallen. Wang Yi jumped out from the cabin and had a combat with Nathan. It was so tense that my palms were wet. It seemed that no one could take any advantage in the fight. Suddenly, a knife flew to Wang Yi. While he was dodging the knife, Nathan took the chance and cut Wang Yi’s right arm.

Seeing Wang Yi got hurt, Zheng He shouted, “Flee! Abandon Ship!” All soldiers and crews stepped back and slowly retreated from the battle, covering the wounded. I felt very anxious. But before I retreated, I rushed into the deep chamber. In the darkness, I saw two green eyes. It was the jaguar in the cage. I pushed the cage near the door, released the jaguar and jumped out of the ship.

When I climbed up another ship, I overwatched the flagship. The jaguar was jumping around the deck, created a big mess. One after the other, the pirates shouted and jumped into the sea. I guess none of them had ever seen such a beast. Soon, the deck was back quiet again. All freaked out pirates had left, leaving only the jaguar walking on the deck. All the soldiers and crews exclaimed and burst into tears of happiness. Zheng He praised me, “You saved our ship! Hero. Let’s put her in front of the crowd!” “Sir, the hero is the jaguar,” I said. Everyone burst into laughter.

The next morning, when the sun rose up, five crew members climbed up on to the flagship and cast a large fishing net to catch our hero jaguar. After sending it back into the cage, I walked to the cage and made a deep bow. Our fleet finally set sail to our final destiny: Quan Zhou port.

Heroes in Time

Creative Primary School, Ma, Lotta – 11

“Come on!” shouted Yun. “We can still make it to class.” His friend Ling scurried behind, trying to catch up. Just when they turned around the corner, they found Professor Fa standing in front of them. “Where do you think you are going?” he questioned. Before the friends could answer, the professor pulled them into a science lab. There were maps of China on the walls. “You must be wondering why I brought you here,” Professor Fa said with a mysterious face. “Have you ever learned about the Ming Treasure Fleet?” The students nodded. “Well, there were some pirates jealous of the legend and decided to travel in time to steal command of the voyage,” he continued. “I don’t have much idea what they would do, so I need you to travel back in time to catch them!” The girls thought the professor had gone crazy but followed his order. With a snap of Fa’s fingers, out appeared a time machine, Yun, thrilled about the adventure, didn’t waste any time. Although Ling was terrified, he still accepted. They were ready for an adventure!

Meanwhile, the pirates, also known as the Crossbone Crew led by Tersilla with Asher and Karl, arrived in a majestic harbour. “We’re finally here!” exclaimed Asher. “But we’re not done yet, put on your disguises and get ready to meet Admiral Zheng,” whispered Tersilla. Later at the port, Admiral Zheng was assembling his crew. When it was Tersilla’s turn, he asked, “And what can you do?” “I’ve served three Admirals, sailed the Indian Ocean and is an expert sailor,” Tersilla replied with confidence. Admiral Zheng accepted the Crossbone Crew without a doubt, not knowing that he was inviting a pack of troublemakers.

On the other side of the harbour, Yun and Ling arrived. “Where are all the taxis?” asked Yun. “We’re in the Xuande reign, didn’t you listen in class?” explained Ling. They, as well as the pirates, had a disguise. “Hey, look!” said Ling. A pile of fish n’ chips laid beside a restaurant. Usually, Chinese people prefer fried rice than fish ‘n’ chips, it was obvious who ate these—the Crossbone Crew! There were also footprints leading to the port. “Oh no! The ship is about to set sail!” they shouted. Luckily, they made it just in time before the famous fleet set sail. Yun got to be the helmsman because of his super-strength. Ling was the scribe who was going to write the story of the voyage. She remembered the look on the Admiral’s face when she told him she could write, the lessons of Chinese finally paid off!

The next day was very special for China. Everyone came to see the Ming Treasure Fleet set sail. We watched the grand launch ceremony joyfully, all except for Tersilla, Asher, and Karl. Soon, everyone began working hard, not wanting to get scolded.

At night, the Crossbones Crew began their heist, by telling a tall tale, trying to scare the sailors. “My two cousins from Japan were sailing across the Pacific Ocean, but one of them never came back,” Tersilla began. “The rumors say that a horrible sea monster followed them for days. They had no clue, the only sign of it was a spooky whistling sound. Then one night, it sprang out from the water, gobbling my cousin alive!”

Somehow, the other morning, Ling heard a faint whistling sound, until it got louder and louder! “Eeeeeeeek!” she screamed. Being the brave one, Yun followed the sound. But instead of a man-eating sea monster, he found an old record player with a Halloween record. Even though Yun had no evidence whatsoever, he knew who was behind all of this.

The following days were worse! More incidents happened, such as a broken sail, someone swapping seawater with wine, and the deck was covered in bubbles! Little did anyone knew, that Tersilla’s plan was to steal Admiral Zheng’s thunder, by giving his crew a bad reputation. “I can’t take it anymore!” the Admiral scolded. “Whoever is behind these pranks should admit it.” “Well, I think it is Yun’s fault or how else is he not afraid of the sea monster,” I mumbled. Unfortunately, Admiral Zheng heard every word and punished Yun by scrubbing the deck. Ling realized that she had ruined their friendship and she was alone in stopping the nasty pirates.

That night, Ling couldn't stop thinking about what she had done, just when she thought all hope was lost, she heard Asher murmuring in his sleep. "Zzz...take command of the ship tomorrow...zzz...we'll be rich and famous...zzz..." Ling gasped, "How could you!" Asher continued, "We'll contact the other pirates and fight...zzz..." Admiral Zheng and the sailors would be in danger!

It was a quiet morning until there was a big "BANG!". Just as Asher had mentioned, the fleet had been surrounded by other pirates. Then, chaos erupted. Everyone was fighting for their lives. Suddenly, Tersilla charged at Yun while he was distracted. As he was a good fighter, he didn't seem to need any help, but he then got exhausted. Ling wanted help, so she charged behind, but Tersilla was quick on her feet. It was a fearsome fight, it wasn't clear who would win until Ling fell on the plank, Tersilla used her sword to stab her, Ling rolled away in the nick of time, but accidentally pulled off the wicked pirates mask which revealed Tersilla's identity. "Ahhhhhhh!" shouted Ling as she fell. Opportunely, Yun grabbed her hand. "You saved me, now it is my chance to return the favour," he said with a smile.

All was well after Ling and Yun caught the Crossbones Crew red-handed. When they went back to the present, they had never been so glad to be back at school. "Welcome back!" welcomed Professor Fa. "I have a little surprise for both of you." He opened an old History book, and found Ling and Yun's name in the Ming Treasure Fleet's crew list!

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyage

Creative Primary School, Shi, Grace – 12

One day when I was looking at the tremendous exquisite mirror in my cozy chamber, I felt a little tired and dizzy. My naughty sister thought that it was a good opportunity in a hundred years to prank me.

She tiptoed quietly and anxiously towards me. I would definitely notice that immediately as usual. However, this time all I was thinking was good sleep so I didn't pay attention to her. She was standing behind me when I suddenly saw the reflection of my sister reaching out her hand in the mirror. I knew what she was going to do. I quickly dodged but it was too late— my sister had already pushed me to the mirror!

I closed my eyes and prepared for an agonizing crash. Wait...I didn't crash into the mirror! I opened my eyes. I saw people selling noodles, dumplings and buns on the streets. I looked into the distance. I saw the Ying Tianfu (where the Emperor lived). I walked towards one of the people and asked, "Which year is this?"

"The person looked at me as if I was an idiot. He replied, "Ming Yongle third year, and just to remind you, you forgot to tie your hair into a bun."

"Wow! I travelled to the Ming Dynasty! The time when Zheng He and a fleet of ship carried cargoes of gold and silk and other precious items for the crew to give away as gifts! I was so excited since this was my first time travel. While I was intoxicated with excitement, a voice appeared behind me.

"Why are you wearing a weird yellow dress?"

"Her feet are so big, just like the men's!"

All the people were talking about me. They formed a circle around me. I didn't know what to do.

"Silence!" a team of soldiers separated the people and tied me with some ropes.

"Why?" I asked, "Why do you tie me up?"

"Yellow clothes are for our supreme emperor ONLY!"

The soldiers led me to Ying Tianfu. It was glorious! While I was looking around curiously, the soldiers pushed me to the prison. They locked the doors as soon as I walked into the prison cell.

"Now, what shall I do?" I asked myself.

I felt something wet on my temple. I touched it with my fingers. There was gold paint on my fingers.

"Oh yes," I thought, "I can paint!"

I have a habit of placing a painting brush on my right ear and carrying some paint in my pocket.

I started to paint a lifelike dragon and a graceful phoenix. My hands were sore so I decided to take a rest. I fell asleep despite the floor being cold and hard.

I had a wonderful dream. I dreamt that I went to the voyages with Zheng He and gave away presents.

Then I was awake. I saw the Emperor with his soldiers. They were looking at my painting.

“Um...nihao?” I tried to communicate with them.

“You are so talented,” the Emperor praised me, “what is your name?”

“Thank you, my name is Grace.”

“Can you help me paint the sails of the fleet of ship?” Zheng He asked. He was standing next to the Emperor.

“I need to think about it,” I answered. I saw a chance getting myself out of here.

“We’re not asking for your opinion, this is a command!” the Emperor shouted.

“I’m not carrying out your command, unless...” I replied. Praying that my little trick would work. “I’m not going to paint in this place,” I said.

“Fine, you can come along with the fleet of ship,” Zheng He said.

I was led to a room with paints and some huge flags. I started to paint the sails with red. In Chinese culture, red represents joy, prosperity and longevity. I think luck is important in voyages. However, when I thought about the western culture, red represents danger. I painted the sails in yellow at last. I also drew a phoenix and a dragon with the gold paint on every flag.

“What do you think?” I asked myself. I always ask myself this question so I can make my artwork better.

“Gorgeous,” a voice said.

“Thank you,” I was contented.

A few weeks later, I went on a voyage with Zheng He and the crew. The sea was blue and clean. I felt so relaxed until...

“There is a pirate ship coming towards us!” a sailor shouted nervously. “What shall we do?” Everyone didn’t know what to do. I was so scared.

“Little girl, maybe you’re going to lose your life. Regret for not staying at home?” a crew member ridiculed me.

“I have a plan,” I said. “We can paint the other side of our sail into a pirate ship flag.” Everyone agreed. We started acting as quickly as possible.

The pirate ship didn't stop. It kept driving towards us. The closer it was to us, the more nervous we were. When the pirate ship was beside our fleet of ships, my face was almost as white as paper. The pirates shot arrows at us. I hid behind a pillar immediately.

I went back to the cabin and painted a really creepy monster.

I took the gold out of one of the boxes and placed the monster painting inside. I delivered the box to the pirate ship. The pirates opened it and they thought it was gold so everyone ran towards the box. One by one, the pirates fainted because the monster was the most creepy and disgusting creature they had ever seen. We drove our ships away.

We arrived a tropical island with the indigenous singing and dancing to welcome us. I was so happy. I looked at the clear water and my reflection. The waves stopped.

"The water looks like my huge mirror now," I thought.

Wait... why did I hear my sister laughing? I turned around and saw my sister laughing. I was back home! It was definitely the best journey ever!

The Revenge

Creative Primary School, Tang, Jayden – 10

I was standing on the top deck of my Bloody Devil glancing over the horizon. The breeze swept over the top of the sail and made it sway. The sea looked calm and peaceful. I was interrupted by my spy, Hawk Eye, who rushed towards me and shouted, "Cap! Good news – Lots of treasures on Ming's ships!"

"Calm down." I frowned, "Our chests were already full of silver and ivories."

"Each ship in this fleet is heavily loaded with gold and jewels!" I could see dollar sign in his eyes.

"Really?" I raised my brow. "Then this might worth a battle."

Immediately, we took off and roved among the seven seas to look for the "treasure ship". We have sailed for years, but still could not smell anything. I started wondering if Hawk Eye's intel was just a joke, thus I ordered him to locate that fleet again.

Months later, Hawk Eye returned with news. "Cap, the fleet is mainly sailing in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, giving away treasures to other countries."

"What? Giving away?" my jaw dropped. "This is the silliest thing I ever heard." I could not believe until he added, "The Chinese emperor wanted to make friends with others, so he did it for diplomatic purpose."

"Then what are you waiting for?!" I roared, as my crew untied the ropes and charged to the Indian Ocean, ready to raid the Ming's ships. "Not even a gold coin will be left on those ships, and we will be very rich!" I grinned. It might be a long fight, but the rewards would be definitely worth it. With my famous Bloody Devil, and I, Captain Golden Hook, we were unstoppable!

During the journey, I heard more about the fleet, such as the captain was Zheng He and they were very shallow to believe that giraffes were some kind of mythical animals for worship. Bah! They did not know what the world is like! Unlike me, Captain Golden Hook, who has captured many vessels and circumnavigated around the globe, it will be easy as pie to loot all the precious items from them!

All the time, I did not have any worries about plundering the treasures. Until one day while we were approaching to destination, Hawk Eye told a rumor about a giant sea serpent near the Indian Ocean that would crush everything into bits when it was annoyed. Since then, we had been cautious of any movement in the sea and tried to avoid that terrible monster.

Next day, the sea was unusually rough. Maybe it was just another storm, I thought. Suddenly, a ten foot tall black shadowed "Unidentified Object" thrust out of the water. "It's...the sea...serpent! Ready the ca...cannons...throw explosives!" The sailor hollered stammerly. But the sea serpent was pissed and its tail smashed violently on the ships that the crew couldn't even load the cannons.

"Link the ship, link the shipp!" monkey Jack squeaked.

"Great idea, Jack!" I praised. "Link all the ships together to stabilize." I yelled to the crew. Sailors instantly chained up all our ships in line and formed a horizontal fortress on water. The sea serpent was starting to lose strength because it no longer bashed as hard as before. Now we should attack. Bam! Pow! All cannons were firing, so soon the monster was defeated as it dived down and vanished. "Whew! Now we are safe." I muttered to myself. Just when I thought the coast was clear, Jack scanned around and squealed, "Ship! Shipp!" Sure enough, there was navel fleet, and it was Zheng He's fleet!

"Surrender and we can be friends" Zheng He gave me a stare as he slowly approached. How dare him to underestimate me! I never lost any battles and I will not throw a towel under any circumstances. I remained silent and longed to attack when the sun went down. The first blow was half the battle.

Zheng He did not push further and we were all hushed except monsoons were blowing hard and making “whoooooo” sound. I was starting to wonder if there was any conspiracy behind all this, or was he really that friendly? It was a windy night as Caesar, my chief warrior, had been discussing the strategy with me on the deck. “We must strike first! Let’s send all the warriors swimming to Zheng He's ships as it's dark now, the crow's nest won't spot us.” Caesar was confident since he has won so many battles with me. “Be cautious, Zheng He may not be asleep,” I warned.

While my crew was swimming silently towards the misty darkness, I was on the deck hoping that our plan would work. But things don't always go as we planned. All out of blue there were flashes of light moving rapidly like shooting stars, before I realized those were fire arrows, my ships were hit and lit up completely as we had chained up to fight the sea serpent before. Zheng He was on the stern of the ship and slowly appeared through the smoke and he gave me some "surrender or die” look. I would never abandon this ship! I decided to fight back even though it was hopeless. Zheng He's forces were much stronger, plus my ships were extremely damaged and slowly sinking. I knew the time had come. " An eye for an eye, Zheng He! You... will... pay the ...price...” I cried with my last breath as I went down to the sea with my ships. All my crew, my glory, my treasures and my ships were gone in one single battle. However, this was not the end, yet.

Years later, Zheng He died in his last voyage, his 7th journey. Everybody believed that he died from illness. However, among the seven seas, people knew that it was me, Captain Golden Hook who haunted him, near the India Ocean where he sank my Bloody Devil. Ever since, the Chinese emperor had forbidden any sea voyages.

Beyond the Seventh Voyage

Creative Primary School, Tong, Nicole – 11

My name is Zheng Ping and I am the stepson of Zheng He, the great voyager of our Ming Dynasty. I am a young sailor and have followed my stepfather since his sixth voyage when I was ten. I called my step father Captain Zheng during voyage times. The sixth voyage lasted for about ten years and I gained valuable voyage experiences and became a senior sailor even I was only twenty.

In 1431, Captain Zheng started his seventh voyage from China to India and gave the poor the treasures he carried, as a usual mission of his voyages. However, after our trip to India, our ship was left with a batch of gold, silk and other precious items. On our way back to China, Captain Zheng had a quick thought that he wanted to give those left treasures to a poor place which he had visited during one of his past voyages – West Africa.

Captain Zheng knew that his change of voyage plan would be disobedient to our King. So, he asked me and the crew of our pilot ship to convey a message to the crews of other ships that Captain Zheng died from over-exhaustion during the voyage. The vice-captain of our pilot ship, Yong, instructed the crews of other ships to return to China while our pilot ship would find a peaceful place in the sea to give Captain Zheng an honourable sea burial. After our white lie, we actually continued our voyage to our destination, West Africa.

About three days later, we finally arrived West Africa. We started our plan to give out our treasures and other materials to the poor Africans. However, after a few days of donation work, we found that we did not have enough materials to continue our donation because there were too many poor people. When we gave our last piece of gold to a family, I made a new friend called Djembu who was a teenager. He felt that we were very kind and caring to the poor, so he decided to tell us a secret. He told us that he was a descendant of an old emperor of the Mali Empire which is a weak nation now as caused by internal wars, but it was a strong and very rich empire which ruled over West Africa about a hundred years ago. Djembu wanted us to continue our charity work, so he decided to bring us to a secret island which hid a lot of gold and other treasures left from their ancestors. However, we needed to take a sea journey by a small boat which could only carry four people. Therefore, Captain Zheng decided to bring me and Yong with him.

We boarded on the small boat during nighttime and told our crew to wait for us on the pilot ship. We were led by Djembu who told us that we would encounter some dangers during the sea journey. Although we were experienced of voyages by ship, we did not use to travel in the sea by a small boat. Luckily, Djembu said he was experienced of sea travelling by small boat and would lead us all the way to the secret island.

We sailed in the dark until the next morning. When we woke up in a cloudy and foggy atmosphere and travelled for a while, we realized that there was a gigantic sea dinosaur emerging its head out of the water. Captain Zheng and Yong immediately pulled their swords out in unison and were about to fight with the enormous creature. Djembu was shocked by their prompt action and told them to calm down because the sea dinosaur was his friend and the guardian of the secret island. Djembu told us that whenever there were intruders, the sea dinosaur would gobble them up. Afterwards, Djembu murmured some magic words that the sea dinosaur understood, then its head slowly lowered back into the water.

We sailed for a few more hours and then saw some shining light in front of us. The light became brighter when we got closer and we found that it was a huge pile of gold which caused the island to glow! We had to pass through a dark cave before we can reach the mountain of gold. Djembu warned us, "You'll have to be very careful or else --" "Bang!" A trapdoor suddenly opened up and Yong was falling down. In a flash, I grabbed his hand and Captain Zheng and Djembu together helped me to pull Yong out of the trap where there were full of spikes underneath. "Thanks for your prompt warning!" said Yong, breathing heavily. For the rest of the trap doors along the way out of the dark cave, we followed Djembu's instructions and moved with great caution to avoid other traps which included snakes, cannibal flowers, and etc., as mentioned by Djembu.

After we passed through all the trapdoors, Djembu led us to the site piled up with many gold pieces and some other treasures. Some people were working there to melt the gold pieces and shape them into gold coins of different sizes. Djembu introduced us to the workers and explained our purpose to them who then agreed to help us to deliver the gold coins out of the island and donate to the poor. However, the delivery could only be done boat-by-boat, and be accompanied by Djembu so as to pass the guardian of the sea dinosaur.

After five years of charity work, Captain Zheng nominated me to be the new captain as he had to retire. I took up the role and partnered with Djembu to continue our secret charity mission of giving gold coins to the poor, with the cooperation between our crew and the African workers on the secret island.

The Dragon in the Mist

Creative Primary School, Tse, Zhena – 11

Everyone knows that Zheng He went on seven marvelous voyages to different countries, and went down in history, but then he also went on his eighth journey. Unfortunately, the details of his last trip were lost in the storm. This is the story of his last adventure.

“I command you to go on another epic journey, and return with the most powerful ally,” said the Emperor. “Yes, Your Majesty,” replied Zheng He. “I will do my best.”

The next day, Zheng He gathered his crew and sailed away in hopes of fulfilling His Majesty’s wishes. They sailed for days without finding land, and at last they found a tall tower in the mist in the distance. “Land Ho!” shouted the crew with joy, “We’ve found land!” “Wait, you guys, this island is weird, it isn’t even marked on the map,” said Zheng He, but his crew was already docking the boat and lowering the anchor. “Hey! I’m Captain around here, listen to me!” No one heard him.....so with a sigh, Zheng He went to join his crew.

The tall tower was indeed horrific. Made from volcanic stone, it loomed above, casting fear over them. Suddenly, a roar came from the other side of the island. The sailors walked around the island, finally reaching the source of the sound. What they saw was astounding, a milky blue dragon laid there, bound in chains. It rumbled melancholy, tears falling from its turquoise eyes. Zheng He approached cautiously, “Honorable Dragon, where are we?” he asked. “You are at the entrance of the tower of the evil Mist Lord, but he has gone on vacation,” replied the dragon. “Who are you? How can we free you?” asked a sailor. “I am Cloud, from the tribe of the legendary Dragons of Dreams. As for freeing me, you must climb to the tenth floor of the tower and find the Mystic Sword, which can cut my chains,” said it. “Just climbing towers? That’s too easy!” whispered another sailor. “Ah, that’s not all. The first nine floors are full of strange traps, in which only the tenth is safe. They launch when you’re near them, but the problem is that you can’t avoid them, because they’re automatic. Everything is automatic here,” sighed the Dragon. “You guys gotta endure it if you go inside,” murmured the Dragon, and went to sleep, or, at least he tried to. “Let’s do this!” cheered the adventurers. “Shhhh! I’m taking a nap!” said the Dragon.

As they reached the tower, the giant metal doors swung open, creaking at the hinges. They shuddered at the thought of being skewered into sailor-kebabs. An overhead parrot squawked, “Up the stairs, up the stairs.” So they slowly went up the stairs, not even sure what dangers they were looking for. A bell rung, and the stairways fell apart, piece by piece, showing electric eels underneath. “Run for your lives!” A bunch of crazed-looking sailors shouted, “Run, run, run!” They really could have broken every speed record in the world if someone was actually counting. More horrors awaited them in the following floors. Ten huge rattlesnakes slithered on the second floor, rattles in the air, threatening to swallow them. The fourth floor’s ground was covered in every corner slimy, stinky sardines, it was dangerous just to let a bit of the air into your lungs, its stench will kill you. Onto the sixth floor. You just might think that there’s some kind of horror waiting for poor Zheng He and his sailors. It’ll repeat for the following floors. But strangely, nothing special happened on the sixth, seventh and eighth floor..... until the ninth. As the troop of adventurers ascended the stairs to the ninth floor, a wooden door bared their way. Clanging sounds seemed to be coming from the other side. Zheng He bravely opened a finger’s width of the door, only allowing himself to peek inside. A moment later, something sleek and sharp in there poked him under his armpits, the place just above his hips. He yelped and shut the door, accidentally slamming it into his face, and he yelped again. So he calmed down, regained his composure and flung the door wide open. A flurry of frenzy was what they saw. But a moment later, hundreds of automated flying swords with glistening blades were pointed at their hearts. One flew forward and dumped a piece of paper in Zheng He’s hands. ‘A Moment Later Swords, by Sword Company. A hundred yuan each. Please come buy!’ “What in the world?!” exclaimed Zheng He. “This isn’t the time for advertising, man! I already have my own sword!” As soon as he said it he regretted it. A piece of paper appeared next to the swords, and they swarmed around it, after they scattered, it was still intact. A moment later, it burst into smithereens, demonstrating their power. A sword came and pointed its blade at the pouch of coins at Zheng he’s side. Finally, Zheng He unwillingly gave up his money just to buy another weapon, but just as he wanted to walk away, the swords gestured to the crew. So they lost another hundred dollars to those stubborn swords.

At last, when they reached the tenth floor, they saw nothing. They heard a bell ring, then, whoosh! They fell down the tower like how Alice falls down the rabbit hole. They landed in front of Cloud. He woke up and said, "You're alive! What a miracle! And got a bunch of those swords. Seriously, you only need one to free me." Then, as most stories go, they freed the dragon, had a safe trip home, and got rewarded by the Emperor. The Queen of the Dream Dragons was so grateful to Zheng He and his crew for saving Cloud that she promised that the Dragons would be China's ally from that day on. To honor the Dragons, the Emperor announced that the symbol of China should be a dragon, symbolizing strength, power, and good luck.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Creative Primary School, Wong, Danica – 11

“Do you want to go to the exhibit Ms. J mentioned?” asked Holly. “She said it’s going to open tomorrow,” Collin said, “I’ve always wanted to see it! It must have lots of information about Chinese history.” Francis mouthed “nerd” behind Collin.

The next day, they went to the museum together.

“Wow! There are so many people!” exclaimed Holly. Collin said, “For your information, there are an average of 5,000 people coming here every day.”

“Please just shut up for once. I don’t want you spouting nonsense that no one wants to hear,” Francis remarked. “How about you keep quiet first?” Collin replied back.

“Guys!” called Holly. “Calm down! Let us all just have a nice day at the museum.” “Fine.” they both answered in unison.

They entered the museum and saw a huge sign saying, “Chinese History Exhibit – THIS WAY” followed by an arrow. They went towards the direction the arrow was pointing at and found themselves in a hall full of exhibition boards.

“The Chinese certainly have a long history,” said Francis. “The Chinese ...” blabbered Collin. While Collin was rambling about the Chinese history, Francis and Holly were looking at the exhibition boards.

“Silk was invented 6,000 years ago... That’s a long time ago!” Just then, out of the corner of her eye, she spotted an Exhibition board. It was about Ming Treasure Voyages.

After a while, they decided that they would buy books from the museum shop. Since Holly was interested in the Ming Voyages, they bought some books on this topic. After that, they went home.

When they were at Holly’s home, they sat down and started reading the books. “The Ming Treasure Voyages carried treasure for the captain and sailors to give away as gifts,” explained Collin. “And I thought all pirates were scary and mean,” said Francis.

Suddenly, a book started shuddering and glowing. “What in the world?” shouted Francis. “THE MING VOYAGES” was a thick book with golden lines tracing the title. They gathered around the book and opened it. Suddenly, a flash of light came out of the book. They felt their bodies shivering.

“Where in the world is this place?” said Francis with his body still shaking. They were all dressed in weird clothing. Then, a person came and said to them in a weird language, “Stop slacking! Start working!” Surprisingly, they understood what it meant.

“What language is he speaking?” whispered Holly. “It’s Chinese,” answered Collin. “Strangely, it appears we can speak the language.” They got up and started working. Their job was to prepare meals. They had to clean as well. They cooked as they spoke. “Where is this place anyways?” questioned Francis. “We might be on a Ming Treasure Voyage.” replied Holly. “The book we opened was about the Ming Treasure Voyages too.” Collin said. “This ship is similar to a picture of the voyages I saw in the book. We must have been travelled through time back into the early 1400’s, where the Ming Treasure Voyages set sail from China to other countries.” “So I guess that explains the weird and ridiculous clothing,” joked Francis. “Very funny,” said Collin. “We still need to find a way to get back home.”

While they were cleaning, they overheard the sailors speaking, and found out a few things. The Ming treasure voyages were the maritime expeditions by Ming China's treasure fleet. The Yongle Emperor initiated the construction of the treasure fleet in 1403 and Admiral Zheng He was commissioned to command the treasure fleet for the expeditions. They also found out it was already the third voyage.

When the kids were giving Admiral Zheng He his food, Zheng He said, "We are going to arrive in Ceylon after a while. Prepare to land and ready the treasure." After a while, they landed in Ceylon and Zheng He offered treasure to Sri Lanka. "The Yongle Emperor wishes to establish a good relationship with this country." The king of Ceylon, also named King Alekshvara, received the treasure. But the King did not accept the peace offering. "Oh dear, this is where it gets nasty," Collin whispered to the other two.

They found that the King posed a threat to the neighboring countries. Admiral Zheng He stood up and said, "We are men of honor! We will fight for our country!" "Not all of us are men." Holly jokingly whispered, the three of them chuckled. A few days later, the admiral and his troops invaded Kotte and conquered their capital. They captured Alekshvara, his family and principal officials. Francis said, "I might be a trouble maker back at home but I never thought that I would go this far..." The three of them felt really guilty. When one of the crew saw their faces, he said, "You guys might be new here, don't worry, there's an army outside waiting to strike, but the Chinese army is going to take care of it." Their faces instantly went green and terrified. The guy saw their faces and then asked, "D—did I say something wrong?" They tried to reply but nothing came out, they were speechless.

Collin mumbled beneath his breath, "W—we're in the m—middle of a w—w—war...!" They could barely believe it. Francis hissed, "We have to get out of here!" While trying his best not to speak too loud. They scurried through the streets trying to blend in and went to an alley way to hide from the enemies, but instead they found the book that caused them to fall into this place. They opened it to see a beam of light, they stepped into the beam and found themselves back in Holly's room. "Man! That was an amazing journey! We also learned a lot about The Ming Treasure Voyages," said Collin. They all decided to put the book in the attic, so that they could tell the story to their grandchildren and let them find the book for an adventure.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Creative Primary School, Wong, Oliver – 11

In a cold and windy night in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, huddled in a dirty backstreet corner, a thin and small boy with only one eye plotting to change his miserable life. This young boy, nicknamed 'one-eye' had been roaming the streets of Nanjing, begging and stealing since his family and the village that he lived in was burnt down by a group of thieves. He lost one of his eyes in that raid and was probably the only survivor of that village. He was always hungry and people chased him away and called him 'dirty beggar'. One day, he heard the town people talking about the great sea captain Zheng He, who was planning his second sea voyage after the success of the first one. One-eye decided this was his chance to change his life and wanted to join this adventure at all costs.

One-eye found out the location where the ship was to set sail and the night before Zheng He began his journey, One-eye emptied one of the fresh water barrels and hid himself inside it. This barrel and the rest of the supplies were bought to the ship.

After the ship sailed for a few days, One-eye quietly came out of the barrel to explore the ship. He tried not to get noticed but the minute he was on the deck he got pulled up by one of the sailors. The sailor shouted, "Who on earth is this boy and how did he get here?" Another sailor said, "We must bring him to the captain!" One-eye was dragged to the captain's office.

Zheng He asked, "Who are you and why are you on my ship?" One-eye replied, "Sir, I heard so much about you and I really wanted to become your servant!" One of the sailors said, "There is no place for a small boy with just one eye to stay on this ship! You are no use to us!" Another sailor said, "Let's throw this boy into the waters and feed the sharks!" A fat man said, "Master Zheng, it will be too cruel to throw him into the waters! Let me keep him and he can work in the kitchen!" Zheng He took pity and agreed.

The fat man said to One-eye, "I am the cook of this ship and now that I have saved your life, you'd better start earning your living by working in the kitchen!" One-eye worked day and night in the kitchen but at least he had food to eat and a place to sleep.

One day, the cook shouted, "What happened to this fresh water barrel? Why is it empty? I must inform Master Zheng immediately!" The cook went to Zheng He's office and told him that the ship would run out of fresh water in a few days! One of the sailors said, "Sir, I saw a plot of land in front of us! Maybe we can go there and see if we can find fresh water!" Zheng He said, "I know this area is occupied by a group of very hostile natives but I guess we have no choice but to dock in one of these islands."

After a few days of sailing they found an island. Zheng He ordered the ship to dock and his sailors to get on the island. One-eye was ordered to stay in the ship but he felt so bad because he had emptied the water barrel. He really wanted to help so he quietly followed the sailors and got on the island as well. Shortly after they landed, a group of hostile natives rushed out with bows and arrows and deadly-looking weapons and started attacking Zheng He and his sailors. One-eye hid behind a rock while the fierce fight raged on. Zheng He and his sailors (who were also trained as soldiers) had much better weapons and captured most of the natives.

Zheng He said to the natives, "My name is Zheng He and I come at the order of the Emperor of the great Ming dynasty. We come with good will and would like to barter fresh water with gold and silk." One of the natives stood up and said, "I am the leader of this island. Show me your gold and silk and I might believe you come with good will." Zheng He ordered the sailors to bring the gold and silk to show the leader. The leader was so pleased he invited Zheng He and his crew to a feast held in the evening.

One-eye overheard the entire conversation and did not trust the leader. He decided to quietly follow the natives and saw the natives put some white powder in the wine they prepared for the feast.

At night, Zheng He and his crew joined the natives for the feast and the leader raised his mug and said to Zheng He, "Let's drink to our newly founded friendship!" Zheng He was about to drink his wine and One-eye rushed out and shouted, "Don't drink!! There is poison in the wine!" One of Zheng He's sailors drank and fell to the ground. Zheng He was so angry that he ordered his sailors to kill the leader. The rest of the natives were so scared that they kneeled and begged Zheng He to spare them. Zheng He promoted one of the natives to become the leader and asked him to supply fresh water to them. He asked One-eye to supervise the natives' preparation of the water and as a good will gesture he gave the natives the gold and silk he had promised them.

Zheng He was so grateful for One-eye's assistance. He decided to take on One-eye as his apprentice and trained him to become a sailor. One-eye followed Zheng He on all of his future voyages and became a great sailor.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages: Alex's Travelogue

Creative Primary School, Yu, Diago – 10

My name is Alex. I worked as a chef on Zheng He's Fleet of ships which set sail from South China Sea to India, Africa and Arabia in the 1400s. We have done seven voyages in total.

First, let me introduce my skills and interest. I am good at cooking all kinds of Chinese dishes especially fish. My signature dish being Golden Deep-Fried Fish, a food plentiful during our voyages at sea. Besides that, I am also very intrigued in the four great inventions of China: gun powder, compass, paper making and printing techniques. These four creations have not only sparked my interest but also turned out to be the hero of our voyages.

One time, when we were travelling to India, passing across Java Sea, we saw a giant ship coming towards us. At first, we thought they were explorers, so we sailed towards them for a closer glimpse. Captain Cheng was about to order everyone to take presents out. Suddenly, they took out guns and started to fire at us. Everyone was shocked but I was calm. I told Captain Cheng that I kept some gun powder in the cupboard. Then, we fired back with the gun powder which we made into bombs. Captain Cheng and everyone on board cheered for me.

During our third voyage, the weather was fine in the beginning. But one day, the sky blurred with clouds above us. Shortly, it became stormy with horrific thunder. We could not see anything clearly because of the heavy rain. At some point, we thought we probably lost our direction of sail and got lost. Everybody on board started to panic. Then, I took out my handy compass from under the kitchen knife and taught everyone how to find North by moving the compass. They were so surprised and cheered, "That is amazing!" Finally, with the help of the compass, we arrived on the island of our destination.

When we got to land, there seemed to be nobody on the island, so we got off the ship and searched. Then we heard some kind of musical instruments behind the bush. Suddenly, someone with dark skin jumped out with an old drum, and led us to a village. We saw people fishing in the river, and children playing with seashells. We tried to talk to the village head in Chinese, but they spoke another language which we could not recognize. I suggested everyone to communicate by drawing pictures on the paper I had scrunched up in my back pocket. We learned that they are from India, and they liked spicy food. We stayed there happily for two days.

After a few years, we finished seven voyages and I made many friends from different countries. I helped Captain Cheng a lot throughout the whole journey. He rewarded me with mounds of gold and jewellery. I enjoyed the rest of my life in peace, knowing that one day, the four great inventions will come in handy once again.

The Tale of a Hero

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chan, Ki Yi Charlotte – 10

The stinging pain shot up my leg in seconds like a raging fire, my brain was shutting down, my body went numb. “Am I going to die?” I cried, fighting for every breath. Strangely, I felt very tired. I collapsed and closed my eyes, letting darkness claim me...

“Hello!” an ear-splitting noise woke me. “Who are you?” I asked, half-closing my eyes, slowly adjusting to the rays of sunlight that blinded my eyes. When I could finally see clearly, I found myself in a totally different environment. I was in a big room made mostly of dark wood, it was almost like a stable. The smell of fresh hay filled my large, soft nose. Standing in front of me, was another giraffe. He was tall and slender, his fur was of a rich and striking coppery yellowish colour, his body was covered in splotches of tawny spots. “What’s your name?” I asked. “Jeff,” the giraffe replied. Just then, a human walked into the room. He was dressed in a colourful purple robe with intricate details on it. “He’s Zheng He, the captain of this fleet.” Jeff whispered in my ear. He then escorted Zheng He out of the room and to my surprise, I overheard them talking. “So, when are you going to include me into your great list of heroes? Well, I think you better do so as it was because of me that you have been able to travel to Africa and captured that other giraffe.” Jeff said, in an arrogant tone. “I’ll think about that later...” replied Zheng He rather shortly. ‘That other giraffe’ – were they referring to me? I was very confused. How could Jeff betray his own species and help a human to capture me from my homeland? Anger raged through my body and I furiously lifted my leg to kick open the door to the stable and ran to a quiet corner in front of the ship, hiding, waiting for a chance to escape.

Then, that very night, someone accidentally dropped a smoking pipe. Sparks and the strong odor of smoke immediately filled the front of the main ship. I was petrified, I couldn’t move a muscle, I glanced up at the sky, the once clear blue sky was shielded by a thick wall of darkness. Then, as if the condition wasn’t bad enough, the wind blew and encouraged the fire to kill everything unlucky enough to be caught by it. The air was hot. The deadly flames started growing at an alarming rate and in no time, it became a wall of flames with a fierce serpent that seemed to be gaining on me. I started to run, running so fast that I thought my legs were going to explode any second. My lungs ached, cold air bit my lungs and my breath came in short gasps, the ground beneath me blurred. Though I was exhausted, I kept on forcing my legs to push harder on the ground. Images of Jeff flashed into my brain, I knew I had to save him too. Even though Jeff wasn’t really much of a friend, he did not deserve to die. I screamed like crazy to attract other people’s attention as the ship was so big that some of the crew members hadn’t even noticed that the ship was on fire. In the corner of my eye, I saw Zheng He bolt out of his room, pulling Jeff behind him. He was staring straight ahead, mouth half-open and face deadly white. It was the fact that Jeff’s face showed no hint of shock that surprised me. As soon as Zheng He recovered from his shock, he began giving orders to the crew. “I want everyone to gather buckets of water and aim it at the fire NOW!”

Sadly though, it was no use, the flames devoured the main ship in minutes. The crew had to abandon the ship. As all of the crew members wanted to be the first to board the smaller ships sailing alongside, they kicked, pushed and screamed and made the ship deck much more crowded than it had been before. Just then, somewhere in the crowd came a blood-curdling scream, it was Jeff, he had fallen into the water. Without giving much thought, I immediately jumped into the icy cold water to save Jeff, not remembering that I could not swim either like any other giraffe. I caught Jeff in the leg, and he managed to splutter out “I-I’m sorry! I-I shouldn’t have f-f-frightened the sailor to cause this accident. I thought I could then s-s-save the ship like a h-h-hero so people would r-r-remember me. Yet, y-y-your s-s-selflessness to save me t-taught m-me what a t-t-true hero i-i-is...” Jeff said, swallowing more and more seawater. Jeff was drowning, he had used the last of his energy to tell me the truth. I was shocked, so shocked that I forgot that I was drowning too. Then, a few strong arms lifted me to the small ship with Zheng He and his crew. I had lost Jeff... I glanced back at the burning ship, I watched as the fire greedily devoured everything that proved Jeff’s existence.

I was still overwhelmed with sadness and depression when I saw a scroll drifting in the sea. I bent down and picked it up with my mouth. When I looked closer, my body trembled as I realized with a shock that the giraffe in the painting was Jeff! The slender body and the golden fur were unmistakable, it had to be Jeff. A strange thought came to my mind. Maybe there was something I could do to help Jeff to fulfill his last wish --to be remembered by everyone. I secretly hid the scroll among the other treasures in the ship... The year 2018...

“Mom, did you see that painting of a giraffe from the Ming treasure voyages?” a girl pointing to the wall of an exhibition in the museum...

Journal of a Sailor

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Choi, Pui Yan Valerie – 11

3rd year of Emperor *YongLe*

Waving, we gazed out across the sapphire-blue velvet of the sea, watching the triangular land of India gradually fade into the horizon. It became nothing more than a distant coastline, delicately outlined by the touch of the glowing sun, separating us from the many exciting adventures we have had. The adventures may be gone, but the thrilling memories will always remain. Now, the fleet headed home.

The visit to India— which was led by Admiral Zheng— had been a successful one. Aside from making a trade deal between the countries, we had seen countless items that were new to us, varying in shapes and sizes. Among all, there was one that was the most intriguing— the Tigrises. Regally, they roam amongst forests of dew-kissed grass with utmost grace, their bold, majestic stripes adorned on the flamboyant coating of their fur. Their blazing feline eyes resemble the lustrous eyes of a dragon, one that can only be found in legends, and one that can see into the deepest parts of your soul. They are like liquid orbs of amber, threateningly placid. These creatures watch with silent ferocity, their cat-like face perfectly symmetrical, evoking a sense of fear, respect, and awe in me at the same time. Yet most intimidating of all, are their formidable, bloodthirsty fangs, sharper than bronze swords. Just picturing a Tigris tearing flesh apart sends chills down my spine. Since it was such a monstrous creature, we had no choice but to leave it where it belonged. It was a pity, I thought, as it was such a beautiful beast, full of hunger and elegance.

“All crew members, prepare to switch sails,” the voice of our captain sounded through the ship. Lethely but carefully, I clambered up to the top of the mast and watched intently for instructions. As soon as Captain waved his hands in the air, I untied the sail, watching it slowly descend. Then, my fellow cabinmates hoisted the spectacular flame-red sails that, as said, symbolized the pride of the country. Captain nodded, and I slid back down, only to see the morning haze lifting off, revealing patches of fire burning in the crystalline water. Taking a deep breath, I stood a little straighter, embracing the pride that I had.

We continued to steer across the ocean for a few weeks, following maps and a compass, and as we nearly reached home, we encountered the most dangerous thing a sailor can encounter at sea.

That day, the weather was perfect. The ocean filled itself with shimmering diamonds as it melted into the silky sky. Perfectly pillowed clouds sailed lazily across the creamy blanket of blue, leaving streaks of white behind and painting a dynamic, ever-changing picture. Golden beams of sunlight spilled out from behind them, never failing to show its face. But out of the corner of my eye, at the far corner of the flawless sky, I glimpse a sullen, menacing, even ominous cloud that started leaking. My heart stopped— a storm.

Soon, everyone felt the cyclone. The air was sharp, and the azure sky was now replaced by a heavy sheet of lead. We frantically fixed the mast, the sails, and the wheel, adrenaline rushing in our body. Blood roared in my ears, the sense of dread pounding in every heartbeat. Whispering a prayer, I clutched the nearest rope and pole tightly, knuckles white, as everyone did. We had nothing to do at this stage, everything was to be left in the hands of Fate.

Suddenly, a jagged bolt of lightning split the ominous sky in half. Layers of thick clouds built into a thunderous deluge and torrential rain poured down like an avalanche. The gale was a tyrant. Roaring and screaming, she conjured rain and waves, splintering the boat like daggers. At the very front, trying in vain to steer the wheel was Captain, shouting orders over and over again. Beads of sweat rolled down my face as I strained to keep the sail in place, balancing the seemingly frail boat. Claws of tempestuous waves lashed our ships, tilting it from side to side mockingly. We were toys in the eyes of the brutal ocean, trapped at the very heart of the raging sea.

“Captain...two members...of our crew co...collapsed and a few were sw...swept in the o...ocean,” I heard my friend telling our captain, voice quivering. The fear in his eyes was uncovered, like glass that could be shattered at any moment. I couldn't hear what Captain said after that.

The waves continued to surge, threatening to engulf our ship, and drag us into its bottomless depths. All we could see were the angry walls of water— dark as coal. Panic spread across my body. My lungs felt as if it carried the burden of a million rocks as I gasped wildly for breath. The only thing I could think about was not to lose my grip.

Our boat lurched back and forth as my stomach tightened. Then, it tipped. The rope broke. The pole cracked. Everything was a blur, and all I could remember was that I was plunging into the jaws of the sea...

My body ached, and my brain was fuzzy, but I struggled, only to find myself in water. I couldn't move forwards, seawater crashing on my face, and causing me to cough and splutter. Then, I recalled what had happened. I kicked and I kicked, with hope that I could find land, but all I saw was an endless stretch of nothing. My arms flailed on the surface, desperately groping for something to hold, head pounding with an electric pain. I felt my body go weak and sank. It was all too much, and I just wanted to give up...

No, you can't. A voice in my head told me. *You have to survive.*

Survive? I thought.

Yes.

And so with a painful effort, I broke through the surface and started thrashing again.

Welcome, Zheng He

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Pak, Hoi Wan Charis – 10

I woke up to the deafening noise. Rubbing my eyes dreamily, I got out of bed and walked to the window. A blurry image appeared in my vision. It was huge, gigantic. As soon as I saw the clearer view of the object, I was shocked. The horn of a colossal ship honked loudly as it was sailing towards the shore. People cheered and there was a commotion.

Fleeing down the stairs, I dashed out of the house with excitement. I pushed my way through the crowd and settled right in front of the ship. A cool breeze brushed past my face softly as the ship stopped on the shore. Meanwhile, a crew of sailors stepped out of the ship in an orderly manner, several of them armed with weapons. Villagers glanced at each other uncomfortably, scared that they would take over our land.

Just at that moment, a tall man, dressed in odd, long robes embroidered with intricate patterns announced proudly, “I am Zheng He, the leader of our crew, and we have come a long way from China. We are very much pleased to have the opportunity to stay here in Dai Viet. Don't be afraid, for we are not here to invade your land!” One of our old villagers who could speak Chinese explained to us Zheng's message, we heaved a sigh of relief. And that marked the beginning of our short encounter with Zheng.

After Zheng and some of his crew settled in a small inn, some villagers and I took him on a stroll around the village. The old villager who could speak Chinese also came with us to act as our interpreter and help communicate with Zheng. Looking at the wall paintings on the houses, Zheng marvelled that China did not have such beautiful things and started to share his journeys sailing around Asia. We were entranced by his funny but exciting stories experienced in different countries, as if we had joined his journeys and were personally on the scene.

After an enjoyable half day walk, we stopped by a famous restaurant called “Queen of Noodles”. We ordered a bowl of “Phở” (Vietnamese noodle soup) for Zheng to try. He took a bite of the noodles, and squinted his eyes on the noodles, looking puzzled. We were afraid that he didn't like the noodles. Just as I was about to speak up, he exclaimed, “It smells really good! What ingredient gives such a special and refreshing taste?” “This is a special ingredient called lemongrass. It gives a lemon–lime taste with a tinge of mint and ginger.” I replied promptly. Zheng smiled, “Well, I must bring such a good thing back China for our people to taste.” We then ordered some more dishes and chatted with Zheng about the eating habit in Vietnam and China. Surprisingly, we found out that both countries had some common food cultures, like using chopsticks to eat, and rice as staple food. We even gave Zheng lot of lemongrass and other spices commonly used by us. Zheng, in return, treated us on his colossal ship a Chinese dinner. This was the first time we had chance to try the Chinese food which was so delicious, for example, wonton soup, stir fry beef with vegetable, braised pork belly, etc; we also learnt about different Chinese cooking styles.

Zheng stayed with us for a few months, we found that Zheng was not just a traveller, he was in fact very knowledgeable in many aspects; he taught our soldiers how to make different kinds of weapons; he taught farmers efficient ways to plant crops; and he even taught us how to speak Mandarin! By listening to the stories told by Zheng, we were fascinated by the prosperity and the profound cultural background of China.

The happy times always goes too soon. One clear night, when we were gazing stars on his ship, enjoying the cool breeze from the calm sea, Zheng said “My crew and I are leaving tomorrow to continue our journey to other countries. Thank you for being our escort during these days and telling me so many things about your country. I will tell our people how nice the people here are. I hope I will have chance to return to this lovely place someday in the future...” “Me too, it's a great pleasure to meet you. I...I...I...” knowing that I might not have the chance to see Zheng again, I suddenly ran out of words. The next day, all villagers and I went to the shore. Though we could not bear to part, we all waved goodbye to Zheng He and his crew.

The huge colossal ship eventually became blurry in my vision and finally, disappeared into the boundless sea.

Qilin of Friendship

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Wong, Po Ying Emily – 11

The fisherman

I waded into the bay as the morning haze cleared. Before my eyes unfolded an armada of majestic warships – some as big as small islands – sailed closer one after another. They looked like mighty towering elephants, skimming through the waves of the sea. The ships' silhouettes, against the morning sun, glowed with an aura of power and might. Alarmed, I splashed back to shore, into the town centre, warning the villagers to be cautious.

A cry rose from shore. I ran to the chattering crowd of villagers, and they made way for the soldiers that were descending from the ship. They wore gold, sparkling armor that was a hundred times better than our rusty shields and swords. One of the soldiers seemed to loom above all the others, apparently the leader of the fleet.

“Dear people!” he bellowed, “we are from China, and we are here to profit and trade! I demand to see your king!”

Excited, some villagers ran inland, eager to ask the king to meet this commanding general.

The general barked an order to his crew, and our villagers stared in awe as they carried down all sorts of goods – huge porcelain vases, tapestries woven from soft velvet thread, and gold piled up as high mountains. As mere Swahili villagers, we had grown up with giraffes, elephants, and zebras. We had never paid a thought about the world beyond our village – we only ever thought about our own wonders in Swahili. And now, having all kinds of new and fascinating treasures in front of our eyes, it simply was amazing. Cheers broke into my thoughts. The king had commanded his soldiers to take out the best of our island's wares to trade, and soon everyone was bartering and trading, laughing and smiling, each wanting to get a piece of the strange yet beautiful goods from China.

The week seemed to slip past silently, and soon it was finally time for the departure of the Chinese fleet. The fleet left just as majestically as it came. In the shadow of the twilight sun, a roar was heard, and the splash of a thousand oars hitting the water broke the silent night.

The soldier

“Land! Land!” the watchkeeper cried.

I could just make out a hazy, thin line creeping closer and closer – the Swahili Coast, the long and awaited destination! After ten days at sea, we had reached our last stop, the place that held all the wonders and promises before we returned to China. A ripple of excitement resonated through the ship.

As we neared the coast, I could see puny fishing boats lining the shore. Strange looking rocks protruded from the ground, and the rising sun cast a long, crimson glow on the shoreline.

Admiral Zheng called, “Dear people! We are here to profit and trade! I demand to see your king!”

Soon their king walked out in a tattered velvet robe and conversed with our leader.

For the next few days, I saw things that I had never seen before, things that amazed me. There were two animals that I admired most. One was very tall, with a neck that stretched to the sky and a docile, pointy face with two stubby horns that the Swahili called Twiga. When the Admiral saw the Twiga, he exclaimed, “A fine Qilin for the Emperor!” The other one was rather like a large donkey with black and white stripes, and a rounded snout. The Admiral called it the ‘Yin Yang Steed’.

Admiral Zheng made more profit than ever in this tiny place. For days and weeks we bought Swahili's goods – elephant tusks, rhino horns and gemstones of every color. Finally, it was time for us to head back to China after almost two arduous years at sea. We headed out with the tall-neck standing proudly on board.

Admiral Zheng He

As I was sleeping in my cabin, the holler of the watchkeeper broke its way into my dreams. “Land! China! Home!”

At last, we had arrived home, with our hulls filled with treasures from foreign lands. I smiled, recalling all the special places we had visited and established relationships with.

As I walked onto deck, Captain Zhu Zhen greeted me with the slightest hint of a smile.

“Good morning, Admiral. Our voyage has been most successful. The Emperor will be pleased. And we have, most importantly, developed profitable trading relationships that will last for years to come. I am sure

the Emperor will reward you greatly, Admiral.”

“Thank you Captain. We have also brought great gifts for the foreign countries, haven’t we?”

“Of course! The highest goods from China! The softest silk, the finest potteries...”

I smiled slyly. “And what do you think is the greatest gift we brought along?”

The Captain hesitated, “I would think...”

“It is you, Captain – you and your army of young men. We journeyed to them in peace. And we have shown these foreigners not only the things we made, but the people that we are. We have shown them our strengths, but more importantly, we have shown them we are a fair and peaceful people. We have shown them we are friends.”

“Ah...yes...” enlightened, the Captain was deep in thought.

I asked him, “And what do you think is the greatest thing we brought back here to China from the foreign lands?”

“The tall-necked Qilin, of course,” he answered confidently, but I shook my head. He was dumbfounded to say the least.

“Then it must be the Yin Yang Steed.”

“No, Captain. It is you, again—you and your 30 thousand men. We have been to places others couldn’t even dream of, met people that are so different from us. Each man will have his stories to tell, of different cultures, different languages and different people. Yet they aren’t people to be feared, and they aren’t people to be conquered. They are to be friends.”

A Voyage to the Land of Camelopards

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Yuen, Yee Ting Hayley – 9

“I DECLARE: Zheng He and his fleet of people set sail now off to the West!” announced the majestic and proud emperor to his people on the balcony of his palace of grandeur. The people cheered, and the atmosphere was one of happiness and joy. The emperor grasped Master Zheng He’s right hand confidently, thrusting it in the air: “The sea is so deep, and the sky is so wide. Explore the fruits of the earth, and find marvelous friendship!” Then, Master Zheng He, and his captive army, set off in a fleet of sixty boats. I was privileged to sail in the boat alongside Master Zheng He, and was given the tiresome but fulfilling job of cooking food for Zheng He’s men.

The first month went by quite peacefully, but about six weeks after setting sail, Master Zheng He warned one day, “If my forecast is correct, there will be an ominous storm coming tonight. Take my advice, be cautious and don’t go outside of your cabins as often as usual. Also, I have prepared some ginger and garlic for you all. Eat a handful of garlic cloves and rub some ginger on your belly. That way, you will prevent sea-sickness.” As you can see, Master Zheng He was a very thoughtful man. I was in charge of looking after the animals in their cabins when dinner time ended.

Later that evening, I was tucked up in my bed with a delightfully warm cup of tea and some reading scrolls. As my mind was drifting away and becoming one with the waves, I heard some pigs conspiring about their journey. “...I think we are going to a certain place to throw a superbly extravagant party. If we get to go there, we’re in for a hoot of a time!

“Objection! I think we’re going to explore the world and enlighten the whole of China!” said another pig, passionately.

“I think we’re going to eat and eat and eat new and yummy food we have never tried!” dreamed a third pig. “Our tummies will be full by midnight!”

It was certainly a funny discussion... and then I awoke from the bizarre dream!

After a few more months, we finally reached land. The place was stifling and dry! We walked around the island, looking around to see if there were any people living on the land.

Later that day, a messenger rushed back to Master Zheng He with news, “Master, Master, Master! I have discovered humans living on the island! However, they look very weird – they have very dark skin.”

Upon the news, the Master turned to his army, exclaiming and demanding, “Men, bring some gifts. Be prepared, we are going to meet people who don’t really look like us.” The men obeyed Master Zheng He’s words of wisdom, and followed his instructions obediently.

Once the men had prepared their gifts, Master Zheng He’s messenger guided the army to the location of the human discovery. During Zheng He’s reading of the introductory scroll, the who-didn’t-really-like-Zheng-He’s-people whispered and wittered to one another, “...wat sê hy...Hulle lyk so vreemd!” Then, out of the blue, Master Zheng He said proudly, “Wo men shi Zhong Guo ren!” The indigenous people seemed bewildered, but Master Zheng He miraculously managed to communicate to them with hand gestures, so they could understand. For example, he made a big circle with his arms to signify “world”. He held a person’s hand and raised it up high to imply “make friends”. But still, the people with different skin did not understand what he was saying, so we laid down our gifts on the ground as an offering.

After giving and giving and giving out our gifts of straw mats, silk and porcelain, the indigenous people finally understood we were here to make friends with each other. We had a big party, but the food was not what I expected! Indeed, it was actually bad! We tried a bun that looked totally normal on the outside, but inside, it was a disaster! It was stuffed with who-knows-what kind of meat, dipped in a sauce that was sickly sweet! So, this was when I came in handy and I informed Master Zheng He of the unfortunate buns. He asked me to teach the darker-skinned humans how to do all sorts of frying. They were overjoyed to hear about the new cooking methods, and rushed back to their homes to tell their family members all about

it. Once everyone returned, we also taught them how to grow crops on the farm, providing them with some seeds to harvest corn, wheat and vegetables. Suddenly, the people huddled together and wittered about something. After that, two men went deep into the woods and disappeared. Some time passed, and the two men came back holding a leash to a very tall and big creature, whose neck was intimidatingly long. They gave the creature to us as a present.

While on the boat, some crew members investigated the creature. Was it the mythical qilin? No, it didn't have a horn. Was it a horse? No, the neck was far too long. Oh! It seemed to be interesting and playful. I climbed up and slid down. Ouch, it hurt my butt. The neck was very dangerous for kids to climb and slide, since it was vertical and fidgeted a lot. Then what was it?

Upon our return to China, we asked an animal specialist to identify the mysterious creature. "It's a camelopard! The only place you can see it in the whole wide world is Africa! Let's put it in the vast collections of the great emperor."

Through this adventurous voyage with Master Zheng He, I learnt that spoken language is only one means to express our mind. It could be by drawings, actions, or even music! Exploring the sea not only allows us to discover new shores, but also establish precious friendships with people in different parts of the world.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Diocesan Preparatory School, Mak, Hei Tsit – 9

Yesterday, when I was riding my scooter down the road, I hit an oak tree and passed out.

When I woke up, I found that myself lying in a hammock in a cabin. I got up, went up some stairs and found out that I was on a deck of a ship. There were people walking around, preparing food, repairing the sails, scrubbing the decks and crushing up some herbs to make medicine. And all of them were wearing ancient Chinese clothing. Then a man walked up to me. He looked like he was the captain.

“Who are you?” he asked. “What are you doing here?”

“My name is Lok Yan, and I seem to be lost,” I replied. “May I ask who you are?”

“My name is Zheng He,” said the man. “I am the admiral of the fleet. I suppose I can have you on this voyage.” He then gave me some delicious food and showed me the room I was going to sleep in.

The next day, I thought it would be a normal day. But when night came, I suddenly heard the sound of battle, I took a quick look of what was happening on the deck and saw that there was a fierce battle around me. I went onto the deck. There were people shooting arrows with fire or gunpowder on the ends. I saw that the ships that we were battling with belonged to pirates. I also heard sounds like ‘Boom!’ or ‘Crash!’ The ship rocked and swayed. It was terrifying. At that point, I saw the flag they put on the ship. The word ‘Ming’ was written on it. I thought, “Wow! That means this is a very long time ago.” I stayed awake until dawn. I could still see it clearly now. The pirates lost and we won! Now there were five boats following us, they were carrying some imprisoned pirates.

After a few weeks of giving gifts, trading with kings of different countries, we finally reached East Africa and met a giraffe there. Zheng He and his crew did not know what it was. They felt so surprised to see a creature with a long neck. They called it ‘Kirin’. They thought it had magical powers which came from the gods.

There we also met other animals, such as lions and parrots. We also gave them silk, tea leaves and taught them skills. They gave us their specialties like pepper, paints and dyes in return. On the way back to our countries on the deck of the ship, I accidentally slipped and fell, and fell, and fell.....

When I woke up, I found myself lying on a hospital bed. I looked around and saw my family next to me. I was so glad and relieved to see them. I hugged them immediately. I felt something in my pocket. They were some peppercorns that looked exactly like the ones that we got when we traded with the East African people back in my dream! That reminded me to tell the whole dream to my family when we got back home. It was an unforgettable experience.

Still, I had a big question in my mind. Was it a dream or not?

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Diocesan Preparatory School, Wong, Cheuk Ying Charmaine – 10

There was once a man called Zheng He. He loved travelling around the world and longed to go on sea voyages around the world.

It wasn't then when he became a trusted advisor to the prince, but unfortunately, the young prince died. A war broke out, and he was one of the commanders during this campaign. After the war, as the young man had helped a lot to win the war, he was rewarded to be the grand director. Soon, he became the Chief Envoy, and this was when his dream, the sea journeys he longed for began.

He gathered some crews, and a fleet of ships, with his flagship, called The Treasure Hind. He and his crew wanted to find spices to bring back to China, so people could try out something new, but at the same time, they also wanted to give away some items to the people who were in need. They also hoped to learn more about the world.

After loading the ships with cargo, such as silk, a large military force and weapons, the crew boarded the ships and set off. Soon, the sun set on the horizon, and China was nowhere to be seen. Zheng He decided to stop, and after a meal of vegetable soup, the exhausted crew soon fell asleep.

It was an eerie midnight, and some pirates had their eye on the fleet of ships. They decided to attack them and take all the cargo for themselves. While the pirates were sneaking off to grab their weapons, fortunately, one of the members of the crew heard the pirate's plan as he couldn't sleep. He also noticed there was a tiny hole at the bottom of the pirates' ship. The young man quickly alerted the crew, and told his plan to everybody, and they also approved his feasible plan.

Zheng He sent some sailors to make the holes in the pirates' ship bigger so that the boat would sink, and some of them put some flour inside the opponents' cannons so they wouldn't work. On the other side, the rest of the crew added some rotten eggs to the mixture of the cannon roundshot so that not only the body of the ship would be damaged, it would have an unbearable stench.

When the pirates finally came back to the dock armed with weapons, they found themselves surrounded in a disgusting stench. But the worst was yet to come ---- their ship was sinking fast! Before they could send anybody to mend the ship, the ship sank and disappeared into the ocean. The crew toasted the person who had come up with the evil plan, and everybody on board enjoyed themselves thoroughly till dawn.

After another day at sea, they arrived at a little village. The chief gave a welcoming feast to the crew, and in return, Zheng He gave him some silk and gold and a little more treasure from the cargo. At night, the crew slept in a big hut which was very comfortable. Two days passed by quickly, and the chief gave him some spices as a parting gift. Soon, it was time to leave.

The crew continued travelling until they reached India.

When Zheng He and his crew arrived at India, the king welcomed them warmly with a huge banquet. The next day, Zheng He discussed if they could trade some spices for valuable items, such as silver and rolls of silk. The king was happy to do so. In exchange, Zheng He received a huge amount of spice and loaded onto his ships. They soon set off again.

The crew wanted to reach Africa and Arabia, so they continued sailing southwest. They wanted to find more about the cocoa beans that are grown in Africa. But although Zheng He and his crew were skilled sailors who knew a lot about pirates, they didn't know that the most dangerous, and also the best-known pirate Ethan, also nicknamed Evil Ethan, was lurking somewhere in Arabia, and the worst was yet to come.

A few days later, when the crew docked their ship near Arabia, Evil Ethan noticed their fleet of ships and immediately formed a plan with his well-trained pirates.

But there was something the pirates didn't know. When the pirates were discussing about their plan, Zheng He saw their ship and quickly opened one of the windows to eavesdrop. He thought, "Part of my crew are excellent rope swingers. What if the rope swingers pour flour into the cannons, and send one of them to kill their cook, and poison their food and liquids? This might work out." Zheng He quickly announced his plan to his crew, and every one agreed to carry out the plan.

The crew quickly prepared the weapons, but this time, they added some poisonous gas bullets to the mixture of the cannons. The rope swingers wore masks to prevent the poisonous gas, and before twilight, they started carrying out their plan.

Their plan worked smoothly, but the pirate captain and few of the pirates refused to eat. With a sudden, Zheng He's ship aimed some cannons at their opponents' ship. Within a minute, nearly all the pirates were dead, except for those who wore masks in time.

When Zheng He was pretending to find one of his crew on the pirates' ship, Ethan aimed his gun at him, but suddenly some rope swingers knocked all of the pirates out and they disappeared into the ocean. Zheng He returned with his crew in triumph as they had won the battle and started to prepare for a journey back to China.

When Zheng He was back to China, he presented the spices to the emperor, who was delighted. He received a huge reward, but donated half to the needy, and divided the rest for his crew. Zheng He didn't care about money, but bore in mind to start a new journey soon.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Diocesan Preparatory School, Yip, Chi Ching Andrea – 11

Work, work, and work. That's what we all do these days. The timbers of our ship creaked underneath his feet as our captain paced on the deck. "You! You, you and you, get it MOVING!" Mianhao yelled. We hastily scuttled to do our tasks. As I scrubbed the dirt-caked seat of the toilet, I couldn't help but think... How much more exciting it would be if something *would* actually happen...

All of a sudden, the whole ship tilted to one side as if struck by a giant wave. The clattering of feet pounded the deck as everyone rushed up to see what was happening. As I crawled up from the head, something heavy flew towards me and struck me in the skull. The next thing I could recall was darkness.

I woke up to find Mianhao leaning over me, as well as the worried faces of my crew members.

"Are you okay? For a second I thought that you had lost the number of your mess." This came from Zheng, the son of Mianhao and his ever-loyal second in command.

"Zheng!" Mianhao snapped. "It isn't proper to talk about such things aboard ship!" He straightened and pulled his robe closer around him, shivering. "Ghosts may hear you!" Zheng stood, red-faced.

"I'm sorry... It won't happen again."

"It better not."

Their little exchange was interrupted by Yui, our ship's lookout, shouting, "Land in front of us, and incoming!" Mianhao quickly scurried forward and peered out.

"It appears that you are right. Crew, prepare for landing."

The ship docked at a mysterious port, which had faded into view from the distance. Everybody slowly disembarked, me feeling a bit queasy. We walked onto the earth, hair waving and clothes flapping in the wind. Looking around, I could see a plain stretching out beyond my field of vision, and the faint silhouette of houses and towers not a kilometre away.

Mianhao seemed to have noticed the same thing. He commanded us to go towards the town. When we were fairly close to the buildings, I noticed something odd. There was no friendly chatter drifting around the buildings. No gleaming candlelight in the windows, welcoming travellers to their shelters. No animals – not even a single chicken feather. Unlike my village back home, this town seemed utterly deserted.

Our footsteps echoed on the stone cobbles of the streets. The heels of our shoes made clicking noises. This normal sound seemed weirdly eerie in such a place like this... Maybe Mianhao was right? Did ghosts really exist?

Suddenly, an old woman stepped out behind the remnants of a crumbling farmhouse. In her left hand, she carried a meat cleaver dripping with fresh blood, and in her right, held a glistening butcher's knife. Her eyes were gleaming with joy.

The faces of my crew paled immediately. We were about to turn tail and flee, when the old woman exclaimed in a delighted voice, "It's very, very nice to meet you!" She noticed the horrified and startled looks on our faces, whose eyes were not straying from her hands.

"Oh my goodness! I'm really sorry!" She quickly dropped the weapons, which let out a resounding smash as they connected with the floor. "My name is Maria... It's an absolute pleasure to meet you, travellers!"

Zheng quickly stepped in front of her. "You have heard of me, of course. My name is Zheng He, and I'm the best sailor that the seven seas have ever seen!" I rolled my eyes. Surely Zheng would never miss the opportunity to show off even with surroundings like this.

The rest of our crew exchanged looks. They seemed to be on the same wavelength as I was on.

Hssssssss! Everyone swung around to look at the old lady, who had to be the one making that strange noise.

But this time...she was not alone.

Snakes had twined up her arms and legs, wrapping around her torso and head. They had completely covered her body and facial features, leaving only her eyes exposed. Mianhao asked in a shaky voice, "Are you alright?"

"Don't worry, dearies... This is a very normal occurrence for me..."

Her eyes had started to glow green.

The crew screamed and scattered off in all directions. Snakes uncoiled from the lady and sped off towards them, chasing them off to the back streets and alleyways. Only I stood my ground.

She turned her face towards me. "Aren't you scared?"

In fact, I was very much so. I furiously racked my brain, trying to think of a viable solution. I suddenly remembered: During our trips to the more outward cities of the seas, I had received a present. The man who gave it to me promised that I would help me in any situation.

I pulled out the canister from my bag. It had strange writing on it that I could not decipher, plus a liquid that seemed contained in it.

The writing looked like this:

PEPPER SOLUTION

I frantically splashed the liquid all over the old woman. At once, her flesh seemed to burn and wither, curling in on itself. The snakes which were terrorising my crew had the same reaction, shriveling up and dying in the middle of the street.

With the same panic gripping everyone, we sprinted back to the ship, talking about our miraculous rescue. From then on, I gained a lot more respect among the crew, and was no longer reduced to the more laborious tasks of menial cleaning.

The West really has a lot to offer.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Discovery Bay International School, Kothari, Aashi – 9

Many years ago the empire of China and Zheng He decided to set a team to build over 300 boats. What they had in mind was that there would be a large group that would sail around the world and back. Months had passed by and the big day had come. There were people pushing and shoving their way through the crowd to take a closer look at the ships and the team. After about an hour, the team had assembled on the ship and they were on their way.

As they were making their way through the sea, the waves were suddenly beginning to get rocky and their ship was shaking furiously. A thunderstorm and lightning struck their ship. A few moments later, they had washed up on an island that was not far away from China. It was India. Someone shouted, "I see some other pirates!" everyone turned to look in the direction he was pointing. "They look friendly, maybe they could help," said Zheng He. The members of the crew exited the ship and walked to the pirates.

As they approached the pirates, one of the team members tripped and the other pirates just sat there laughing. Finally they spoke up, "Sorry you fell, it was our trap to keep away intruders." Zheng He and his team told the story to the pirates and they agreed to help but they were up to no good. After a good night's sleep, they woke up to find a surprise. Zheng He struggled to get out of bed and bombs were flying everywhere. Zheng He told them to fight. His last words had echoed through the room and in 5 minutes everyone had set off to fight.

The battle had begun. The Chinese and the Indian pirates were fighting furiously. Bombs were flying everywhere, destroying every single thing. The bombs were toys flying around a kids room. It was like a never ending battle. The Indians and the Chinese were tired of fighting and so when the Chinese pirates got the chance they snuck out of India and were on the ship home.

As they got down the ship, many journalists were gathering around the sailors, eager to know what had happened. The team were very proud of themselves. They might not have sailed across the world and back but they had succeeded in returning home safe and sound. Today they are made heros around the world.

Alive

Dulwich College Beijing, Carmichael, Lili – 10

As soon as Arrow woke, his friend came rushing into his room and shouted, “Arrow, Arrow, it’s Saturday! It’s *hong dou bao*, your favourite!”

“Oh, yeah! You know me, Lotus, always forgetting about things. Even, about my favourite— red bean buns,” said Arrow, lying back down “But just give me a few more minutes...”

“C’mon, out of bed, sleepy head. Otherwise there’ll be no more left!” she said, before swiftly leaving the room. He groaned but got up. Once dressed, he slid the carved, cherry-wood door open and walked to the food counter. Arrow poured some herbal tea and shoved mounds of red bean filled buns on to his plate. Wolfing down his breakfast, Lotus sat down next to him as captain Zheng He came into the room. “The head of the boat is falling off. We need... You!” he announced, pointing at Arrow, “Go please our guide with our precious melted gold, let him continue with us on our journey to Burma.”

“Yes, Captain,” replied Arrow as he put his plate away. He scurried off to the gold room and was out of sight in a second.

As he approached the head of the boat, gold-filled bucket in hand, he thought about it. The head of the boat truly *was* a head. A tourmaline green, ruby-eyed dragon head. Hand carved and carefully painted, it was genuinely a master piece, and nobody wanted it to fall into the ocean as it was their guide of their journey to Burma. It, of course, had a name, *Fei Teng*. It meant *ebullience— bubbling enthusiasm*. Of course, it *gave them* ebullience; there was a rumor that said it was blessed to protect.

Finally, he got to the dragon head and slowly started pouring the shimmering gold into the crack between the head and the boat. Even though the gold was already turning solid, Arrow heard a cracking sound that seemed to be coming from the head. *That’s weird*, thought Arrow, *the gold is hardening right before my eyes—*. Without warning, the head gave one last crack and fell into the never-ending sea. An emerald green blur shot up from the ocean and into the silver clouds. Dumbstruck and speechless, Arrow gaped and stared at the sky. Panicking frantically, he tried to calm himself down and thought, this is only a dream. Go to bed and everything will be just fine. With shallow breathing, he headed towards his room and slid into bed.

When Arrow awoke, he almost had a heart attack. The head of an emerald green dragon with ruby red eyes poked into Arrow’s room, staring at him with eager eyes. He jerked up and slowly, got out of bed, breathed heavily and never took his eyes off the magical creature. Eventually, he approached the dragon. Breathing deeply, he carefully lifted his hand and placed it on the dragon’s head and softly stroked its scaly head. It was surprisingly calm and seemed to be relaxed...until Arrow heard footsteps. Thinking of an excuse, he spun around to see Lotus gaping at Arrow and the dragon. She pointed her finger at them and stuttered,

“You...i-it...d-d-dragon...” Arrow put a finger on his lips and whispered, “I—its head was just poking in,”

“O-Okay. W-what are w-w-we going to d-do about it?” stammered Lotus.

“Let’s tell the story teller, o-or the captai—”

“No! L-lets j-just take it t-to the story teller,”

Silently, the children slipped past the dragon and dashed to the Story Room, where infants sat around an elderly man with a long, silver beard. “Sir, come quick!” Lotus and Arrow said in unison.

Back in Arrow’s cabin, the man rubbed his chin as he stared at the now sleeping dragon. “Mm... yes...you, are a special young man,” he said

Arrow gazed at him, “Me?! How?”

“You were chosen by the gods; very lucky you are. They chose you to be the Controller.”

“Me!?” he repeated as Lotus gazed at him, “But I’m just a messenger and cleaner. I’m just *me!*”

“Yes, exactly. You will know how to control *Fei Teng*, it will come naturally to you. I will inform Zheng He,” the old man said and very slowly left them. About ten years later, the man was finally out of earshot.

“This dragon,” Arrow said, pointing at the dragon, who was still sound asleep, “Is *Fei Teng*? The head of the boat?” He recalled the green blur, the same colour of the *alive* dragon.

“I s—suppose so, knowing the story teller is very wise,” replied Lotus.

They glanced at the dragon and decided Arrow should try to be the Controller. In the first attempt, Arrow fell off the creature’s back when he tried to get on. In the second attempt, he managed to sit without falling. The next thing to do was to get out of the hallway, but it miraculously came with ease. At first he felt an energy coming from the beast, silver and gold line swishing around them until, suddenly, they were out on the deck. *Okay, now for the dreaded part—flying*, thought Arrow. There were antennae like things with

lightbulb-shaped tips that came out of the dragon's head which he guessed he would hold onto like reins. Pulling randomly, he made it lurch forward and leap off the ship. He kept pulling, but this time up, and a wave of relief came over him as the dragon flew upwards. Grinning from ear to ear, he leaned forward, and the dragon went faster. The wind was refreshing as it blew in his face, and the view of the glistening deep blue from high above was breathtaking.

Instantly, Arrow knew he loved being the chosen one and couldn't wait for the exciting adventures ahead. Adrenaline shot through his veins like fireworks on Chinese New Year. His heartbeat pounded like a drum in his mouth. Exhilarated by his new purpose, he hollered into the infinite sky, "I AM *ALIVE!*"

Ming Li's Great Adventure!

Dulwich College Beijing, Herbert, Oliver – 9

Wokou: Japanese pirates who raided the east coast of China.

Zheng He: a famous Chinese explorer.

Junk: a Chinese ship.

The smell of tangy, tasty meat and earthy charcoal filled his nostrils, as Ming Li dreamily gazed at a cotton wool cloud drifting toward him. His ancient dwelling was made from oak wood. Inside, lying in the middle of their one room was a handmade table. Next to that were two strips of silk, on which they slumbered. His younger sisters leapt joyfully over the long piece of rope that they were playing with. His mother and father were hanging the laundry.

Daydreaming, Ming Li looked back at the beautiful cloud drifting by, something was not right... The cloud somersaulted in the breeze and revealed a dark grey sinister side. The idyllic scene was abruptly interrupted by the crazy barking of their neighbour's dog, Ping-Ping. Suddenly, the breeze hardened. In a flash, something sliced through the washing line like a knife through butter. A pirate emerged and with a grin on his face cut off his father's finger! Screaming at the top of his lungs, Ming Li sprinted as fast as he could away from the violent scene. Behind him he left all his childhood memories, his mother and father, his sisters, his best and only friend called Wang Li, everything!

Ming Li ran all day and night without food and water. Eventually, he reached a reasonably sized fishing port. He could see the fishermen coming in and out of the harbour. Docked at the end of the port, could it be?! Zheng He's colossal galleon! As fast as a hunting lion, he raced up to the giant junk. Scouting about on the ship, he found an empty cabin and hid inside a giant box. Luckily, inside the box were food and drink supplies. Ming Li got comfortable and immediately started snoring louder than his father.

The following day, Zheng He came bursting into the completely empty cabin except for the giant box. Surprised to find an intruder on the ship, he tied Ming Li to the giant mast. Zheng He bellowed questions to the terrified Ming Li. After spluttering out words, to his surprise they finally released him and made him cabin boy. This is how Ming Li's adventure began...

A few years later...

Sailing day and night, the person in the bird's nest spotted something on the horizon. A prized jolly roger flapped in the cold breeze, their cutlasses and daggers, PIRATES! Trembling and fearful, alarmed and afraid, he grabbed a massive sword and hopped onto the Japanese pirates' deck.

Ming Li remembered his first fight. It was horrible! But now he knew how to handle a sword, throw a spear and how to stab with a knife. Dodging and diving the spears that were being thrown at him, he stabbed one of the pirates, cut another and repeated that sequence. Zheng He's crew was so strong and mighty that they hadn't lost anyone in fifty fights! Ming Li reached another pirate and saw that he had only four fingers! Ming Li vaguely remembered someone who only had four fingers... HIS FATHER!!! His father's finger had been chopped off when Ming Li escaped from his town when the pirates attacked. He must have been persuaded to join the Wokou!

Ming Li fought his father by pushing him and then tripping him up. To threaten him he put the point of his dagger at his dad's neck. As his dad complained, Ming Li tied him up and threw him into the empty cabin and double locked the door, then ran back onto the pirate ship and started battling again.

Later, Ming Li showed Zheng He to the room he had left his dad in. His dad explained to Ming Li and Zheng He why he had joined the Wokou. Thanks to Zheng He's persuasion, his dad, who was called Zhang Li, agreed to join their crew.

Aboard Zheng He's mighty ship, they were trying to track down the vile pirates on their ghastly ship because Zhang Li told them that the pirate on that ship was no ordinary pirate, it was Wang Zhi!!! Wang Zhi is a Chinese traitor that caused all the chaos in the sea. All Chinese ships have been attempting to find him.

Thankfully they reached an island in the middle of nowhere so they could fill up their water supplies. But docked on the north side of the island was Wang Zhi's pirate ship! Sneaking up behind the ship they realised that no one was aboard. Peering to the south of the island he could see someone stood on the edge of a cliff. Telling the captain, he immediately knew that it was Wang Zhi. The captain ordered him to "capture Wang Zhi and if you have the chance, kill him".

Like a fox, Ming Li edged closer and closer to the cliff. Little did Ming Li know, Wang Zhi already knew he was there. Wang Zhi unsheathed his sword and the battle began! Clashing their swords together and attempting to stab or cut each other. Wang Zhi lifted up his sword and just before it reached Ming Li's neck, Ming Li dived away. Unfortunately, Ming Li misplaced his footing and nearly toppled down into the murky waters below. Hearing something unusual, he glanced down the hill and saw that his crew were waving at him and screaming, "THE MEGALODON!". Ming Li looked down the cliff and saw a huge fin circling. Ming Li focused back to the battle. Wielding his sword, he realised that Wang Zhi wasn't concentrating. So, he crept up behind him, put his sword next to his neck and pulled back, beheading him and then pushing his remains off the edge of the cliff and down to the megalodon's huge teeth.

Peace returned and Wang Zhi was no more...

The End

结束

The Ming Treasure Voyages

Dulwich College Beijing, Jacob, Manav – 11

Darkness crept onboard and the crew grew silent.

It was our 64th day at sea and it was one of our worst so far. Thunder rumbled near us as lightning struck the water, causing it to shriek in pain. We would have been petrified, of it, if it wasn't for the man who led us—Captain Zheng He, Commander of the Ming treasure fleet and amongst one of the boldest people I've ever encountered.

Cambodia, you'd better be worth it.

The weather didn't budge; and neither did the captain. "Keep going," he'd grumble each time we requested a change in route. The nights were cold and pretty soon day was too. It wasn't exactly the most joyful thing to do.

At last the words were said, "We're here!" Zhang Wei, the second-in-command yelled. Cheers erupted around me as brooms were thrown to the air. "Calm down, calm down," the captain ushered, though even he couldn't hide his smile.

We were denied entry. If there's one thing about the captain, it's that he doesn't take no for an answer. Ever. Things got nasty very quickly. The PLA (People's Liberation Army) were taking over the Junk and we were forced to go below deck. 360 soldiers covered our ship. War was dawning.

The sounds of gunshot, rage, and death echoed around us. Each time we thought we were safe; another explosion would erupt overhead.

At last, it was over. Not a sound was heard from the upper-deck. We were safe. Suddenly, the top of the staircase creaked. We froze. Not a soul dared breathe. Footsteps. We exchanged glances, the footsteps were descending towards us. We huddled together. It slowed, then changed. Something or someone had begun rolling down the stairs with a "humph" on each step. Finally, it was in our room.

His hand was sliced off; his face was covered with cuts. Broken armor rested on his chest revealing a wounded stomach. Broken armor, yet Chinese armor. It was Zhang Wei, the second-in-command. A scream reverberated through the lower deck from one of the other crew members but was quickly silenced with the trembling hand of another one of us, as we watched the lips of Zhang Wei move.

"Sangkram nih min chh te yeung nung thveukaudakamm vinh." We gasped in astonishment, he was speaking Khmer, the language of the Cambodians. We looked towards Hang Ruo, the junks translator, for help. "The war is not over; we shall strike soon." He translated with a cold stare upon the ground. We followed his gaze to a small portrait of Zheng He lying next to a peeling wall. "The captain!" Hang Roa exclaimed, "You four, go look for the captain. We three will stay back and ensure Zhang Wei's wellbeing." Hang Roa then got up, and walked towards the painting. He picked it up, peered down whilst running his finger along the soft creases of the picture. He began to place it back down when he noticed a small, spherical shaped ball with light which flashed at each sound. Hang Roa bent down, then started reaching out to it. "Hang Roa, No!" Meifan exclaimed, but it was too late.

It started with his hand. Small specks of dust falling off. Then the arm. Then the body. Then he was gone. One second he was here standing next to us, and the next he was removed. After everything he had done for us, for China. The commitment, the effort; All to be taken from the face of our world without hesitation. To the universe's disposal. To a place no living man has been before. Alone. Afraid. Yet still gone.

"Give him water. That should wake him." Hang Ruo directed. I woke up to find both Mei fan, Li Wei and surprisingly, Hang Roa, all looking down to me. "Where am I? What happened? How on Earth did I get here and Hang Roa! You are...you're...dead."

"Dead!" Hang Roa laughed, "What do you mean dead? According to what I know I'm very well alive!" and with that he started pinching himself which made all of us roll on the floor laughing. "Why are you laughing?" I asked quizzically as he looked around, then realized where we were. "How are we, outside?" I exclaimed, getting up. "Uh, because you were sleeping for so long that the captain himself said he wanted his best patrolling officer on field and not busy sleeping."

"You are one tough sleeper man!" Li Wei chuckled,

"Ya, we tried waking you up but no matter what we did you didn't wake up!" Hang Roa said,

"So we took you outside and splashed that water on your face." Mei fan finished. It was at that moment that I realized that I was soaking wet from head to toe. "Well okay then," I said, "So then where are we going next?"

“Well according to what the captain said and the direction we are facing and all the coordinates on this map,” Li Wei paused, “We’re going to a place called...”

“Home” interrupted a tall man with a wooden leg and eye patch on one side of his face—a pirate, “To call your mommies because there are some new bullies in town!”

“But we don’t need no mommies!” We fired back.

“Because they have me ...

Captain Zheng He!”

Ming Voyages

Dulwich College Beijing, Lam, Yoko – 10

Blazing sunshine beat down on the ocean, illuminating the turquoise waves. The ship full of bounty thrust onwards, navigating the blustery winds, in search of the unknown, desperate to share her wealth of treasure with deserving souls.

On the deck was a boy, the youngest of the crew, scouring vigorously and watching others hustle about the captain's commands. Captain Zheng He, a well-respected man, was currently a trustworthy servant of the Yongle Emperor, who had specially plotted the voyage and was his benefactor.

Stunning everyone into silence, Zheng He bellowed in rage. Everybody scurried downstairs to observe the crisis. Intrigued, the boy followed the crowd. The nimble boy managed to squeeze to the front. A stowaway! Glancing at the slim boy that was no older than himself, he noted the streaks of black hair peeping through his tall camouflaging hat and the drooping white sleeves of a Chinese.

"Sorry sir," the stowaway stammered in fluent Chinese, "Please, sir, forgive me. I can fight on this ship for you." Dumfounded that the boy could speak in their own mother tongue, everyone curiously awaited the captain's verdict.

Zheng He paused, "There's no need of you in this cupboard, better to have more crew. Feng, our cabin boy, will guide you to his cabin, which you will share, and show you to the weaponry to let you pick out a sword that suits you. The rest of you, back to work!"

Murmurs arose as everyone filed out, eyeing the stowaway. Holding the boy's wrist, Feng led him to his cabin. Again, he couldn't help staring at the stowaway. As he looked closer, this peculiar person reminded him of his close friend, Wang Xiu Ying. But he couldn't be.

"What's your name?" Inquired Feng.

"Wen Hou."

Feng, wary of Hou, steered him to the weaponry, departing Hou to single out his preferred fighting tool. A fortnight later, when the moon was beaming down onto the ship, like lights for a stage, Hou settled on the edge of his bed. When he was certain only Feng was looking, Hou took off his black hat for the first time and revealed long black hair, with a bun at the top. The tips glistened in the moonlight as his ink-coloured hair swayed in a light merry tune. The only person he knew who looked like this was...

"Xiu Ying?"

"Yes, Feng, yes." With that, Xiu Ying slid her hat back on and shut her eyes, ready for bed, quiet as a mouse. Feng shut his eyes, trying to soothe his astonishment. However, he tossed and turned in bed the whole night. Could the fatal secret be kept?

The sun was long above their heads when Feng emerged from his dreams. Hang on, thought Feng, there's no sunlight! Out of the filthy window, he realised that the sun's duty had been misplaced by the menacing clouds, cackling their evil laughs as their sons struck lightning at the ocean; that the ship was being tilted from side to side, struggling against the strong currents with her might and that the waves were roaring for all they were worth.

Getting ready for the day, he saw that beds were all vacant except his own. Feng scrambled onto the deck and vomited violently off the side of the ship. Scanning his familiar surroundings, he glanced at Xiu Ying, who was slaying tentacles with a shining sword, fresh from the weaponry.

Purple tentacles were all over the place, attempting to drown the ship. Sighting Feng's green face, Xiu Ying, who had been fighting until the interruption, hurried to Feng's side, dropping her sword without meaning to. The fighter retrieved her sword, examining it for dents. In her distracted moment, the monster squeezed her so tightly that she could barely fill air into her lungs! Xiu Ying wriggled, resulting in failure of escaping. Her sword was tossed onto the ship and her disguise tumbled off, unraveling her photogenic hair. The cover was blown! His new friend, Chong, tossed the fallen weapon at Feng. Too far to be of any help, Feng clasped the weapon anyways, hoping for a miracle.

"What now?" Feng questioned the captain. Silence greeted him. Chong pulled him aside. "I think the captain's mad at you. It might be because of you and the girl...". How did *he* know?

Before Feng could speak, he was abruptly interrupted by Chong.

"She spoke like a girl, her hat appeared to be fit to burst so hair was probably stuffed with hair underneath, it was never taken off in public and she cared for you a great deal..." He glared his blazing ebony eyes. Oh. Chong's bed was on the other side of his so, Feng deduced, Chong must've secretly spied on them that deadly night.

"Right. Give the captain my apologies." Feng turned away before his friend could peek at the lonely tear rolling down his cheek, leaving a trail of sparkling water.

Cloudy white tears streaming down his pale face, the cabin boy strode into his room, collapsed onto his bed and opened his confider. Feng jotted down in his journal:

It's my fault Xiu Ying is taken as the Kraken's prisoner. My fault I blew her cover. My fault that the captain and Chong is burning with rage. My fault I distracted Xiu Ying. I should've been there to help her, like she's always done for me. That's why she was here in the first place, to protect me, to be here for me, to save me as she always does.

Finally, I understand it. But even if I do, what use will it be now?

Everything's my fault. I owe it to Xiu Ying to make things right. Like it was before I got tangled up in this mess, before Xiu Ying came on board, before she showed me her true identity. I'll save her, I will. I'll make amends with the captain and Chong. I'll make the wrongs into perfect rights.

I must. For Xiu Ying.

The Parrot Who Saved the Day

Dulwich College Beijing, Liang, Ryan – 10

A wash of crimson illuminated the atmosphere, spreading a spectrum of red through the sky, crescendoing the diamond-tipped waves into blood-shot brilliance. A variety of birds soared gracefully across the horizon. One parrot, distinguished from the others, swooped down from the sky and landed on Captain Zheng He's shoulder.

What was this? *Who* was this? This ... was *me*.

It all began on a normal school day. When I entered the building, I realized that the first lesson was library, my favourite. So, I strolled into the cavern of books with the class and immediately, we scattered across the library. The shelves were abundant with stories, nearly overflowing onto the marble floor. I scanned the shelves for an intriguing book. Eventually, I found it – *The Ming Treasure Voyages*.

I lifted the dusty cover, anticipating a story. But when I opened it, a bright, blazing light blinded me, the world beginning to spin out of control; *what was happening?* Shelves collapsed, novels and reports scattered the floor and the library began to whirl uncontrollably until...

Everything was silent.

I looked around; I was on a ship. I was on a person's shoulder, who was looking into a mirror. However, realization hit me when I glanced into the mirror. I was a ... parrot.

So, there I was. A parrot. Captain Zheng He's parrot on an ancient, Chinese ship.

"Stop daydreaming!" Captain demanded to a startled, filthy young boy, interrupting my thoughts, "Scrub the deck!"

"Sorry, captain..." the boy anxiously mumbled, careful not to exasperate the captain.

As he dragged his feet while mopping the floor, he noticed me staring at him; I was still wondering where I was. Perched on Captain Zheng He's shoulder, I glanced at the ship I was on – the crew paced around on the deck, life rings hung from the side of *Ming 88* and the mast swayed gently in the warm breeze.

"Wang Jie Luo," Zheng He said, with me perched on his shoulder, "Come over here!"

"Coming, Captain!" Wang Jie Luo replied. He was Captain Zheng He's most trusted general.

"Make sure everyone is on duty. No messing about!"

"Aye aye, Captain!"

All was calm.

But that was when the shot rang out.

"All hands on deck!"

The command from Captain Zheng He caused sudden mayhem, as pirates onboard their menacing ships were suddenly within sight.

Havoc broke out. Panic flooded the *Ming 88*, screams of terror ringing in my ears. The loud clanging sounds of swords filled the ship, as the pirates began walking the plank over to the *Ming 88*. I opened my beak, to shout, "Stop! Calm down!" But instead, what came out was *Squaawk! Squawk Squaaaaawk!* Zheng He gave a violent jerk and his hands covered his ears from the deafening sound, his sudden movements sending me plummeting towards the floor. I flew up and witnessed a ship full of fighting and destruction. I knew this was going to be a long battle.

"We are the pirates!" A voice boomed over the cacophonous clanging of swords, "The pirates of Alagonakkara from Ceylon! And we will NOT be defeated!"

It was the king that refused to stop, that refused to respect the authority, that ignored Emperor Yong Le's orders; King Alagonakkara.

"Justice will be served, King Alagonakkara." the captain replied, amidst the battle, "Just you wait."

At this moment, I decided that King Alagonakkara had gone too far – to attack the *Ming 88* Fleet and attempt to loot us. So, I tried to stop him. Instantly, I flew into the air. Staring straight at King Alagonakkara standing triumphantly on the lead ship of his fleet, I soared up into the sky and plunged at him, talons at the ready...

I struck King Alagonakkara, my razor-sharped wing piercing his eye. "Owww!" King Alagonakkara winced, instantly putting his hand to his face. Pleased, I flew back to Zheng He and landed on his shoulder.

"Good job," the Captain whispered into my ear.

Meanwhile, onboard, chaos raged on. That is, until the opposing enemy stopped the fight.

"Stop!" King Alagonakkara commanded, still grimacing from the pain, "We surrender!"

The noises stopped. All the screams, all the swords clanging against each other, all the guns firing; it all stopped.

King Alagonakkara repeated, "We surrender!"

Slowly, Captain Zheng He nodded and demanded, "Your master has retreated. All pirates, get off the *Ming 88*!"

One by one, the opposing army trudged back onto their own fleet of ships. As I triumphantly watched the pirates retreat, I noticed he had a sneaky grin on his face, acting suspicious. I could see his eye were still in pain. Surreptitiously, he muttered something under his breath and pulled out his gun and directed it at Zheng He. Then, he pulled the trigger. Immediately, I flapped my wings desperately and, in a split second, Zheng He moved his head.

The bullet whizzed past me, grazing my outstretched wing. I span around to see where the bullet had flown ... straight at General Wang Jie Luo's head.

"Noooooooo!" Admiral He cried. But it was too late to do anything to stop it. Wang Jie Luo was dead. It had all happened too quickly. First, *Ming 88* won the battle, then Zheng He's most trusted general was dead. It was all a blur.

"Thank you for your help," Captain He whispered to me, "Without you, we would have lost." I was lost for words; so, I just said: *Squawk!*

Then, a bright, blazing light blinded me, the world beginning to spin out of control. I didn't want my adventure to end. But before I knew it...

I was back. Back in the library.

As I lifted the dusty cover for a second time, I read that Ceylon was the ancient Sri Lanka. After reading for quite some while, I closed the book, satisfied.

"Oh my gosh," For on the front cover of the library book, was the author; Captain Zheng He. And inside, it said, *dedicated to my parrot, who saved the day.*

Ming Treasure Fleet

Dulwich College Beijing, Soldati, Sophie – 11

The feeling of cold steel upon my neck sent a shiver up my spine. “Answer or else!” a voice bellowed into my ear...

I was crouched in that stuffy cabinet for what felt like weeks. Time slowed down to a nearly stagnant trickle of minutes and hours. Actually, it was only two days since I hid on the ship of Zheng He, the admiral of Ming China’s treasure fleet. If my hideout was discovered, my life wouldn’t last long...

Suddenly the cabinet was yanked open and I rolled out into the daylight.

The next few minutes past in a blur.

Then, a terrifying voice bellowed, “Who are you? Answer or else!” I blinked my eyes open fearing whatever was coming for me. Knowing that something had to be done, my voice blurted out, “No please don’t kill me! I can be useful!”

Zheng He raised his eyebrows, loosening his grip on me and motioned me to continue. Still aching with pain, I scrambled to my feet. Suddenly, someone shouted with urgency, “Captain, come quickly, 2 of our men are dead and 15 more are sick!” I saw my chance, “My Granny taught me some witchcraft. I can help!”

Zheng He turned back to me and hissed, “Later I shall deal with you.”

I had survived...for now...

The following morning, I woke up to the distant sound of yelping noises coming from the deck. It took me a few seconds to realize where I was: in the hold of Zheng He’s ship. My dry mouth and cracked lips reminded me that I didn’t have a drop of mouth since the port. As I was making my way to the door, an unsettling feeling began welling inside me. There was something wrong about the sounds up on the deck. Hurriedly, I made my way up the dusty staircase.

As the deck came to view, my heart sank. The air, heavy and stuffed, was filled with blood-curdling screams of people in agonizing pain. The boat was full of sailors kneeling on the wooden floor, holding their stomachs and screeching, vomiting on the floor; a horrendous sight to see. I stood frozen to the spot and stared at the scene in front of me. Feeling my bones tremble in fear, I did the only thing that came to my mind – find the captain!

As quickly as my legs would carry me, I wound my way through the disaster zone and ran for Zheng He’s cabin...

Certain that the captain wouldn’t be pleased to see me, I knew I had to go in. Taking a deep breath, I knocked on the heavy door. The captain was lying on a bench clutching his stomach in pain. “It’s you again, what do you want?” he growled at me. “Captain, what has happened?” My voice rose to a squeak. Hesitating he replied, “All potable water on this ship was poisoned.”

“What can we do?” my voice trembled and my palms got wet, as panic flooded me. “Nothing, we all are doomed to die...”

The room span and I squatted on the floor, trying to make everything slow. Only one question knocked my mind: how could I save the sailors? Suddenly, a muffled yet familiar voice sounded in my head. Granny! “88, 88,” she repeated twice. “Key to knowledge.”

It took me a while to comprehend her wisdom: books are the key to knowledge!

As my eyes scanned the bookshelves in the captain’s cabin, in the furthest dark corner an ancient book shining caught my attention. Engraved on the front was the number 88. Wondering how Granny had known, I hurried over to the mysterious volume, cautiously risking a glance at the captain who was still clutching his stomach and letting out ear-splitting cries.

A trickle of magic seeped through my fingers as they grasped the stiff, leather book. Carrying the tome, I walked over to a small round table a few feet away from the door. Opening the book to the first page, I was surprised to discover that all that was written on it was 1. Next few pages also had only the numbers marked. Suddenly, a thought struck me: I leafed through the book until 88.

There, in front of me was a sheet filled with characters. “*Wu dialect!*” I recognized with relief. Luckily, Granny managed to put some knowledge of it into my head during our few lessons. Sweat was beading on my forehead, while I was struggling through the text: the summoning spell... rain... healing... There it is, my only chance! Grabbing the book, I raced up the stairs as fast as my legs could carry me.

My heart pounded like a blacksmith’s hammer in my chest. I took a deep breath, before commencing the chant.

With the last of my words, a streak of silver split the sky and a torrent of water drained down on the sailors, cascading like a waterfall from the heavens and mercifully washing away pain and terror from the faces of the suffering crew. Sheltered from the rain by a main sail, I watched how life returned into their exhausted bodies.

The feeling of relief was so overwhelming that my legs wouldn’t hold me any longer and I sank to the floor.

When I looked up, a tall bulky figure stumbled across the deck towards me— the Captain! I clambered to my feet and watched as tears of happiness ran down his wrinkled, weather— beaten face.

“You saved not only our lives but the whole expedition and honour of the Chinese Empire. Thank you.” These words of Zheng He filled my heart with pride.

At that very instant a sharp pain cut my stomach in two, and a wave of nausea washed over me. “Those few drops of water in a cup I found on the stairs of the hold...” was my last coherent thought...

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Dulwich College Beijing, Wang, Ariel – 10

The story you're about to hear was passed down through my ancestors. It all started in the early 14th century, when she heard the ocean rumbling beneath her...

On a winter morning, white gulls swooped and squawked in the spray of the waves, a bright red parrot dipped and swerved just ahead of the ship. On deck, a filthy teenage boy watched the birds, as if hoping he could soar with them. As he paused for a moment's rest, he licked his cracked lips with his parched tongue. Just at that moment, the bellowing voice of Captain Zheng He exploded behind him, calling his crew into formation on deck. Silently, the teenager tried to allow the shadowy corners loom over himself, but he felt the eyes of the captain pierce through him which led him to turn abruptly on the spot and face the enraged Zheng He.

"Yun, evading your assignments? Night patrol the entire night!" roared the captain. He stormed away, grumbling at the crew. As for poor Yun, he joined in with the struggle whilst weeping soundlessly.

The streets of India were filled with various stores, as the parade appeared around the crowded area.

Amongst was the little boy, Yun, transporting numerous gold. Despite the weight he was given to carry, curiosity got the best of him, and even the tears stopped dropping. It was around 6pm when they finally reached their destination, a large truck awaits as they layered the gold on top one and another. No one can hide their disappointment, for the members with high expectations they expected the majestic palace awaits them, but even with low expectations, at least a storage room!

The ship stood on the North-west coast of India, staring out to the diamond-tipped waves. As the crew boarded the ship, eyes drooping, the moon, long above their heads. Everyone else seems to be getting ready to sleep, when unfortunate Yun is getting ready for night patrol. Unexpectedly, the tears started to flow according to its own will, whilst the wind blew, swirling around the troubled boy, making him cuddle in a shadowy corner, rubbing his hands from time to time. "Hello." A mysterious voice echoed in the dark, effecting the numb boy in the corner. A shiver ran down his spine as Yun shivered uncontrollably. He didn't know what, but something was urging him on, to run, to hide from whoever is calling. However, his legs wouldn't move, only the thumping of his heart accompanied him as the night passed on hour by hour, little by little...

The next day was foggy and unwelcoming, it wasn't until 10pm when the sun was to be seen through the mist. Never were the members of AS Conqueror so silent, so unwelcoming. Deep below in Yun's heart he knew there was something exotic about the voice and it will do them no favor. The sooner the owner is found, the better.

Slouching to the hall, everyone seemed to be occupied so no one noticed him when he dragged his foot as quietly as possible into the private chambers of the Captain. Something lured him to go on, to step into the unknown. He didn't know what or who made him venture inside, only that an invisible rope seems to be tugging him on. Once again, Captain Zheng He detected his presence and was indeed irritated, which led him to another night of patrolling the grounds. The tears were blocked by the waves of determination, Yun is going to uncover the mystery within and discover the possessor of the cold, hallow voice.

There wasn't a single light up in the sky, wasn't a single bird in sight whilst Yun faced another night of darkness alone. All that followed him is the swirling of the winds and thumping of his heart. Somehow, the voice is all Yun could think about, not the hallow within, but the mystery that lies beneath. Tonight, it showed itself again: the voice.

"Hello." It whispered softly. Yun stirred from the shadowy corner as his eyes grew into focus. There it was, the owner standing in front, ebony black hood covered her body, the only feature that is visible is her lips. Another rub of his eyes, she was gone. Yun stayed unmoved for a moment and stared blankly at the spot the figure once stood on. It wasn't until 5 minutes later when he finally came to his senses and smoothed out his eyes to make sure he wasn't dreaming. Still nothing. Nothing at all. Even the winds stopped moaning as if it was aware of another's presence. Little by little the night went on, leaving the boy standing there.

Unmoved. Untouched. Unwanted.

The sun rose and perched itself on the horizon, sending strips of sunlight through the member's window, leaving the crew awake. As for Yun, the main goal was to keep on the bright side of the Captain and don't get into any unwanted inconvenience. Arms full of gold, Yun marched down the streets of India yet again, his arm seems to be falling off as curiosity didn't accompany him. Finally, the moon uncovered itself, as they trekked down to the safety of their chambers and Yun stumbled to get an old piece of cloth to clean the deck. There was the helpless youngster, cleaning the deck whilst tiredness drizzled through him, making him slump on the deck, falling asleep.

The voice didn't bother him that night, only the sound of the waves whispering and the wind whooshing. On the vast ocean, was the AS Conqueror, as a boy slept motionlessly into the night. Glorious sunshine glinted off the crystal-clear waves, as the ship drove on with its AS Conqueror fluttering in the blustery winds. As for the boy, he went away too and was never seen again... The voice in the story was amongst us, the youngest siren, daughter of the Queen. She's now the eldest of the sirens, soon to de cease.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Dulwich College Beijing, Wang, Catherine – 11

Three weeks ago... As Captain Zheng He told his diligent crew to gather around immediately, his talking, magic and helpful hook began to remind him impatiently again, "2 days left! 2 short days left! Get moving or else it shall be death for all!" No one else knew about the danger except the anxious captain.

He was on a mission. A mission to save mankind. "Okay. Listen up everyone. Here is our plan..."

It was the third day when I finally regained consciousness. There I was, body all scrunched up in a dusty, crammed shoe box as weak as prey being hunted. The smell of ash got to me, I coughed a million times. Although it was only the third day, it felt like years. The only thing I could hear was the sound of my heart beating as loud as a drum. As I thought of my sickly grandmother, tears rolled down my rough, dry cheeks. Yes, I was fleeing away from my life. I was in desperate need for a break. Before this summer, my grandfather left my grandma due to her sickness. She had brain cancer, but we had no money to do anything about it. We also had no proper home and had to live in a ragged train. No home.

No food.

No parents.

My mother and father died because they saved my life since there was a volcano eruption happening. "Leave this place sweetheart, do a good deed for the world." My mummy and daddy whispered to me. Guiltiness filled my heart. Everything was all my fault.

My stomach growled at me when I realized I had not eaten for almost two days. Hunger. A cloud of unanswered questions rained into head due to the noises I could now hear. Would they find me now? Was I going to get in trouble? What was going on? I had no idea until...

The voice screeched, "We need to get there now! The pirates are going to take the bounty! We would all die!" It was probably the captain shouting the bad news making everyone frightened by the sound of his demandingness. I peeked out from my little world and saw terror in everyone's eyes. Some cried, some panicked and some fainted. A floor of what looked like completely dead people horrified me. "Water, water!" some shouted. I'd never seen anything like that before. But I mean, I would see why he would do that, he needed the precious gold to save us.

"Ay mate! Stop right there!" another voice screamed. What I saw shocked me. A lot. Even more than before. Then, I really didn't know what this adventure held.

"It was the pirate!" I had thought I shrieked that inside my brain, but I was wrong. Completely wrong.

"Wait a minute, who are you and why are you on my boat?" The captain bellowed. Uh-oh. I was busted.

Standing right behind him, I was completely busted. Panic was starting to flood inside my mind. What could I do? What should I do? I had no idea...

"You do not need to worry nor think about that. What you do need to worry about is the gold. The treasure belongs to you! Everything here belongs to you!" I screeched. It was the truth, and the truth helped me survive, well, maybe a little bit longer only. I wasn't sure. And I didn't want to find out. I needed to show them that I was here for two particular reasons; to get away from home, and to be a part of the crew. When I was three years old, mum would always tell me that I ran as fast as lightning. It was time to use that as a talent. I sprinted as fast as I could to take the bounty away from the (adjective) pirate. "Hey! Who do you think you are and what are you doing?" the pirate roared. I knew I had no time answering him. After about five hours of arguing but pointless results, I finally made it come to an end. And it only took seven words.

(inspired by the grinch who stole Christmas)

Nearly 2000 years ago, there was something called Christmas. I never experienced it, but it was passed down to say that it was full of love, joy and peace. But then, a pirate took the fun away from everyone. He didn't like people having fun, all the pirate wanted was... Misery on everyone's faces. That's all. So, he erased the Christmas memory; no-one knows how, and was never heard of again. The myths of the pirate carried on due to the fact that he was no longer to be seen.

"Hey! You're the pirate who stole Christmas!" I hollered. The now looking guilty pirate had make-up start to sweat of his pale face. He took off his dark brown wig and the pirate fled away. It was assumed that he didn't want to be found and had a disguise. After that, the madness was gone. I had succeeded.

"Even though you weren't supposed to be here, you did a good job. But still, you weren't supposed to be here," The captain told me. "I can't believe me saying this but, would you like to be our new captain?" I was in shock. It didn't take it long for me to answer. So, I started nodding like a dog wanting to snack on bones. looked like an idiot. "Well then, crew, we have a new captain! Start listening to his instructions, or else, well you know what happens." The captain mentioned. It was official. Until, something horrible happened.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages – Mystery!

Dulwich College Beijing, Xiong, Tiger – 11

The waves scraped the sky, devouring the moon. Thunder collided with the ocean as our ship, Tao Tie shook with anxiety. She could not hold it anymore. The sky as black as the sickness of death lightened up every second. The compass was not working. The map was wet. Life boats dropped one by one. The ship was panicking.

Suddenly, an unstoppable force blew on the sail, making it flutter and rip into pieces. Now where we are going to amble is a mystery. Immediately, right after this mayhem, a gargantuan wave demolished the ship whole. The next thing I knew was darkness...

I found myself lying on sand shimmering in the sun like melted gold. I got up wearily and sat on the sand looking for human. What I saw nearly made me gasp my lungs out of my chest. It was a skeleton that looked centuries old. Its clothes were all ragged and torn. Its rib cage was smashed apart and one of its legs were missing. In its lifeless hand lying on the sand was an artifact. However, the most dreadful thing about it is that there were teeth, about 10 cm long stuck in the skull. I walked cautiously to him, gradually stepping on the sand, leaving deep footprints behind me. What kind to beasts could have done this to a human?

Then something hit me. I was stuck on this isolated island in the middle of nowhere with a skeleton. I do not have any maps, compasses or any other equipment in this remote place.

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a deafening roar. It made the palm trees shatter. It made the sand flee. Whatever just roared is colossal.

All of a sudden, an enormous beast leapt out of the blue. I watched, eyes open in horror as its shadow loomed over me. Terror rushed upon me, tearing my inquisitive brain apart. The beast looks like a tiger, except it was as black as the ashes of devils, and as large as a roaring thunder cloud. Right when its claws are about to rip my skull, I heard an ear-splitting sound of a bullet flying out of a pistol. The bullet soared through the air, thrashing at the beast, pelting a hole through the beast's body. It looked like that the darkest night was suddenly lightened up by millions of crimson stars. I looked in the direction of where the bullet came from, but all I saw was a shadowy figure. The figure was wearing a shredded hood, but I was certain that under it was a Chinese man. Out of the obscurity of his hood, he stared at me and walked away. His legs were oozing with cardinal, while shaking a few drops off with every step. "Wait!" I hollered suddenly. The man stopped for a second and carried on walking away, deep and deeper into the breathing forest. Who was he?

Suddenly, I realized all of our treasure from the emperor are sunk at the bottomless abyss of the ocean.

Gems, silk, gold, silver, clothes, pearls, bronze, swords, armor, scrolls and artworks are all lost forever. How is our emperor going to torture us if we ever see him again?

It hit me another time.

Forgetting all my troubles, I asked myself– what is wrong with this island? Bizarre beasts, skeletons and a shadowy figure. I need answers. Running as fast as my legs could carry me, I ran into the forest chasing after the shadowy man. Cardinal blazed around the forest, covering my legs whole because of the scraping thorn bushes. After some arduous agonizing running, I dashed to a sudden stop, huffing and puffing for air. My chest sped up and down like complex machinery, filling the place with sounds of breathing. Then every thing was silent again.

A twig snapped.

My head twisted slowly to direction of where the sound came from. Gradually and slowly, I walked backwards into a hole to hide from what made the sound. I crouched down into the hole as a gigantic paw smacked me. The next thing was sapphire blue in front of my eyes and then black.

I did not know how long I have been blacked-out, but when I woke, it was a morning. Everything seemed fresh, the trees which seemed holding their breath seemed to shake freely. I climbed out the hole, preparing to walk back to the glistening beach. My legs were still bleeding from the thorns.

A few minutes later, I was walking on the iridescent sand again. I walked to the demolished skeleton that had been there but something changed about it– it was wearing a torn black hood! How strange... I pulled the hood off and out of it dropped a substantial thing that clinked while dropping on the sand. With my heart pumping as loud as a culverin, I picked it up and it was a pistol! I checked the ammo and what I saw made my jaw drop– all the bullets were fully loaded!

I heard breathing. A man, about the same age as me, lay on the sand breathing heavily. I put my hood on, covering my face in the shadows of coal. I waited in the shade of the forest until he woke. Out of the blue, the same beast that attacked me leapt upon him. Without thinking twice, I aimed and shot. The deafening sound echoed through my eardrums. The beast fell on the ground as million of crimson stars filled the air. I started to walk away.

“Wait!” He hollered.

My eyes opened wide. His voice is my voice, his looks are my looks, he is me. I walked away. I just time traveled— Then another glimpse of sapphire blue and then black again.

I found myself lying on my comfortable bed in the captain’s room. It was just a dream I thought, relieved. Suddenly a crew member bumped in and shouted, “STORM INCOMING!”

“Uh— oh...”

The Mission

Dulwich College Beijing, You, Lauren – 11

“Sir, the emperor would like to see you.” Emperor Yong Le’s advisor called.

“I will be right there, thank you for informing me.” Zheng He responded politely.

Sliding the sturdy, red door open, he stepped inside the gigantic office. Bowing, he said: “Your advisor sent me, Emperor Yong Le.”

The emperor turned around saying: “Yes, I’ve been observing your team, the ‘Red Dragons’, in training. They are determined, trustworthy and resilient. Therefore, I have a mission which will be perfect for you,” explained the emperor, “I want the ‘Red Dragons’ to sail to Kolkata, India, to trade, give gifts *and* test your skills...”

“What do you mean?” Asked Zheng He curiously.

“You will see for yourself...” the emperor said slyly, “Be prepared...”

Joyfully, the seagulls sang whilst the Red Dragons loaded their reliable junk, ‘*Explorer*’, and prepared for the long and arduous journey ahead of them.

Finally, it was time to leave. Time to leave their family behind. Time to leave their friends behind. Time, perhaps, to leave their *lives* behind... forever... “The emperor is counting on us to accomplish this treacherous voyage, and we mustn’t let him down!” Zheng He bellowed, breaking the silence. The crew frantically scattered off, getting everything ready for their departure. Fluttering in the wind, the sails opened, slightly shifting the junk; the anchor was heaved up and the Red Dragons were ready to embark on their journey.

For the first few days, it was rough for the crew. The gale made a small hole in the once pristine sail, the seas roared, sending several obstacles their way but despite this, they had faith in themselves and kept going. They now knew almost After what seemed like decades, the voyage to India was officially over and they safely reached their destination and started their trading activities. After a few months, they had achieved all they needed on the trip, the crew joyously celebrated their great success with a party, honoring their captain, Zheng He for his leadership on this successful mission.

“I’m sorry to ruin the enjoyable party but does anyone else feel that something seems amiss?” asked a member of the crew. Half of the Red Dragons shrugged, whilst the others looked confused.

“Well, I guess...” But, before he could finish, something suspicious caught his eye... “THIEF!” The crew member called out.

“GET HER!” Zheng He ordered.

Sprinting down the narrow aisles, they followed the mysterious, masked, young girl into a dark alley. She ran to the entrance of a gloomy dilapidated building and crept inside. “Master, I have stolen the jewelry upon your request, please can you let me go now?”

“Fine! But you better be back tomorrow at 8:00am SHARP.” an unknown voice hollered sternly.

“Come on, let’s go inside and investigate.” whispered Zheng He to his crew. Tiptoeing, Zheng He and two of his crew members caught a glimpse of someone that they knew from a long time ago and whom they thought was dead... It was the one and only CAPTAIN HOOK!

“Well hello there Zheng He, glad you could make it, please do come out of the shadows” Captain Hook called out.

“Captain Hook?! I thought my father had destroyed you!” exclaimed Zheng He in surprise.

“You see, when your father pushed me off that cliff, he assumed I was dead, but I successfully climbed back up the cliff and survived!” Hook hollered with laughter.

Looking confused, the two members of Zheng He’s crew immediately drew out their swords, ready for a battle. Their enemy and his fellow pirates did the same. “Let’s settle this the right way then!” shouted Captain Hook.

The ear-piercing sound of metal swords clashing against each other triggered the rest of the Red Dragons crew to follow inside.

The violent battle went on for what seemed like eternity for the Pirate and Zheng He. Both challengers were equally talented and very experienced in combat, which caused uncertainty of the winner. However, with the Red Dragon army on Zheng He’s side, they were unstoppable...

As time passed, Hook and his pirates grew weaker, were tired and eventually noticed it was no use trying to fight back. The Red Dragon army was far too formidable for mere pirates like Hook. A few moments later, Zheng He hollered to his opponent “SURRENDER or prepare to be killed!” Astonishingly, the answer no one expected stammered out of his arch enemy’s mouth. “I-I-I Surrender!” And that was it, the words Zheng He had been waiting for. The battle had eventually concluded.

“LET GO OF ME!” Captain Hook shouted as he was forced by the Red Dragons to board the junk against his wishes. It was time for Zheng He and his crew to bid farewell to India and sail back home to China. This time however, they were heading back home with a little *more* than what they had expected. On top of items that were traded and gifts that they had received, the Red Dragons brought back with them a PIRATE. And not just *any* pirate, it was the very same pirate that Zheng He’s father spent years tracking down and whom he thought he had successfully eliminated.

This mission had indeed tested their skills as the Emperor had stated earlier on. Zheng He was proud of his army for accomplishing the mission that Emperor Yong Le set out for them, and he was especially grateful to his team for their efforts in helping him capture their arch enemy and fulfill his father’s legacy.

“Finally, let’s go home.” Zheng He said with a contented smile.

The Stolen Treasure

German Swiss International School, Chen, Josephine – 10

I sweated nervously as the customs official went through my suitcase. I hoped he didn't open up the false bottom of the suitcase where I had stashed various valuable necklaces from The Ming Voyage Commemorative Museum in India. My ingenious plan was to smuggle them back to Malacca where I could sell them to my black market dealer. When that happened, things would seriously get interesting. I tried not to show how relieved I was when he closed the suitcase and asked for my passport. He studied my passport carefully and asked me: "Is your name Ming Shee Kuk?"

I replied cheerfully: "Yup, that's me,". He slapped my passport in my hand and let me through.

As you know now, I am Ming Shee Kuk. On my passport, it says my job is an 'art dealer', but how I really collect my money is by smuggling treasures from country to country, which then goes to the hands of my black market dealer. *RRRIIINNGGG!!* Now that's probably my evil dealer, Ted Lees calling me. I picked up the phone. "Hey Mr. Evil, I got your treasures alright. Ones from India that got shipped from China. You'd better be happy,"

"Right'o pipsqueak, you better be here in a flash, I'm a busy man,".

"Sure. I am in a rush too," I said, "and we better be careful because I think a detective is after us."

When I arrived in Malacca, I handed the stolen artifacts to Ted. I could see by the greedy glow in his eye that he knew how valuable these stolen goods were. He spent a long time studying one golden necklace especially. I was relieved that he didn't make me go back to India again to get a replacement. Now, let me explain some of the history of the necklace. A long time ago, a pirate called Chen Zuyi was planning an attack on the Ming General known as Zheng He. Chen Zuyi had told one of his other pirates about this plan – to wait until Zheng thought he was surrendering and then to attack. However, one of the other pirates was a greedy lad called Shi Jingqing. Shi was very clever and told Zheng He to look out and be ready for the fake 'surrender'. So on the day Chen Zuyi tried to attack Zheng He, Chen was caught and the smart Shi Jingqing abandoned his crew for a job in Malacca. As soon as Zheng He won the battle (thanks to Shi Jingqing), he took all of the valuable pirate treasure and used it as gifts on the voyages. He took all of the treasure, that is, except one necklace – this was the necklace Ted was so interested in. This necklace was given as a reward to Shi Jingqing to thank him for betraying Chen. Anyway, all of this precious treasure had eventually ended up in The Ming Voyage Commemorative Museum in India. And yes, they are now in the hands of Ted.

Ted had finished examining the valuables. He told me that he could probably get me two or three million dollars for the loot, more if I did not mind to wait. I shook my head. Ted is a bit weak and not too brave, so I knew I could push him to pay me more. "You can get me at least 2.5, Ted, and in a hurry. The jewels in there, on their own, should be worth at least 3."

Ted eyed me slyly. "Maybe," he said, "I *do* know someone who is very interested in Shi Jingqing's necklace. I think he even claims to be a descendent of the tricky ex-pirate! However, he wants to meet you first. I could probably get you a few hundred thousand more if you are willing to meet up with him."

"Great!" I exclaimed, "Just get me the cash."

Ted arranged the time and the place for me to meet the buyer. We had to meet in Malacca Bird Park, near the parrot aviary.

I was waiting patiently at the Malacca Bird Park. There were a row of parrots on the trees above my head. They were screeching like they were on fire. I was impatient and muttered to myself "Hurry up," when a high-pitched voice echoed back what I had just said: "Hurry up. Hurry up." Soon dozens of parrots were all shouting the same instructions back at me.

Finally, I spotted Ted. He came towards me a bit hesitantly, like there was something wrong. He had a suitcase, which I assumed contained the stolen jewellery. He told me that the buyer would be there at any moment. Ted had just received a text from him.

I looked over at Ted, but he was staring straight ahead. I noticed he was sweating a bit. He twitched his forehead to indicate there was someone coming from the front. I looked. It was a short guy with short, flat hair. He looked like he might be a soldier or something.

The man approached with a big duffel bag. He threw the bag to me. "Count it!" he said. "All the money is in there!" The bag felt heavy, so I figured there must be a lot of money in it.

I carefully unzipped the bag and took a look inside. Inside there was a lot of paper. It was looked like money but it wasn't. It was just shredded newspapers. "Hey... what the h..." Suddenly I realised the guy was pointing a gun at me.

"You are under arrest for stealing all this valuable treasure that belongs to China" the man roared. Then he mumbled something into his radio when Cheng Heet walked in. He smiled smugly. "You thought you could escape us didn't you, huh? Well. Thanks to your friend Ted here, we knew all your plans!"

I turned to Ted and accused him: "Why did you betray me?"

Then I saw Cheng passing Ted the necklace. "Here is your reward as arranged." he said.

New Beginnings

German Swiss International School, Chen, Veronica – 10

My name is Harold and I am a Reticulated Giraffe. I used to live on the East side of Africa, in Somalia with my other animal friends. We used to talk together, play together, and eat together. One day, my friends and I were eating just like on any other day, when my giraffe friend heard some strange noises. When we turned around, I saw a group of short animals with silver sticks and nets. Men. We started moving away from the men because they were walking right towards us. As they came closer we saw they were a group of twenty poachers, all looking scary and strong. We tried to run, but they brought sticks and forced us to move. Soon we were being led by ropes around our neck. We were pulled for many miles until we reached the ocean.

I saw several giant looking ships with funny writing on the side and very large flags of gold and black. Soon, and much to my confusion, we were being led up a steep wooden path and onto the boat. The ground on the boat was strange because it was made of wood and moved. I immediately felt sick. Before, we knew it, we had left our homeland. I watched it from out of the window in my stall. My long neck could fit out of the window and I could feel the breeze in my mane. It made my eyes water as I saw us sail away and saw the grasslands getting smaller and smaller,

As nightfall came, we were all nervous about where we were going. I saw a cage with lions in it, who I do not usually like, but they looked so sick I felt sorry for them. Eventually everyone calmed down and the swaying of the boat made us all sleepy. As soon as I woke up, I heard hundreds of people shouting and running around. The only person that didn't seem frantic was the poacher, standing tall and trying to look brave and bold.

To avoid feeling dizzy, I poked my head out of the window. Covering the whole ocean in front of me, it seemed, were boats. The huge fleet, with over 200 boats looked fierce. The boats had five tall and proud sails and there were so many it looked like the ocean was a marketplace. The boats were powerful and swift compared even to sharks or whales.

Soon we pulled into a harbour in a strange land. There was a strong smell of spice in the air and many people were gathered on the beach as the boats approached. The ships docked and then, as I watched, the leader on the biggest boat of the fleet walked onto the shore. Two other men came with him. As you know, we giraffes understand all languages, as we are intelligent and can figure things out easily, so it was fun to know what the foreigners were saying before the short man understood. The massive man, who the others called Zheng He, was over two metres tall. He spoke in chinese to the first translator, who translated it to the second translator in arabic, and finally to the local man. After many rounds of speaking and translating, the brave and arrogant man summoned all the frightened faces out to trade with the new people. Not long after, the streets were buzzing with bargaining street vendors, loudly shouting, and every type of noise you could have imagined. It was soon apparent that the people in Quillon, where we were, were giving a gift to the people from the boats. They called the gifts tributes. There were many spices and cloths that looked bright and colourful and, in return, the Chinese sailors gave them food and gold and beautiful silk. After a few days resting in the sun and on the firm ground, finally we set off again. This time I heard we would be going to China!

After many days at sea I was starting to feel sick. My fur was blotchy and starting to fall out. The food they gave us was no longer green and smelled like sewage. Some of the animals had died and even the sun-burned sailors were moving more slowly and looked tired. Then, just as I was waking up one morning, I heard a shout.

“China! China! We are home!”

I poked my head out of the window and saw a beautiful coastline and forests of trees and bamboo. The air was hot, like at home, but sticky – as if there had been a great storm. As we sailed along this great land I saw many people, who seemed to be standing in fields of water, stop and look at us. I also saw pink dolphins dancing and playing in the water. The air smelled of green and of sweet fragrance. This, I knew, would be our new home. We were finally in China and going to visit the Emperor.

Haven

German Swiss International School, Wong, Madeleine – 11

Father slipped. If only it hadn't been raining....

We were moored in the sea off the Indies. During the journey, every day I looked at the flags flying on the majestic *bao chuan* -- all 63 of them speckling the sea -- and they were glorious in the morning sun.

"Mei Li, when you deliver water barrels over to the *ma chuan*, make sure no one notices that you are a girl," said Father. "Remember, girls are not allowed on these ships."

Father couldn't work for at least a day or two so he wanted me to cover for him. This was my chance; I couldn't miss the opportunity to finally observe them close up. I was ecstatic and couldn't focus on my congee.

I had always wanted to see horses. Before I came away on this small ship, I'd lived in an old fishing town near Nanjing and was very exposed to going to the sea. One day some important looking men galloped into our village on their horses. That was the first and the last time that I had seen any horses and I became instantly fascinated. The men circled the village once and went into Mr. Wang's noodle shop. Our only noodle shop that can fit a large crowd. Then I saw Mr. Jing, our village head, run hastily inside after them.

After a whole *shi*, he came back out -- rather pompously to my eyes -- and made an announcement. He said that they were looking for people who could contribute a boat to carry water -- *shui chuan* -- for the Treasure Voyage led by the great Admiral Zheng He.

"I would but can not!"

"My heavenly goodness! I could never in the world afford a *boat*!"

"Of course I would. But how would I make such a boat?"

The villagers each exclaimed. Just then someone raised a voice.

"I will contribute a boat to carry water along with the *bao chuan*!"

It was father. Father volunteered to make a boat. Everyone wanted to. But no one had the timber nor the money. Father didn't either but what was his plan?

"I will use the timber from our house -- the house that we live in!"

People gasped. Our neighbors told him it was preposterous to give up a house to build a boat. I felt disappointed and sad by Father's decision but decided not to dwell on that feeling. Anyway, we had been away at sea most of the time in those days, trying to earn a living on the boats that came from big towns. At the same time, I was proud of my father for contributing to such an important project by the Emperor. Maybe he will build a reputation; maybe he will go and work for the Emperor one day!

Everybody seemed excited about the spices and goods that were given to us to take back home. My back was sticking to my shirt with sweat. It was so hot that I had to try hard not to succumb to the temptation of glugging down all the water that we are carrying on this boat. I knew that it was one of the most important supplies for the thousands of people on the fleet. Our boat supplied water just for the four *ma chuan* that carry the horses. Some of these were used in battle; some were given as gifts to the countries that we visited. It was horrible to even think that the horses could die of thirst because of my thoughtless action! Then father and I would have to leave our boat and go back home somehow, where we actually didn't have a house anymore.

Our boat slowly approached the *ma chuan*, which was at least five times bigger than ours and my heart beat fast. I quickly lowered the anchor and soon the plank came down. As I rolled the water barrel up over to the higher platform of the *ma chuan*, I sniffed the air; it smelled just like the time the officials came with their horses. Where were they kept? A man motioned for me to bring the barrel downstairs. He means below the deck; that must be it!

As I entered the lower deck, the smell of the horses grew more evident. I paused, took a deep breath and walked in, ready to meet the horses, at last. Wow. My eyes followed each stall of horses; rows and rows of them! I parked the water barrel and stroked the silky black hair that seemed just like my own.

Suddenly I was startled by a growl. It came from a beast with black dots and burnished orange eyes. “Cameleopard” it said on the cage. Then I noticed. There were many more different creatures in the stable — colourful birds that made talking sounds! Fantastic feathered fowls with green and blue tails and grey wrinkly cows labeled “Rhinoceros”. Weren’t these animals supposed to be on the *bao chuan*, as they were “treasures” given to our Emperor, too? My solitary awe was interrupted by a sense of being stared at. I swung around and searched for the eyes. There it was, in the far corner of the room, an animal that resembled a cross between a deer and a lion — or more like a horse and a dragon? I tread over to it, and the closer I got the animal seemed to grow taller. In fact, my height came up to just around its lanky legs. My eyes followed up its spotted body all the way up the towering neck to its enormous bulging eyes. They were delightful, dazzling and divine and looking down to me. I got a feeling that we may become great friends when we got back home.

I couldn’t think of leaving this haven of exotic creatures until I heard someone calling for me. Reluctantly, I tiptoed out of the room. At least I would get to come back once more tomorrow.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Good Hope Primary School cum Kindergarten, Chung, Nga Yu – 11

I am one of Mr. Zheng He's maidservants. I met my master who took me back home when I got abandoned by my parents when I was five.

My master went to the Yongle Emperor's throne room a week ago. When he came back, he was as happy as if he was flying in the air. He cried, 'Ling, the Emperor gave me a mission : The expedition down the Western Ocean! We are going to set off in 3 months to find the jade seal!'

I signed. Although I didn't suggest him to do so, it was the preliminary order from the emperor.

11th July 1405

We set off to the Nan Jing coast. I was amazed by the ships which were as tall as a mountain. We set off with ambition. A while later, the ship became bumpy. I rushed out of the deck. The sky and the sea was howling. In a blink of an eye, I had an idea. In a moment, my master ordered the soldiers to push fake people made of straws and papers. Inside was filled with the intestines and organs of the pigs. The sea became silent. My master praised me for my intelligence. We continued our journey.

25TH July 1405

After 14 days of sailing, we arrived at a kingdom named Champa. I went out for fresh air at night. Abruptly, one of the soldiers covered my eyes. When I woke up, I found myself in a place liked jail. I was stunned why am I in such place? Day after day, I sat by the window, waiting for my master. A surveillant told me they were having a war. I started to worry my master. Finally, I was released from prison 3 days later. When my master saw that I came back with the King safely, he nearly wept. Later, after the King gave us the gifts and the documents, we continued our journey.

12th August 1405

We sailed for 10 days and nights, and reached Siam, which had a large population. The sovereign sent an envoy to deliver a message. However, Wang the deputy marshal insisted on strengthening the prevention. So all soldiers went to stand-by in their own post. The sovereign came with his large army. When he boarded the ship, he got caught and tied. Thousands of feeling flocked to his face, which was liked twisted. I nearly burst out of laughing! Similarly, he gave us some gifts and then documents. We apologized for our foolish.

23rd August 1405

Java was our destination. Yet, we were all frightened by the nations who were waiting near the coast, ready to fight with us. We parked to the harbor. The soldiers were shouting in different languages. I took a peek out of the window. After general Tong's order, the soldiers rushed into the little town. Here went the 'Ping Pongs' and there went the 'Cling Clangs'. A week later, the emperor was caught and my master ordered the servants to put him in jail.

30th August 1405

We reached Palembang. The King there was honest and kind. But one of his courtier was a villain. So my master and the king set a trap together. Days later, he was caught. The King was glad and he gave us money precious native product as a souvenir.

13th September 1405

The King in Malocca was thoughtful. He offered us to leave our luggage and gifts in their kingdom and to take it back when we returned to China. My master thanked him for his kindness.

18th September 1405

A traitor in Semudera killed the emperor to become the leader of the nation. In order to help the prince, general Liu and general Cheung encircled their composite and blocked all their escaping routes. He felt forlornness so he committed suicide. The King was satisfied, and he called Ghazni, Malabar, and Baghdad three kingdoms. They all invited us for dinner. My master was glad to see peace among them.

1st October 1405

Wong sergeant got lost in Semudera! He climbed up a hill and found some grass that could make him invisible and a phoenix egg. He borrowed a small boat from the fishermen and caught up the ship. Then he gave some of the 'invisible grass' to me!

21th October 405

100 000 miles away China in Kozhikode! I felt a bit touched when my master ordered the servants to build a gazebo to commemorate this remarkable time.

5th November 1405

We reached East Africa 2 days ago, and we had a war. So one of the sergeant gave the marshal a magical coin. When they battled, he threw the coin and their opponent blocked out.

12th December 1405

7 days before, an envoy from Mecca led us the way to their kingdom, which was the headstream of Buddhist. My master was a Buddhism, so he longed to go to the temple there. Two days later, the King held a farewell dinner for us and welcomed us to visit their country at any time.

13th April 1407

We travelled back to China. Although we didn't find the jade seal, my master was happy to find a night pearl which was the most precious treasure in the world. Yongle Emperor was glad to see us back. Although it was interesting and adventurous, I don't hope that we need to go to a same expedition years later ...

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Good Hope Primary School cum Kindergarten, Yim, Charlotte – 11

I think I definitely made a mistake of going through the beautiful portal that the scientist made. “Take me to ancient China — Ming Dynasty, year 1400,” I said, as I stepped through the portal.

Look, I know what you are thinking. The whole thing was just supposed to be an elaborate trick. Surely, it wasn't supposed to actually work...or so I thought. Boy, was I wrong! How did I know if this thing really had the strength to take me back to ancient China? Stepping inside the time portal literally meant travelling back time to 1400 in ancient China, and that required strength and indomitable spirit. I soon realized that the decision to step through was not clearly thought out, as I had forgotten almost everything, I learnt from my history classes – especially the stuff about the boring wars. However, I did remember something to do with a pirate voyage sent by the Emperor from that period which I wanted to find out more about.

I got up and peeked through one of the coloured windows, and I saw the emperor giving orders to a group of people. Unfortunately, some of the emperor's warriors saw me peeking through the window. They pointed at me and yelled thunderously, “Stranger! Assassin!”

“Oh no!” I thought, “The emperor might catch me and I may never return back to the real world ever again! What if —” My thoughts were interrupted by the Emperor, who was in front of me before I noticed. He spoke, “Ah, I guess you are also interested in joining the voyage! These pirates are going to travel to the seven countries to give each of them a present: either silk, gold or other valuables that I have packed and loaded for them. I believe you are interested in such an odyssey, aren't you?” He winked and smiled at me.

“Your Majesty, I am very honoured! Yes, I'll go!” I said, thinking of all the great voyages I might have. “Very well. Go on now, we haven't got all day!” said the emperor.

I have a happy scream in my mind because I couldn't believe what just happened. I couldn't believe I was going to join the mighty China warriors around to seven lucky countries and hand them their gifts. Moreover, I was delighted because this seemed a much better way for me to complete my history homework.

With great excitement, we sailed across the vast oceans. There were a few countries which were very nice, yet wished to refuse our gifts. However, we insisted as we were given a challenge to travel around the world. Sometimes, there were some countries which were kind of rude. They accepted our gifts and just ignored us. Some tried to attack us as well. It was a good thing we brought some warriors to fight the soldiers sent after us.

The most remarkable and memorable voyage had to be the one when we went to U.K. The Queen of England was very kind and offered us a ride for us back to China on her maiden ship. We of course thanked her for her generous offer and instead gave her some precious items and some silk. She was very surprised and said “May God bless you! You are very nice! I'm sorry to hear I cannot give you a ride back to China, but I will certainly remember you and will never forget you!”

That is when I realized the deep meaning of “One will feel more blessed to give than to receive. “This experience was surely my greatest treasure. At our school, our School Theme this Year is “Seek Your Treasure”, so it would seem that this was to be my treasure and serendipity during this voyage with these pirates. Soon after this part of the surprising voyage, a portal opened up behind me. The Emperor appeared again and I told him that I was grateful for this opportunity, and I hoped to join them again on another History Class voyage. With that, I turned around, and stepped through the portal before it closed.

A Tale from the Emperor's Ships

Good Hope Primary School cum Kindergarten, Yim, Hoi Lam – 11

I woke up to the sound of the lieutenant of our ship's loud yelling. As my roommates scrambled out to the deck for orders, I found myself hardly being able to follow them. I was one of the latest to reach the deck. I glanced over my shoulder when no one noticed. All 317 ships of his Majesty, Emperor Yongle, lead by one of the Emperor's most trusted companions, Zhenghe.

"Focus!" Lieutenant Chen yelled after noticing that I was not paying attention, along with a few others, all mesmerized by impressive sight just like I was. We snapped our heads back to the enraged generals, looking a bit sheepish. They cannot blame us. Many of us had only been recently recruited and this was our first journey out of our great kingdom. It had only been 6 months, but it felt like forever. I was far far away from our family and missed them dearly. It was estimated the journey itself would take 2 to 3 years, which means my little sister would be 5 or 6 by the time I returned, and I myself would be 26 by the time I returned home, not to mention I possibly have to serve in the army for a few more years.

It was a tough life, but nothing compared to how much our king has served us. He gave us peace and tranquillity.

"Soldiers! We are nearing the land that we have named Champa! This specific land is known for creating the lemongrass you may know, but possibly not, since most of you are stupid and uneducated." There were quite a few murmurs at such a harsh and crude comment from Lieutenant Chen, but they were all silenced by the other soldiers. We continued to listen to what we were supposed to do.

"Half of you on this ship will stay and guard the ship. The other half, the most elite, will be chosen to go with General Zhenghe. Understood?" The tall and imposing man barked. He was rewarded with a loud and clear "yes" from us and he nodded gladly.

"Those who wish to stay here, get back to the sleeping compartments downstairs. The rest, we'll choose the best." Few soldiers budged, since most wanted to take the most out of the journey and see the scenery, others just wanting to possibly wanting to experience a real fight. I was among the many who stayed.

Lieutenant Chen grunted and told us he'd be tapping the head of the ones that were going with the General. I crossed my fingers and prayed to the Jade Emperor that I would be chosen. And I was. My eyes glimmered excitedly. I was going to set foot in another kingdom! Most people never even had the chance!

We set off a few hours later, and were immediately stopped by Champa's guards. None of us were able to communicate with them, and we had to rely on hand gestures to show that we weren't a threat. It was extremely hard, but we finally managed. We were welcomed, but all of us were extremely careful, knowing they could turn on us and kill us any second. We were not fighting in our territory. We were fighting in theirs. I was among those who waited outside a large building's door as guards while the General entered to converse.

It was hours until the General came out again, with bad news. The Champas were not happy about us, and he heard plans of killing us. Two of our fastest runners were sent to warn the ships while about a hundred others and I remained in the city, half of us hidden, the others, including me, escorting General Zhenghe to safety. I was one of the very last at the small parade we had back to the ship, and therefore the first to notice the oncoming Champa army.

"Enemies at 6 o'clock!" I yelled loudly, nudging the nearby soldiers and urging those in front to run faster. The General was on a horse, and he sped with two others towards the ship, while the others were left to deal with the enemy alone.

It was a lost cause, so little of us against so many of them, but we had sworn we would fight until our last breath, and that was exactly what we did. I was among the first to join the battle, my sword gleaming under the harsh sunlight. People all around us were screaming and hurrying away, unwilling to be in the bloodbath. I did the most stupid thing. I jumped straight into the fight.

I managed to stab a soldier, piercing through his armour. Blood splashed onto my helmet, and I bit back a disgusted yelp. I was almost decapitated by another soldier who took advantage of my momentary stun, but I counterattacked and managed to trip him before a fellow warrior finished him. I nodded at him, thankful that I was not the one to spill blood.

All around us, the battle raged on. I fought enemy after enemy like a monster, and when they started retreating, we wasted no time running to the ships, and when the last of us got on, the anchor was released and we sped away into the oceans, watching as Champa became nothing but a small dot behind us.

I write this on the ship that is carrying us back home, to China, my beautiful country. We have achieved many things on this journey, which I know will be rejoiced over and over years after years. But for now, I'll keep this piece of paper under my cabin pillow, and I'll see who I'll reveal this to.

Lee Ming

Diary of a stowaway

Harrow International School Beijing, Zhang, Queen – 10

Dear Diary,

Today is the first day writing in this. My friend Sophia and I all want to sail with the great Zheng He. But we all know the rule that girls aren't allowed on the boat – so unfair! And girls are treated in a very bad way and we can't do anything about it anyway 'cause we are kids. But this time we won't let them push us down any more. We have a plan to sneak on to Zheng's boat.

Day 1

Today we will try our best to be like men. We help each other cut our hair, even though it looks like our hair has been bitten by dogs but at least we look like a man. Oh great! Now I look like a beggar. We have to wear men's clothes. I hate those stinky man clothes that my father gave me. They are so heavy! When we tried walking in them, OMG! So disgusting. But after an hour or two we started to actually feel like a man and swagger like they do. We practice speaking because if we only look like a man and we sound like a girl that would be pretty weird to others, right? We are very nervous with this because if we do not success we will not get a chance to sail with Zheng. Or if we get caught we might even be killed. And we do not want to die. Now I have just got to make my voice very low and make my voice louder and stronger.! Sophia doesn't need to try 'cause she already sounds like a boy (though I would never say that to her).

Day 3

Today Zheng's crew will be arriving and today our job is to pretend to be selling our mother's dumplings to people so we can sneak into his crew without being seen. It is quite easy cause there is a whole bunch of them and they are all taller than us so nobody will see two girls in aprons crawling on the floor and we could just squeeze in. Then we will change outfits. Luckily, I have a sister and Sophia has a brother who will be helping us. We could just tell them we were going to the bathroom and that they have to get on with the work. Our mother's recipe is selling very well so it is super crowded. But good for us as we can just easily slip away and leave our poor little brothers and sisters alone in the crowd handling those crazy customers.

Now we are in between the crew. Ewwww! Gross! They all smell like animals! I thought that they are supposed to be great but ughhh, they stink! Really bad.

Suddenly, Sophie fell. In this situation, if you fall, you will probably die. They are men and if they step on you ... Game over! But thank goodness that I quickly pulled her up. "That was close!" I whispered loudly. Nobody could hear us because the music was way too noisy.

The boat is much bigger than I thought.

Zheng is coming ... We rush and hide behind a wooden barrow to change into our uniforms. Now we look like men.

Zheng's voice boomed out "Our mission is to ..." He said a lot of things about the boat like where we are sleeping or where the deck was ... Luckily, me and Sophia are hiding in a relief boat on deck so we have a "room" to ourselves. Lucky us! Ha ha. We have been learning a lot of sailing skills so sailing won't be a problem. It is just that we don't want to be recognized.

Day 4

The first thing I did in the morning when I woke up was to check the time. I did not want to be late on the first day of sailing! But Sophia did not seem to care. It was already 6:30 in the morning. Sophia is literally still sleeping while I am already dressed and ready to get down. I finally wake her.

We zoom upstairs. We are not late.

Zheng is teaching the trainees how to do their jobs. Our job is to control the position of the sail. Zheng seems to notice that we are not as strong as the other boys so he tells us to hoist the sail together. That is quite a tiring job because you know you have to climb the rigging to set the sail. Normally this job is exchanged through the day but we have to work together. No-one sees this as strange, except for Zheng.

It is such a busy day that we don't even realise that it is lunch time already. Just when the day was going perfectly... Suddenly... "Boom!"

Our boat bumped into an island and it began to sink. Uh-oh, there was no time to launch the safety boats! Luckily, we had not travel far yet. And we learned how to swim before so we won't drown. We saw Zheng Paddling around the water almost drowning but other sailors were too busy saving their own lives that they didn't see him. Zheng doesn't know how to swim! What about him? We can't just leave our hero behind to let him just die. We only had one thought in our mind, "We have to save him!" I said as we pulled Zheng onto a piece of driftwood that was moving in our direction and we took turns to push him.

Finally, we reached land. And when we got up, we were shocked! It was Shanghai! And people were cheering for us. Why? Because we saved Zheng! I wish I can see my family now. They would be so proud of me.

The Voyage of a Lifetime

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Chan, Mavis – 11

Day 1

Captain's Log

There is a new crew on the ship. His name is Leng. He looks really young and skinny, so I am not sure if he can handle the heavy packages. Well, if he doesn't perform well, I'll feed him to the sharks.

Lian's Log

I arrived today at this colossal ship. I just met the captain and I don't know what he thinks of me. I'm very anxious since I don't want them to find out that I am a woman. As long as I keep my voice deep and work hard, hopefully, I should be fine.

Day 10

All is well. The ship's crew are settling in, learning to obey orders quickly. The winds have been favourable and we are setting a good pace. That guy, Leng is stronger than I originally thought. Let's hope we keep this up.

Wow, this is difficult. It's much harder than I thought. Every single day we need to wake up before the sun, we go to bed after dark. I am responsible for keeping the deck spick and span. If it's not to the shipmate's liking, I get 10 lashes. So far I have avoided any punishment. I have seen it happen on others and it looks nasty.

Day 29

We lost a crewmate to the storm. He was thrown overboard from the deck while looking for dangerous waves. We replaced him with the new guy Leng. We will see how he copes as the new porter. We will need to keep an eye on our water supply. I'm impressed with Leng! He is a better porter and can lift more than old Yongle. He is more intelligent than I thought. I shall ask him for some mapping help.

I'm exhausted. I have double the work! They have given me the porter duty as well as my cleaning duty. My muscles ache really badly. I keep telling myself that it's worth it. I'm not so sure anymore but I think the captain is starting to take a liking to me. He was amazed that I could understand maps. I can't wait to get off this flea-infested ship.

Day 38

We are beginning to run out of food. We have put the men on rations. I'm hoping we get there sooner than later as hungry men can start a mutiny. Leng however, has a real skill for reading maps, possibly even better than me. I really feel happy and relaxed around him.

This work is getting easier and I feel like I'm doing a good job. This is becoming worth it as each day means I'm getting closer to the destination. Captain and I are able to talk about anything... well, there is one thing I can't tell him. If he were to find out, I couldn't cope with it.

Day 51

Yesterday, we saw Arabia and we all got excited. Unfortunately, the sailor Ma He, who was manning the wheel, was not paying attention and crashed us into a giant rock. Today, I woke early before the crew, I went to check in on them. When I entered Leng's room, something shocked me. How could he have long hair and lied to me the whole time? He covered up the fact that she was a woman? What should I do?

We had crashed into a giant rock!!! I fell into the water while sweeping the deck. Then, my wig fell off and my hair came loose! I don't know what I'm going to do...

This morning, the captain invited me over to his quarters to have lunch. The food was so much better than our normal lunch. Surprisingly the captain had found out I was a woman. I had imagined it happening a million times but I never thought it would be real. I didn't want to lie to him and I felt bad when I told him the truth. He has decided to think about whether he should tell the others or keep it a secret.

Day 72

I made the decision to keep it a secret since she was the best crew I had ever had. Yesterday, was the last day I could see her, considering that she escaped from us. I wonder how we will get back to our hometown since my ship has been destroyed.

I was so relieved the captain kept my secret but I still had to leave since I didn't want anyone to know who I actually was except for the Captain. Now for my next adventure, I will head to India to discover their culture. This was a very important experience that I will never forget which means that I will learn from it and not make this mistake ever again.

Day 93

I can't believe that Lian's gone, but the good news is that we found a guy called Ming and he was happy to sell us his ship. We just arrived near India. Now, we just need food. Well, the others probably can fish for food. I'm amazed that there was a woman on the deck right under my nose and I had no idea. Oh well, life goes on and I have got work to do and I wonder if I will ever meet her ever again.

I found her! I can't believe that I found my mum! I missed her so much. We just spent a day crying and laughing and trying to piece our lives for each other. It was all worth it. I hope I will meet him again

Revenge

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Chelpanova, Alisa -10

Zheng He trades treasure with countries to show peace...

The wind howled through the night and everybody was staring in shock at their sinking ship. The crew was shivering from the cold and the thought of them drowning out at sea. Not seeing their family after they died. Not being there anymore to see their children grow up.

“Where’s Captain Zheng?”

Everybody cried out, “Somebody go get him!” A tired looking man ran off into the shelter to find the captain. His feet drummed on the wooden floor as he raced his thoughts to the captain’s hammock. Why hadn’t Captain Zheng run out at the first sign of trouble? What was he doing right now? Was he alright? Little did he know that the captain was nowhere near alright...

While the crew member was getting the captain, small, smart and brave Qui Xi at the age of eight was hiding out in the storage closet next to her dad’s (the captain’s) room. She had quickly realised that they were sinking but had decided not to climb out of the closet in case somebody saw her. She had peeked through the crack in the middle of the closet and heard two people come by, one had been very slow and cautious, or so it seemed, and Qui Xi had spotted something shiny and sharp looking which glinted in the moonlight with her sharp eyes. Perhaps a knife? She had wondered for quite a while why the man had been carrying a knife.

It hadn’t been a chopping knife, thought Qui Xi, remembering the knife her mother always used to cut tomatoes or steak, it hadn’t seemed like the knife to peel too, those usually had two sharp metal bits connected with plastic. No, it looked like the type of knife to kill something.

Her thoughts were disturbed suddenly by heavy boots clomping frantically down the corridor. Who could it be? Qui Xi nearly missed the sight of a thin, skinny man racing across the corridor looking confused. What could be wrong? At Qui Xi’s age, children liked to ask questions which, much to their annoyance, almost never got answered! Now’s a good time to come out, thought Qui Xi and very cautiously, climbed out. Almost the second she climbed out of the closet, she heard an agonised scream followed by the sound of a door being slammed shut and fast footsteps getting quieter and quieter until there was nothing to be heard. Qui Xi hated silence so she was glad when she heard the creak of a door being opened and closed, but was not so glad when she heard another scream, less agonised though, more sorrowful and sad. She reached the door which she recognised to be her dad’s and peeked inside. What she saw Qui Xi will remember for the rest of her life. She saw a man on his knees, back faced to her, holding a blood-soaked body in his hands. Her father.

She wanted to run. She wanted to run for the rest of her life, but she didn’t. Instead, Qui Xi watched in shocked silence at the man holding her precious father in his hands. One that would never see life again, enjoy life again, feel life again. Somebody who would never again witness the feeling of being proud or alive, because he was dead. Murdered. Murdered by someone Qui Xi would get back at one day. From now on, there would be no happiness in her life until she got *revenge*...

The sailors had started to wonder what had happened to their crew mate but decided to take action themselves, without the captain. The stronger people were left behind to scoop water out of the ship and the weaker people would go down the ladder where they wouldn’t weigh so much in the water but still hold onto the ship, ready to climb back on. Everyone had the same thought in mind; *save the treasure*. Everyone worked like bull in a fit, scooping water in, scooping water out, scooping water in, scooping water out. They were all soon very tired and wished for their hammock. When the last of the water had been scooped out, the people onboard sat down heavily on the benches and the people in the water gratefully climbed out and wrapped themselves in warm towels and changed into dry clothes.

Once everyone was settled, two things happened. One, the crew felt more of a team now, and two, they wondered what had happened to their captain and crew mate. So, with newfound team spirit, the group of curious monkeys went downstairs to find out what had happened. Much to the crew’s surprise, the first thing they saw was a little girl, about the age of eight or nine, weeping.

The brave team peeped into the room, the same way Qui Xi had done, and they too, will remember what they saw very vividly at the bottom of their heart. Captain Zheng was laid down on the hammock and the wound had been covered. The crew and the little girl formed a circle around the captain. To the whole crew's surprise, the little girl spoke in her quiet, small voice, "My dad told me once that one day, I will leave him and go out into the world as a young person and I should take with me my eager heart, mind and a will to help. That I should take with me a good understanding of many things, and a willingness to accept responsibility and show myself as somebody to trust and lean on. He said that he counts a successful person not as somebody who has done well in school, those these things are good too, that he counts a success as somebody who learns to be good hearted, and kind, sensible and trustable, good, sound people."

"I will."

Seeweed's Wretched Life

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Cheng, Jessica – 10

“Seeweed, go get me a cup of hot green tea. NOW! You wretched girl.”

And that’s how my wretched life started.

You see, my father was a very important Chinese emperor. You’re probably wondering how I ended up being a slave when I was a Chinese princess. Well, it all started like this...

My father, the important Chinese emperor didn’t want a useless baby girl in his grand, royal life. So, guess what he did? Well, this is pretty harsh but... he put me on a DESERTED ISLAND to let me starve to death. He clearly hated me.

While my *grand, and spoilt* father is enjoying his life at his *glorious* palace, I was being a dirty slave in a ship. The only person that actually treated me *nice*ly was the captain: Captain Ming. The other crew hated me ever since Captain Ming found me at the deserted island. They didn’t care about me. When Captain Ming was around, they pretended to be super nice and loving (they were *really* bad actors and too bad Captain Ming didn’t notice).

After living here for twelve years, I got used to this kind of bullying behaviour. I loved the ship; it was so nice. We travelled night and day. We went to different places such as: India, Southern China, Africa, Arabia. The most dangerous voyage was in Africa. The people there seriously did not have any common sense.

It was my first journey: to Africa. I was really excited since this was my first time traveling. By now, I already been to six places in the world to give away our precious treasure. After ten years of traveling, we finally reached our destination. Also, after twelve years, I finally got my name: Seeweed(I know it’s spelt wrong. The pirates didn’t know how to spell)

Anyway, we went to Africa. Captain Ming was really weird. He didn’t steal treasure like normal pirates. He *gave* people them. I once asked him, “Why are you giving people money?”

He replied, “It’s kindness dear, kindness”

I was really confused then. Why would you give someone when you could keep it all for yourself? Apparently, he was really kind and shared everything he had; for better or for worse.

Back to reality. As we landed in the coast of Africa, we met a huge army of Africans staring at our humongous ship. I didn’t realize it then but the Africans were too scared to do anything. They thought that we were going to attack them or something. Captain Ming suddenly shouted “We are here in peace. We are here to help. We are here to offer money to this glorious country. Have no fear!”

The people of Africa looked around in horror thinking “Our country, glorious?”

Boldly, the crew marched of the ship and towards the emperor’s palace.

Suddenly, the door banged open. Lots of smelly, well-armed men marched into the palace. When the emperor was about to yell “ATTACK”, Captain Ming said in a clear, loud voice “We will give you the treasures of China. Please accept our gift!”.

Shocked, the emperor muttered “Okay”.

“If there’s no problem, we must journey on our way.” Said Captain Ming calmly.

Then, I understood. China was on the verge of war with lots of places. The only way to stop that was natural kindness. The Chinese Emperor never understood the meaning of kindness. He always thought violence was the best way to solve problems. But Captain Ming, he traded kindness with peace, and that was the only way he could succeed.

The Ming Treasure Voyages – I am Li

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Fung, Charlotte – 10

Boom! The crashing waves hit against the docks, as the crew busily run around, getting ready to depart.

Cautiously, I watch closely; hiding behind some cargo nearby. I am Li and I am hungering to become a part of the infamous Ming Treasure cargo crew! And I will do whatever it takes to get there.

Although I am a girl, I know I am destined to join Yong-le Emperor's treasure fleets to sail the oceans under Admiral Zheng He and to show the Western World the true power and magnificence of the Chinese empire.

Suddenly, an idea comes to me! The crew is so busy, and the night is becoming so dark that I can disguise myself as part of the male crew and no one would be any wiser! Quickly, I run back into the village, roughly slash my long black hair with some scissors, change into some dirty trousers, and rush back out of the door.

It is not long before I return to the docks; just in time before the powerful ship sets sail. Quietly, I sneak onto the ship, as the rest of the crew continues to be oblivious to me as they busy with their chores.

"Let's go!" yells the Admiral proudly as he boards the ship.

We are off! The ship slowly and confidently drifts off into the deepest darkest seas that I have ever seen. The thrill of my new adventure is overwhelming but at the same time the excitement and the lull of the ship's sway makes me a little sleepy.

A few of the crew pass me by as I find my place in the hold trying to look busy shifting cargo. I am relieved as by now my heart is pounding out of my skin. I'm struggling to hold it together. I lean on the cargo boxes and slowly, my eyes get heavier and heavier and finally, unable to resist any longer, I give into temptation and close them firmly shut as the other crewmen begin to leave. I dream wildly of all sorts of wonderful things: faraway lands, meeting beautiful Kings and Queens, languages I could not understand, but am excited to learn....

Then, abruptly, I am awoken by thunder that roars from the skies like a hungry lion pouncing on its prey. The next thing I know, the ship is being engulfed by the storms. The hull is cracked and the bow is completely wrecked! The crew are not ready for this as many of them are standing on the deck and are thrown into the waters. As luck would have it, I manage to remain safely in the hold with the cargo although by this time water is starting to seep through the cracks appearing in the hull.

I run as fast and steadily as I can onto the swaying deck and notice something glistening close by within the waters through the corner of my eye. The ship must have hit some land in the storms and what I see are the crystalline rocks from the land being reflected in the moonlight. Grabbing all the rope I can lay my hands on, I run towards the direction of the glistening rocks and jump off the gradually sinking ship. I swim hurriedly and manage to climb safely onto one large piece of rock. As soon as I make sure I am securely on, I tie one end of rope to myself and throw the other end with all my might towards one of the sailors in the waters pulling him safely onshore. I do this again and again until I am exhausted and can no longer see any more bodies in the dim moonlight as the storms begin to calm.

The dawn sunlight begins to appear bringing with it a new day and new beginnings. The horizon is illuminated in warm colours. The crew I have managed to save, start to stir. Some have sore limbs, others have minor injuries; but nevertheless all of us feel fortunate to be alive.

"Li, you saved us! We want to make sure the Admiral rewards you for your bravery and does not punish you for boarding his ship without permission! We will all make a solemn oath to keep your identity a secret!" The survivors swore amongst themselves once I tell them my story.

I am Li, I am a girl, and I have become a part of the Ming Treasure cargo crew!

The Doomed Voyage

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Hill-Wood, Wilfred – 10

A solemn evening washed over the deck. We had embarked on a perilous journey to India. The road would be very long and arduous, full of deadly perils. The weather picked up on the crew's mood. Stormy clouds cackled as the rain attacked us. I looked into the dreary horizon. Would we succeed? I clung to the old, dilapidated rail. We would have a perilous journey ahead of us and we would make it to, **India**. Lightning crackled, the wind howled, thunder roared and the boat set off into the dead of night...

The sun beamed, feeding on our cheerful mood. The waves subsided, it was as if grim was unknown. One figure stood out from the rest. Compared to the others he was a god. He stood imposing, towering over us. He was admiral Zheng and he would lead us to India.

Boom! Fear shook the deck, "Pirates!" the lookout cried in alarm. An arrow whizzed over my head. I drew my sword and strode into a legion of pirates, slashing at them, showing them no mercy. They were hurting my home and I was not going to let anyone hurt my home. I was invincible. My confidence allowed the my cabin mates to come back and fight, it was like a battle horn. A ghastly pirate rose the last one of the pack. His expression was an amusing one, as if he didn't care if most of his fellow pirates were silenced. His sinister grin angered me, forcing me to lunge out at him, only then did I realise the truth. He was holding up the admiral's head, coated in blood. I thrust my dagger out, allowing his corpse fall off the deck. Tears glistened down my cheek. I stared in horror at the carnage of the battlefield. I mourned for my lost friends and fed the pirate's bodies to the sharks. I felt a twinge of guilt, then shoved it away. They were hurting my home, and I wasn't going to let them. "Set course for India," I yelled!

Dark clouds hovered, casting their anger towards us, only then did I know the truth. The ambush had turned into a massacre. An army of dark figures leapt onto the deck, polluting with pirates. "Stand strong!" I bellowed, the crew's confidence was gone. It crumbled like sand. I attempted to reach the lifeboats, our only saviour. Only then did I realise our doomed defat. I tumbled into the lifeboat. My eyes were welled with tears. My ears blocked the anguished screams of the sailors, the cackling of the pirates. I was a sitting duck out there in the ocean. An arrow ran towards me, embedding itself in my forehead. My eyes rolled out, everything went black and it was the cursed voyage, the doomed voyage...

"Ugh!" I crawled out of the wreckage. Was I the only survivor? A dense, deep forest lay before me. The vines gnarled around my feet, the fog clouded my vision. The only bright aspect was the bird's chorus echoing around me, like a microphone in a tunnel. The sun penetrated my skin. The wind rustled my hair. I was deserted and alone would I survive? ...

I settled down, nourishing on the last of the goat I had captured. I caught the aroma of fire burning, it reminded me of the taste of a sweet, succulent meal in a warm place not on a island scavenging for food. I was a beggar on the streets of this city. Thunder rumbled! I drew my dagger and charged of into the night. I froze, fell in agony, it was a hundred bullets invading around my body. Rivers of blood, sweat and tears fell from my eyes. I was going to make it, I urged.

I woke up with a shudder to find myself in a thick net. I struggled to turn around. My feet bound together, handcuffs had engulfed me. I was hurt physically but mentally as well. My proud navy, I had set off with men, ships gifts. All was left was me. My throat was choked with emotion. I glanced down to see a horde of barbarians crowding around me.

I was desperate. The chief replied by banging his chest swinging his two axes which spun around in his hand. I was outnumbered, I was unarmed. I have no hope left. I was the mouse and he was the cat. He lunged at me cutting my prison in half. I leapt out dodging his powerful strikes. They formed a ring around me, moved in for the kill. My heart pounded. I closed my eyes and prepared for the worst. He raised his axe up...

The horn sounded. I looked up, incredulous. I had never been happier to see a ship before. "Climb aboard," I dived to port escaping the battle raging behind me. I had dodged the battle but I couldn't evade destiny. The leader charged towards me, a bull was charging towards me. My pulse sped up, my reactions quickened. I felt if I had been pumped with energy. He charged to me in slow-motion, I easily ducked. He fell, he fell of the waterfall. His eyes were blazing with fire, anger towards me as his head submerged. I took charge of the wheel and lead my army out of the battle..

I was lust on dreams of glory, a massacre towards these creatures, who had broken me so much. I charged out, my men behind me following my bloodthirsty brain. I left no survivors. I traveled on, to India.

We were starving, too hungry. A banquet lay before us, only when we reached out it disappeared. Miraculously we found a flock of cattle. Fear was etched on their faces as we killed their brethren. We were ready to go again, to continue the arduous journey to India.

We were almost at Delphi, India.. We trekked across snowy mounts the cold freezing our persistent will. Should we give up? The icy terrain was full of crevasses and as long as galaxies. It was a universe of snow and rocks. It was a mirage. What is the point of struggling? I pondered. I pushed the thought down. I wasn't going to give up now, amount of hardships I had endured. I kept going. I glanced up. "Delphi," !

I was greeted with a warm welcome... We gifted them with rivers of jewelry and paper. We served feasts of steak and beef and pork. This was our grave mistake...

"Run!" I cried, as they charged, insulted. They formed ranks, advanced like robots. Each move in sync. It was a dead end. I had nowhere to go, nowhere to run hide. I was a battleground of fear and anger.. Ungovernable terror gripped me. I closed my eyes, and fell off the palace roof destroying myself...

The Ming Treasure Voyages

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Jones, Kaelan – 10

My name is Harry and I am 11 years old. I work on a ship but it's not any ordinary ship. This ship is a colossal boat that has been ordered by Admiral Zheng He to deliver some precious goods around Asia. "Harry! Hurry up Harry!". That was my mum calling me to hurry up getting ready for my big journey. I was actually quite early but I knew better than to argue with my mum. The reason she wanted me so early is because she wanted to spend more time saying goodbye to me.

I was excited and nervous at the same time because of the long journey ahead. It was dangerous because I could encounter pirates and we might get swept away at sea. Yet, it was also exciting because I would get to deliver goods that people could only dream of and I could go to different countries.

I am at the boat pier right now and I can hardly hear myself think, let alone hear my Mum. My heart was pounding through my skin as I was saying goodbye. "Goodbye, mum!" I yelled over the commotion. "I will miss you so much Harry!" my Mum replied. I knew my Mum was afraid because I think we both knew I might not be making it back to China. My heart was racing as I stepped up the wooden plank saying what might be my final words to my Mum...

Once I got onto the vessel I was dumbstruck. It was literally the most amazing sight I've ever seen. There were at least three times the number of people on the boat than there was at the pier. There were thousands of people loading and unloading goods that literally sparkled in the sunshine. I met a few people including a girl my age named Hazel and a boy a bit younger than me called Frederick. Hazel is quite tall and strong and Frederick is very short and skinny. Soon, I got settled down in my cabin, coincidentally with Hazel and Frederick. Soon I started doing some work. First, I moved some barrels away so there was more space for the adults to put down the goods (I was too young to handle the goods). After that I cleaned the lookout so the people up there could sit or stand comfortably. My last job was to wash the dirty dishes that the older crew used for their supper.

Soon it was my supper and we hadn't even set off, yet I was already loving my new job. I was just about to brush my teeth after a long day of hard work when I felt a sudden lurch and I rushed outside. When I got outside I looked around for the pier which we were at only a couple of minutes ago but I was surrounded by pure darkness. No stars shone and there wasn't even the faintest of outlines of where the moon might have been.

This is my tenth day on the boat and we still hadn't seen any land until late morning when a voice from lookout informed the whole crew. "Land ahoy!". Suddenly everybody dropped and stopped what they were doing and started leaning along the railings to try get a good look at the land. At first it only looked like an isolated island but when we got closer the land looked surprisingly like Singapore just like on the map we had on the main deck.

Singapore was one of our destinations to deliver to so we were going to stop there. At first, I was just stood there not knowing what to do but then I felt a clammy, sweaty palm slap my shoulder. I quickly turned around not knowing who to expect but when I saw it was the Captain I rapidly relaxed. "Go look around son. You've earned this break after all your hard work these past few days," the Captain ordered. So, I obediently followed his orders and had a look around this minute country.

Soon it was all over and we all had to get back on the boat after a long day of seeing iconic structures, like the Merlion. That night I could hardly sleep because my leg muscles were aching so much from all the walking I had to do so I went up onto the main deck to look out at sea. I decided that I would tell Hazel and Frederick because I could hear them uncomfortably twitching in their beds. They willingly got up and we walked together chatting about what we did that day. I think we were so encased in our own conversation that we didn't even hear the mutterings from behind us. Soon I felt something touch my back so I quickly spun around to find what were obviously pirates.

“PIRATES!!” I yelled “PIRATES!! PIRATES ON BOARD!!” but I had a piece of tape around my mouth so it sounded like “prtftw! Prtftw oo bood!!” so no one came running to rescue us. The pirates made the quick decision of dumping us into the shark-infested sea. Soon we were shivering in the icy cold water praying that the sharks don’t get us yet we still managed to scream at the top of our lungs. Nobody on the ship heard us so we soon gave up trying and just let our bodies float helplessly waiting for our doom.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, this fire-breathing, almost transparent dragon swoops in from the skies. “I am called George. I have been summoned by Capogo whom, I’m sure you know, is the most feared sea monster in the world. Anyway, he summoned me to come save you because he thinks that you three are the ones in the sacred prophecy,” said George whilst hovering over the surface of the crashing sea. “D-dragon?!” I exclaimed but before I knew it we were scooped up onto the back of the dragon and taken away into the night sky...

The Adventure on Sea

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lee, Abbey – 10

Dear Diary,

“Alright, are we all ready to set sail?” Emperor Zhong Lee asked.

“Yes, we are ready if you are Sir,” Maiden Ying responded.

My name is Fei and I’m 13 years old. I have a sister named Yuan and my dad is Emperor Zhong Lee. Today we are sailing to the Macadain forest to find this stupid pile of gold that my father wants.

“We are ready captain, let’s go!” Father exclaimed eager to leave.

Once we set sail, I went down to my room on the ship to wait for Yuan to finish her violin lesson in the violin suite. While I was waiting, I looked out my window and saw trees as light as a marshmallow and fishes dancing in the water. Not long after we started to sail, captain Zhang Wei shouted “Waterfall! Waterfall!”

I looked out of my window and saw what seems to be a cascading waterfall under an opalescent light.

“Hey, let’s go play!” Yuan cried. Then I got out of my bed and we both walked over to the game center.

In the game center, there lots of arcade games like down the clown, claw machine madness and lots more.

We dashed straight to the game that we wanted to play and started playing. Suddenly the captain shouted “Five Minutes left, Five Minutes left.”

“Oh No, there are only five minutes left, that means that we can only play one game.” Yuan said.

Then I said “Don’t worry we can still play when we come back.” Then we started to play the game that we choose. “ We are here! We are here!” Captain Zhang Wei bellowed. We all walked over to the front of the ship and waited for father to say we could get off.

“ Get Off! Get Off!” Father told us. One at a time we got of the ship and went to the Macadain forest. We walked inside the Macadain forest and searched for the stupid pile of gold.

We searched for ages and finally found the gold. Father reached out for the gold and grabbed the gold. The crew quickly ran back to the boat to avoid any traps. Once we got on the boat, the captain told us that we are going to stay overnight. The sun started to set and the moon started to say hello, I looked outside my window and saw the sunset sky with clouds as soft as a marshmallow. The mountains were standing tall on the green grass. I got tired so I went to bed.

Bright and early on the next morning we started to set sail back home. I was still very tired so I went back to sleep. A few hours later, Yuan woke me up to go to the arcade. We walked over and played lots more games. We played ten games and father said that there was only ten minutes left. So we played as fast as we could and five minutes later we played fifteen games. “ Get off the ship,” father yelled.

Finally, I said I can go back home.

Written by Fei Lee

19/6/1775

The Secret Pirate

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lee, Franco – 11

As quickly as his legs could go, Admiral Zheng ran and ran like his life depended on it, going as far as he could from the menacing shouts of evil laughter. Gun shots pierced the atmosphere. He scrambled towards the lower deck, desperate to guard the treasure with his crew.

As the gun shots stopped, silence invaded the room. Hong Bao, who was a chubby young man, followed his admiral to the upper deck to investigate what had made the pirates disappear.

Many pirates and crew members were lying on the wooden floor with a pool of blood surrounding them. The scent of war still lingered.

“H–Help!” cried a croaky voice. “Help me...”

Hong Bao heard the cry and as quickly as a cheetah dashed towards the sound, finding himself face to face with a weak and feeble man, lying on the ground.

Admiral Zheng had also heard the voice and was standing next to the man, questioning him.

Admiral Zheng, the kind–hearted man he was, took pity on this stranger and gave him food, water and a place to sleep. Little did the admiral know that this man was only the first step to a huge, nasty plot planned by the Black Pearl Pirates.....

Soon, darkness covered the sky. Charcoal clouds rolled in, swallowing any last bits of light. Then began the gentle pitter patter of rain quickly becoming a vicious onslaught.

Once the rest of the crew found out about what happened earlier in the day, they had a feast to welcome their newest crew member, Yang Zhen. Out on the table was any cuisine you could ever desire. Fried sweet and sour pork, fried prawn, rice noodles, fried rice, etc.

They gorged themselves in food as though they had never eaten before. Their manners were atrocious!

When the clock struck twelve, Yang Zhen decided this would be the perfect moment to strike. He got out of bed and darted to the treasure vault, swiftly and quietly. The vault with all the treasure inside had many complicated locks. *Wow*, Yang Zhen thought, *How could I be so dumb not to think that a vault will definitely have locks.*

He remembered what his *real* captain had said to him.

“Yang Zhen, I am giving you the one chance to prove yourself. Steal the Ming Treasure and I might promote you. Do not fail or else you will be banished from the Black Pearl Pirates. Arrrgh!”

Reluctantly, he went back to bed and tried all night to put together a cunning plan.

The next morning, a bucket of icy cold water was splashed onto Yang Zhen’s face.

“Hey! What was that for?”

“To wake you up.” replied Zhu Liang, another crew member. “Follow me, I’ll give you a tour of the ship.”

After Yang Zhen dried his face, Zhu Liang showed him around. On the upper deck, a huge sail towered over them and a steering wheel to guide the ship. A staircase was connecting the upper and lower deck. On the lower deck, there was a mini kitchen, the captain’s quarters and tons of sleeping bags for the crew to sleep in.

“Out of interest,” Yang Zhen nervously muttered, “How do you... how do you open the vault?”

“Its a secret. Only the captain knows. Why do you ask?”

“No reason.” replied Yang Zhen. He tried to change the subject. “So... what is for lunch?”

Only the captain knows, Yang Zhen thought to himself. *Hmmmm...*

He ran as fast as his legs could go to the captain’s quarters, eager to complete his mission. Inside the captain’s quarters, there were paintings on the walls and priceless artefacts on top of the shelves. In the centre of the room was a desk with files all over it.

This is my chance! I have to do this.

Yang Zhen fumbled hastily through the captain’s possessions. Abruptly, he heard a sound and thought the captain was here.

“Look, sir. I—I can explain...”

Instead of the captain who he was speaking to, it was actually a parrot who he was talking to. He breathed a sigh of relief and determined, continued on his mission.

Eventually, he found the captain’s secret files under the desk. *Very sneaky, admiral. Very sneaky...*

Written on the files were the captain’s personal details, the crew’s information, pictures of the ship when it wasn’t finished and...the password to the vault! Yang Zhen quickly scribbled down the numbers:
2 3 7 1 9 7.

Footsteps sounded from behind him, Admiral Zheng roared!

One word came to Yang Zhen’s mind.

Run.

“AAAAAAH!”

He dashed to the treasure vault, dodging the crew members who failed to catch him. Eventually, he saw the vault and quickly inputted the password. **237197!**

He grabbed an old sack that was lying on the floor. He filled it with as much treasure as he could. Grunting from the weight of the sack, he struggled to pull the sack towards a life boat. The angry crew were just behind him by only a couple of steps away!

He got all the treasure to the life boat, panting heavily. Admiral Zheng ordered the crew to paddle after Yang Zhen but it was already too late. Yang Zhen was already very far from the ship.

He now could barely hear the shouts of the crew. He paddled as quickly as he could on his lifeboat, smiling because he had successfully stolen the Ming Treasure! He had completed his mission.

Sometimes, Yang Zhen thought to himself.

Pirates win.

Journey as a Ming Voyager

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lui, Michelle – 10

Hello, I am Cerise. I am a member of the Ming Voyage. This is my diary entry about my trip on Captain Ming's ship. As the crew boarded the ship, I had a swarm of butterflies in my stomach. I remember Captain Ming saying that we had some other evil ships sailing as well, and if we see them they could attack us. Ming came over and clapped my back.

"Don't you worry, Cerise. I will avenge you, even if it costs my life."

I grinned, but a little sadly as I didn't want Ming to perish. She walked off, and the ship lurched forward. Some crates crashed on top of me as I followed her. The shards of wood smashed onto my head, and my vision blurred. Blindly, I climbed up a series of stairs and collapsed onto the ground. I had a faint vision of Ming spinning the wheel, and then I blacked out.

When I woke up, I smelled the fresh scent of the salty sea. I scrambled up, and began to work. I kept the sails going and pressed my eye up against the telescope every once in a while. Then a colossal wave towered over us, and we all got soaked. Ming immediately stopped and looked down. A gigantic shark burst out of the water, and another huge wave splashed us.

"Oi you!" The shark growled. "I am a Megalodon, don't you see? No shark is bigger than me! And, I am hungry, so... I suppose you'd make a good meal!"

He leaped out of the water and tried to latch onto Ming and eat her, but she drew her bronze dagger and swiped at his snout. A fresh red scar appeared.

"GRRR!" he snarled. "I can't stand you anymore! Besides, I've got some other sharks to eat. So, I guess you can mind your own business now!"

He dived back into the deep sea. Ming stumbled back to the wheel and began to spin it again. The ship tipped over, and I almost fell into the ocean.

The day went quite fast and it was evening. Everything was going fine until a waterspout whirled out of the ocean. He laughed, then took a gulp of air. I felt the ship drag towards it. I acted quickly and climbed up to the crow's nest. Then I jumped, drawing my dangerous steel sword as I flew across the air. I then brought it down. I felt the sword severing the waterspout.

"YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS!" were his last parting words.

I grabbed onto the railing and heaved myself up. Ming grinned.

"Very well, Cerise. Now let us get going, we have a long week ahead of us."

The night passed quickly and I pushed myself up from my comfy bed. The sunshine seeped through the window; I winced as I gazed at it. I dressed up, and then climbed up the stairs. Ming had ordered Eddie to help her with the wheel as she slept. This morning, she was back and looking energetic.

"The breakfast will be later! It's only five in the morning, we can have it soon."

I placed my trusty telescope up to my eye. That was when I saw a bit of land. I told Ming, and she commanded John to do the sails. The ship swiftly sped up, and before we knew, we washed up on the beach. We hopped off. The land was deserted, just lots of mud and twisted trees. Then I heard an evil moo. Three devilish cows swirled out of the ground.

"YOU!" they mooed. "YOU HAVE DEFEATED THE WATERSPOUT. LET US SEE IF YOU CAN BEAT THIS!"

They pointed their ruby sceptres at the ground next to us. Hades appeared.

"What is it now?" he moaned.

Then he saw us and stomped his feet.

"INTRUDERS!" he boomed. "THIS IS OUR LAND! I CALL IT INDIA! Now, I shall BATTLE YOU to DEATH!"

Before he could swing his burly hands at us, I swung my steel sword and chopped off his arms. Then Ming punched his face, and a tooth was knocked out. John picked it up, puzzled.

"It's a BABY tooth!" he said. "Hades is a grown up! He still has BABY teeth!?"

"Calm down, John. We've got other things to worry about."

We turned around, leaving the cows and sailing off.

It wasn't long before we saw another land. It was night time, and the stars twinkled above us. The ship parked near the shore, and all climbed off. A loud growl was heard, and it lingered in the air for a while.

"Shush," Ming hissed. "I see something."

We tiptoed behind a tree and saw it. A liger the size of a garbage truck was busily grooming itself, grunting as it smelled our salty, sweaty scent. It turned its head, its amber eyes glaring at us.

"RAAAARRRR!" it roared, padding over.

It licked the tree, and it ripped straight off the ground and landed next to the liger. It bared its teeth at us; then it prepared to pounce and squash all of us with its gigantic belly. Luckily, we acted quick and sprinted like we never sprinted before. We climbed aboard, and Ming ran to the wheel. The liger swiped. The hull had a giant hole as the ship zoomed off. David, the professional mender, rushed over and patched up the hull in a flash. We continued sailing.

"Hey," I said, walking over to Ming.

She turned around and smiled wryly.

"Well, Cerise. You did great. Let's go."

The ship docked by the pier of China, our home. I was satisfied about that, as the boat ride was so bumpy I could've passed out the whole trip. Now, shall I tell you the name of that land we last discovered? We called it Africa.

The Wreckage of the Sea

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Stranger, Emilia – 11

Tick tock tick tock. Time was running out. Blinding lights flashed in my chestnut brown eyes as my charcoal hair flew behind me. The colossal buildings towered over my small child figure as I raced down the unlit, dark alley. My head was faced straight down to the stone floor, making sure nobody could recognize me. I could smell the scrumptious food from the local dim sum shop down the crowded street. Everybody was lined up outside like bees in a beehive as I sprinted past it, trying to resist the delicious food. In the corner of my small eye, a gigantic ship entered my view. Bullseye! I was a cheetah, sprinting towards my target. A crate met my shimmering eyes. I headed towards it and leapt into it like a kangaroo. Bang! Everything hurt. I shut my eyes in raging pain as I tried to keep my screaming inside. Slowly, the pain seeped out of my body in small amounts. I eventually opened my eyes. Pitch black.

I reached inside my bag and pulled out the notebook that I had gotten for my thirteenth birthday. When I opened the book, I felt like all of my notes were flowing out in a waterfall of secrets. Then, my embarrassing secrets were leaked out of the crate and into everyone's minds. They were laughing and chuckling inside my messed up head but I pushed them out and carried on. I put down my pen and try to move it around but all I knew was that it was just going to be scribbles everywhere. I needed light. There was a tiny hole in the bottom of the cramped crate. I was going to get out somehow so I propelled my leg forwards with a lot of force towards the small hole. Boom! Thin lightning shaped cracks appeared across the splintered wood. I did it again. Another bang! Splinters of wood flew across the ground as the rough wood collapsed into pieces. I was out!

As soon as I got out, I flicked through my journal and a piece of writing caught my eye.

January 26th, 1421

Dear Diary,

My friends keep asking why my name is Fēngbào. Well, the not so long story behind my name is that my name means storm in English. My mother called me that because she had a passion for the sea and everything about it. She loved sailing and writing about the storms she encountered until she met my dad. My dad hated my mum going even a tiny bit closer to the water, so she never did because of him. Now that my mother has passed away the only person left is my dad. He is the only man in charge of me and the entire empire. So, I am going to follow my mum and sneak away, but honestly, I don't know how.

–Fēngbào

As I shut my journal, I found myself being rocked back and forwards continuously until, Crash! The boat tilted on its side and groaned at the enormous impact. Deafening thunder whined and moaned outside. I grabbed my notebook rapidly and opened it to a new page. This was an experience I could write about.

October 15th, 1422

Dear Diary,

Dark grey clouds were sprawled across the gloomy sky. In a flash, a thin slit of bright white struck down and split the sky into two uneven parts. It was as if a painter painted a canvas only grey then accidentally spilled a streak of silver all the way down it. Then, he kept doing it repeatedly and not cleaning his mess up. I thought that the lightning was bad, but the wind was much worse. It was howling like the opening of every single horror movie. It was roaring violently while the rain spat down forcefully against the rocky sea. I was getting thrown around and hung up on the wall like a painting. The waves grew larger and larger until they crashed against the weak wood. The boat was screaming in pain as I would if I was getting crushed by a wall of force. Monstrous waves were towering over the crew as they screamed and panicked. They were ants compared to the gigantic walls of water. I was extremely excited that something interesting had finally happened in my life. All I ever do is practice my manners and greet people with a phony, fake smile. I want to be on a boat and in storms at all times but unfortunately, I can't.

–Fēngbào

I slammed my book closed with enthusiasm as I peered through the holes in the window. I could feel the cold air punching my face, but I enjoyed it. I was trying to get a better view but then,
“Oi! Whot you doin ere!”
“Oh no!” I whispered under my breath.

The Adventure on the Sea

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Suen, Gaia – 9

“Go!” Emperor Zhang shouted. “Go!”

“Father, no! Please, I’m your daughter!” Ming begged. She looked up at her angry father. “You are nothing to me. What did I do to deserve a useless daughter like this?” Ming helplessly looked at the guards standing next to the golden doors. She knew the guards would be ordered to take her away. Emperor Zhang looked at her and smirked. “Guards, you have my permission to take her away. If she tries to get free, threaten her.” Ming cried in despair.”

“Father, why?”

“You heard me guards. Take her away!” Emperor Zhang’s voice echoed through the hallway. As soon as the Emperor spoke, the guards scurried forward pushing each other just to get hold of Ming. Her long ebony hair was soaked in her tears. They all wanted Emperor Zhang to reward them. Soon enough, Ming was in chains and was carried away on a gigantic boat. Emperor Zhang laughed wickedly. “Finally I got rid of my daughter. Now for my little prank. “Qing!” Suddenly a young woman dressed in expensive, silky clothes ran into the room. “Get The Sagana Boat here! Tell the crew to set sail for the island.”

“Yes my dearest,” answered Qing, Emperor Zhang’s wife. Then, as quick as ever she sprinted out of the room tripping a few times on her delicate dress. Slowly, Emperor Zhang rose from his throne and strode out of the room in a very posh way. As soon as he stepped outside, the crew of men outside made space for him and bowed. “Hello my workers. Are you ready to trade gold?”

“Yes sir,” the captain of the crew replied. “Where are we going?”

“Oh! You are so going to love this. You are going to Alasonamakosaris!”

“Um... But sir, that’s not even a real place!”

“Oh it is. It’s just not on the map. You will find Mascotara on the way. She will guide you there. One of the residents.”

“But but...” said the captain in a panicky voice.

“Yes?”

“Nothing sir.”

“Then I guess you can go now. Bye.” The Emperor headed back to his palace proudly, thinking of how his crew would react when they realise it was all a prank. With that thought he laughed. The captain of the crew did not laugh though. He just stood there looking like he was paralyzed. One member of the crew had to shake him a few times before he would move. Finally, the captain said shakily, “Okay crew. Everyone on board The Sagana Boat.” Soon enough, all the crew was on board sailing out to the stormy sea, ready to begin a new adventure.

The Start of an Amazing Tale

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Tse, Leticia – 10

As people brushed pass the busy market in Beijing with fruits and a jug of water in their hands. It was always a busy place, but today was especially busy. For today was when me and my family set sale to give treasures to the poor it was tough as I knew from the days I would sit up in my comfy violet bed reading the diaries of my great grandpa. As I knew me and my sister would be the only girls aboard.....

The new journey to atlantis

HIIIIIIII! My name is Sydney and I'm 10 years old I have a sister whose name is July she is really dirty and clumsy and my papa's name is Raymond and my mamma's name is Miriam we set of yesterday early in the morning to go and give presents to the needy .Since I arrived it has been a very hard job keeping the place tidy I tried to clean my room it had mold sticking everywhere just thinking about it makes me want to BARF! Any way the bed seemed to be in good shape so I just slept on it.... I woke up to the sounds of thundering storms and roaring creatures I peeked out of a tiny hole leading outside it was a crazy storm. I saw large tentacles smashing the sea ground. I broke into a cold sweat and rushed into every room I could find and yell "ALERT ALERT THERE'S MONSTERS ON DECK ALERT" and of course they would wake up and jump around screaming except for my 4 year old sister she would jump out of bed and read her book and she would yell "YAY MONSTERS COME TO PALLY YAYAYAYYY SQUEEEEE" I seriously can't believe that girl we would have to fight bare handed because all our weapons were stored safely in the storage room the person that had the keys had been swallowed by the monster I used to slap his tentacles of the deck with wheelbarrows uhm you wouldn't believe how long it took to wash that slimy muck of my hands, but those tiring days were all over we finally arrived to are destination Atlantis. As the beautiful land scape came into view the tall trees and the colorful flowers, but the best part was there was a humongous palace standing proudly above us our mouth dropped as I asked papa and mama if me and July could take a closer look as we pushed are way through the bushes and trees covering most of the land we finally passed the bushes and trees into a clearing a tall majestic shimmery palace looking over the forest the doors swung open, as July tugged on my arm she squeaked "can we go in there" without answering she led herself in.AAAAAHHH a blinding flash of light brightened the area as I called out for my sister ..no answer without looking I quickly rushed past the door .All the way down it felt like a illusion falling down a deep dark hole THUD!!As I got up on my feet I desperately tried to find my sister as I heard footsteps approach it got closer and closer I could make up the figure it was my sister! "JULY" I ran across the room hugging her like I was back at home. I smiled as she told me her adventure through candy land I thought she was lying before she showed me a crystal candy phone she told me the time here was much slower so we had time to figure things out. She also said that she got to have a cup of tea with the mad hatter YES, the mad hatter can you believe it. she explained that we needed to find a pendant to go back to papa and mama she told me that it would be just around the corner of the land of monsters I shuddered at the thought as we waked and walked as we arrived we were unpleasantly greeted by know what I think as a nature monster moss was growing rapidly but this will surprise you it was a sign as I heard footsteps I knew we were going to have a messy fight as my sister huddled under a rock as I quickly made a shield out of leaves and twigs I scratched myself so I could get some blood and paint with it on my shield I learned that it will scare the monsters in monster adventures . Apparently, it worked as I heard it running and whining yes, I saved the day and it happened alot of times finally we got the pendant by playing a winning chess game against a villager. As we rushed through pirates and monsters and fought through twice as fast as we reached the destination we came from we could see the pedant was gleaming we quickly rubbed it and POOF we landed head first into the pond surrounding a small village it was noisy but colorful as we almost forgot what we came for as we quickly gave things to them including July's crystal phone as they thanked us and gave presents of their own including carved paintings on rocks and new weapons witch I'm shore papa will love ,as we waved good bye we set of to find papa and mama it wasn't that hard since they were coming to look for use since they were wondering where we were now I'm back in my cabin writing this all in to my diary hoping that my grandkids will read this and spread it through their own family roof BYE! poof that was a really long diary entry I wish grandma would have wrote a shorter diary entry. As mama loaded the luggage's onto the ship mama said "come on Hope the ship is leaving soon and don't say anything like that to my dear mama."

My Voyage

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Wakelin, Laura – 11

I am just like any other girl from China, whatever you say, except for the fact that I had always wanted to explore the oceans. Mother had told me many times about the sea, as my late father was once the captain of a vessel, but one day he had heroically died in battle. That was all I knew about him. I didn't even know his name. Once, I had tried asking Mother about my father, but I would never get a proper answer. From then on, I learned to stray far away from the topic. We had always been happy, even without my mysterious father. We sometimes quarrel, but only with reason. However, we are both as stubborn as mules, (I inherited it from my mother!) so these 'disagreements' could go on for days on end. We were never the richest people in the world. Even though we had just enough to survive, sometimes, Mother would have to work a few extra hours sewing and mending clothes, with me helping, to feed us through winter.

One day, I was awoken by a loud trumpet. It was a proclamation! I scrambled down the stairs from my tiny room. Mother was already standing at the door, watching the elaborately dressed messenger in polite interest. "Hear this, people of China! The great adventurer, Zheng He, will be welcoming brave young men to join him and his crew on a lengthy voyage across the seas to find and destroy the wicked dragon, Tsunami!! Those who dare to join the crew will be richly rewarded, and will become renown throughout China!! But beware! This is a near-suicidal mission, so join, *if you dare.*"

I didn't notice, but mother turned whiter than snow.

My mother faced me and sighed, "I know that I won't be able to stop you, but at least take this. She handed me an ornate silver dagger that gleamed in the feeble sun. The handle was delicately carved in the likeness of a flame, burning bright. It seemed to emit a soft glow that wrapped my heart in comfort.

The day before the voyage, I dressed in male clothing and cut my flowing, ebony black hair short with my father's dagger. I sprang aboard the ship and we set sail! The sea was a thick foamy blue, like the sky. The captain, Zheng He had a kind smile on his face as he greeted the crew. After five long days of sailing, we arrived at the monster's lair. It reeked of death and destruction. Suddenly, a thrashing dragon leapt smoothly out of the water, sending a tidal wave of fear through the crew. *Now* I could see where it got its name from. It let out a fearsome roar. It was like a python, but immense, and it was lined with spikes that expelled corrosive venom. It was as graceful as a panther, having a long twisting body but as deadly as a cobra. It had teeth as white as pearls but extremely lethal. Its horns were like freshly forged swords, glowing red and sharp in the darkness. Its eyes glowed amber in the blackness of night as if inviting us to our deaths.

We shot our arrows nonstop at it, but they did no good. They bounced off the polished scales as if they were only pebbles. 'Maybe we can use fire!!' I struggled over to Captain Zheng He, and quickly told him my plan. "Excellent idea! Of course, a water monster would loath fire! We announced to the crew that we would set our arrows on fire, which would sear away at the flesh and kill the monster! The great beast spat its corrosive venom that missed the ship by the length of a mouse's whisker. Encouraged to work faster, the crew lit the arrows and took aim. Blood stained the ocean as the beast got shot over and over again. It was hanging on to life by a single thread. Then I remembered my dagger and pulled it out of my pocket. Its flames seemed to flicker and dance. I threw the blade with all my might at the creature's chest. The dagger drove itself into the beast's heart. With a last eerie caterwauling, the beast slowly crumpled into a heap, with death hanging over its body. It started to disintegrate in front of my very eyes. I watched in awe as dagger-sharp tooth drifted towards me and landed in my hands.

As we all gazed at the slowly disintegrating dragon, the captain motioned to me to speak with him. The dagger that you slew the beast with used to be mine. There was no other dagger like it in this world. My jaw dropped. "Father?" I gasped. He murmured softly. "I am proud to be your father. You have proven that you are a warrior at heart.

Treasure Hunt

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yip, Tiffany – 10

Once in an island there were 3 pirates who lived in China. There was Mia, Jake and Annie. There was also a captain called Percy. The pirates did not get along with each other and always argued day and night. This is why they are on this island without their parents. Mia, Jake, Annie was horrible, greedy and had no manners. Percy was a bit more sensible than them. They wish to have all the gold on the world.

One day, they decided to go search for gold. They went on the ship. Percy was driving the ship while the others started to fight. In the middle of the journey, Mia pushed Annie out of the ship. “Hahaha!” laughed Mia.

“This has to stop right now and stop fighting!” shouted Percy in anger. Annie was very far ahead of the ship. They didn’t care about saving Annie so they kept going. BANG! CRASH! A flash of thunder was rushing out of the sky. It started to rain. The waves swished. The water slashed. The ship crashed in to hard big rocks. The waves made the ship flung side to side. They got very wet. The pirates were wondering around shouting. “STOP RIGHT NOW! CALM DOWN!” shouted Percy.

The pirates were silent. A few hours later, it got very dark. They all got tired and started to sleep.

The next morning, the pirates landed on a big island. They ran out of the ship as fast as lightning. “Yeah! We had arrived!” said Jack.

“Whatever, well when we find the treasure, it’s going to be mine!” shouted Mia angrily.

“Learn to share guys because sharing is caring!” said Percy.

They started to walk in to the island. The trees were green, the birds singing. There was a shiny castle. They went inside. It was silent. They all went into a dark room. Behind the chair they saw a treasure box. They tried opening it but didn’t work. So, they decided to search for their key. Percy searched for the key in the book shelf. Mia searched under the table. At the same time Jack searched in the flower pot.

“Found it! It’s in the flower pot.”

Slowly they tried again to open the treasure chest and it opened. BANG!

“What are you doing in my castle? Said a lady.

“We are so sorry, we just wanted to find some gold and please forgive us.” cried Percy.

“Well you should if asked me but now I must call the cops because stealing is not the right thing to do.

The lady started to call the cops. Percy burst in tears saying “We are never doing this again. This was a really bad idea.”

“I know we should be good to each other and not steal again.” Said Jack.

They never steal things again and lived happily later after.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Harrow International School Shanghai, Hui, Sabrina – 10

“Grandpa! Grandpa! Please tell me another story!” pleaded 5 year– old Chang. “Alright, I will tell you a story.” Said Grandpa. “ This story takes place in the Ming dynasty, where people ride on horses and wheelbarrows for transport. People also travel by boat. Your ancestors were sailors, Chang. Only we know this.” “Grandpa, can we please get on with the story?” said Chang impatiently. “Okay, okay. Be patient.”

THE MING TREASURE FLEET

Your Great–great–great–great Grandfather was a regular sailor. He went on many voyages. But this voyage was like no other. During the autumn of 1405, he was selected to go on this maiden voyage led by Zheng He. This voyage was to give gifts to other countries to make peace. Unfortunately in their time, there were vicious pirates roaming the seas. But the most feared of all was Chen Zuyi and his ferocious crew. So Zhu Di (the current emperor) demanded Zheng He to bring soldiers with him. On this voyage, they brought a total of 4 ships. Your Great–great–great–great grandfather got a job to scrub the deck on the leader’s ship.

They undocked the ships and set off on their journey. Their first destination was Champa, Vietnam. They met the Vietnamese king, and handed them chests of gold and barrels of fine silk. Their second destination was Java, Indonesia. They presented porcelain vases and priceless jewels. They saw beaches with sand glimmering under the sun. They went to places around Southeast Asia like Malacca, Aru, Semudera and Lambri. After leaving Lambri, one ship headed to the Nicobar Islands but the remaining three ships continued to head to their seventh destination, Sri Lanka. The view was breathtaking. The ocean blue skies were endless. The green plains were joined together, as if it were a carpet, smothering the land with its bright colour. They soon embarked and set sail to their final and ultimate destination, Calicut. There, people wore silk sarongs and turbans of different colours. Though they considered most foreigners to be barbarians, they respected residents of Calicut for their honesty in trading. The fleet traded in the last of their vases, gold and silk and finally headed back to China.

On the journey home, your Great–great–great–great grandfather saw a disturbing shadow come towards them. The shadow came closer and gradually started to resemble a ship. He warned Zheng He himself. After hearing this, Zheng He summoned a line of defence. As the fog cleared, the ship became clearer. On the ship, a man with a cloak held a telescope scowling fiercely. “Shoot the arrows!” he barked. This man was no other than the unmistakable Chen Zuyi and his pirates. The pirate ship started to sail closer. The arrows injured some of the sailors. The soldiers climbed on Chen Zuyi’s ship. The soldiers battled with swords. The pirates lost miserably. And Chen Zuyi was ordered to walk the plank.

“After arriving back in china, the sailors went back to their families and friends. Your Great–great–great–great Grandfather shared his tale with your Great–great–great Grandfather and he passed it on to your Great–great Grandfather and he passed it on to your Great grandfather and he passed it on to me and I passed it on to you.” Grandpa smiled. Chang stared in awe. “Chang, someday when you grow up and become an old grandpa like me, hopefully you could share this story with your grandchildren and think of me. Goodnight, Chang.” “Goodnight Grandpa.”

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Chan, Antonia – 11

As Zheng Le walked up the gangplank onto the ship, the *Jadeflower*, he felt a rush of excitement to be on this voyage. Though he was just twelve, everyone on the ship respected him as his father was Zheng Wu, brother of Admiral Zheng He, chief of the voyage to East Africa. Named after Emperor Yong Le, Zheng Le knew he was a privileged boy of his time.

For the first few weeks, the merest suggestion of breeze carried the ship along. Zheng Le enjoyed the sunshine. He also had different jobs on the ship such as helping the navigator to locate stars and looking after the ship's sails. He saw, did, and learnt much.

Suddenly, strong gales rocked the ship, tossing everyone and everything on board this way and that. The wind morphed the sea into mountains of ferocious waves. When Zheng Le and the others heard and saw how frightened the sailors were, they panicked.

"I miss home and Mum. I will never make it back home..." Zheng Le whimpered.

Zheng Le and other passengers stared forlornly at the horizon. No land was in sight. After sixty days, a brown strip of hope appeared on the horizon. That day, there was great jubilation on board.

"Good job, men! We have finally reached land!" the captain, Zheng Wu boomed with excitement, "Let's go and explore! My brother will be proud and the Emperor will be pleased."

Zheng Le followed his father to explore the land, exhilaration coursing through his veins. Suddenly, a towering creature with a long neck, long legs and dark patches on its body stumbled past Le. He spurred back to his father as fast as he could and blabbered, "This is a monster land. I've just seen one..."

Before Le could say another word, a native man with skin as dark as midnight appeared before them. Le and the man looked at each other in curiosity. Then with hand signals, the young man motioned for Le and his father to follow him back to the village. They found themselves surrounded by a crowd of inquisitive natives. After establishing that they were people of peace, Le's father took out ten dark green pieces of jade flower pendants from a silk pouch and gave them to the natives. The villagers seemed ecstatic with the gifts and brought out an assortment of local delicacies.

At last, the villagers indicated that Zheng Le and his dad could take back any animal they wanted from their land. Le's dad bowed low in gratitude.

They then scooted quickly back to the *Jadeflower* to gather soldiers to catch an animal. "Let's round up the long-necked creature that I'd seen!" Zheng Le blurted as he showed the ship's soldiers where he saw the creature.

"ATTACK!" Zheng Wu clamoured as the soldiers blitzed in on the creatures. The wild animals all galloped away like waves of thunder, except for a young, feeble one. The soldiers rapidly threw a rope over the smallest creature's neck and started to haul it back towards the ship.

"We got a long-necked deer for the Emperor!" the soldiers cheered.

However, as they boarded the ship, a larger long-necked deer dashed out from the trees to thrust the soldiers away. The soldiers fought back by shooting arrows. Blood flowed down its legs as it was clear this was a mother desperate to have her child back.

Suddenly, a wave of sadness washed through Zheng Le as he remembered his own mother waiting anxiously for him to return home.

"Dad, set him free, please! Let it roam in the wild again!" Zheng Le begged Dad.

"No! I need to take it back to the Emperor!" refused Dad. "Your Uncle, Zheng He, demands it."

They pulled the pitiable creature up onto the ship where it gazed despondently at Le.

Late that night, while the rest of the crew were sleeping soundly, Le stealthily took a key from his father's pouch. Sneaking and slinking, he slithered to the cage below the deck and unlocked it. Wordlessly, he led the creature down the gangplank.

Le was surprised to see its mother sitting wistfully near the dock, her wound already slowly healing. As he cut the rope with a knife, the creature bent down, and nuzzled him tenderly.

"Go back to your mum. I'll never forget you, my long-necked friend!" Le wept as he bade good-bye.

The long-necked deer's mother limped away with her baby joyfully by her side in the moonlight.

The next day, when he was eating his tasteless breakfast after the ship had set sail, a sailor rushed in and screeched anxiously, “The creature has disappeared!”

“What—t!!” exploded Dad.

Zheng Le was terrified. He then steadied his breath and admitted to Dad, “I was the one who let it escape and I’m sorry...” Le then explained every single thing.

Dad murmured with new understanding, “We’ll have to ask the ship’s artist to present of the drawing of the deer to the Emperor. It will not be easy.”

Back in China, Zheng Le’s father presented the dazzling drawing of the long-neck deer to the Emperor.

“Your Majesty, here is a present from our travels... the long-necked deer! Forgive us as the creature unfortunately got away from the ship,” Le’s father apologized.

“How dare you,” the Emperor admonished, “You exchanged ten jade flowers only for a useless picture. Bring the creature in the picture to me tomorrow or I will execute you!”

The colour of Zheng Le’s face drained quickly as fear sucked out his very breath.

“I’m the one who should be execute! I helped that deer escape. My father’s innocent!” Le stepped out and confessed, as he sobbed out his story, “I’m sorry...” Le ended as he wholeheartedly apologized for his actions.

After listening, the Emperor was moved with compassion and announced, “ I pardon you. You did the right thing.”

And that was how a picture of the long-necked deer ended up in the palace during the reign of Emperor Yong Le.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Chan, Zennie – 11

I am a spirit; a free spirit of a young medic on the fleet of ships that once sailed imposingly with fame and attitude as we marked our place in history. I was one of the main medics serving on ZhengHe's commanding ship. I still remember that fateful day which changed my life forever.

It was almost at the end of our voyage, our ships were filled with our acquisitions as we exchanged gifts with our new found friends and allies. We came into possession of a very smooth fabric called "silk" and spices, including the rare and exotic spice they call "saffron", from various countries, such as India and Arabia. Apart from that, we also came across a very interesting animal in Somalia, which had a long neck with brown spots all over its body. The crew joked, 'This zebra must be ill. It has swallowed a broom!' We all had a hearty laugh as we led the "long-necked animal" to an enclosed area on the ship. We dangled some herbs in front of it to draw its attention as we slowly pushed it onto the ship. The crew was praying that the animal would not suffer from seasickness, as it would not be much fun for them on deck should the animal start throwing up... Nonetheless, we were looking forward to showing it to our emperor.

As we sailed back to our homeland, celebrating a successful journey, our captain, ZhengHe, was very ill in bed. He was vomiting and had a terrible cough. His forehead was very warm to the touch. I was frantically trying to figure out what ailment he was suffering from. I had to use the limited supply of herbs and medicinal potions to soothe his discomfort and alleviate his symptoms. I just prayed that we would have a speedy and smooth return trip.

'Hurrah!' cheered the crew on the deck. Bowls of rice wine clinked as the planks soaked up the spilled wine. There were dancing and music. 'Poor captain, such a pity that he couldn't join the celebration!' sighed one of the crew members. 'Yeah, I am sure he can fight through this nasty sickness,' I responded, shouting out to the deck. 'Don't...don't worry, I will be fine...' replied ZhengHe in low spirits.

All of a sudden, the 'hurrahs' on the deck became blood-curdling shrieks. I rushed out to see what on earth was going on. As I looked up into the sky, I froze, my mouth agape in disbelief. A monstrous storm was brewing right above us. It was launching against our fleet of ships. The sky was pitch black, as black as ink, with thunder roaring and rain pelting steadily on the wooden floorboards. The sky threw thunder bolts at us, making the deck crack, and leaving charred, burnt spots on the wood panel. Our fleet of ships gave way one by one, sinking like stones thrown into a pond. Our ship was in chaos. Sailors, cooks, cleaners and pursers, were all running around, screaming in intense fear and panic, jumping into the water, grabbing onto any piece of barrels or planks to stay afloat. I, however, decided not to jump just yet, but to first tend to my captain, who was still resting in the medic room.

Rain continued to fall incessantly with the raging wind and roaring thunder. As the ship was crumbling into pieces, it was certain that it couldn't stand anymore of nature's fury. I swiftly dragged the feverish captain back on the deck before the wreckage sank to the bottom of the sea. I wasn't strong, so I struggled valiantly against the horrific storm to do so. 'Hey, guys! Catch our captain!' I shouted to the sailors who were already in the sea, hoping against hope that he would not drown. Then, I burst out my remaining strength and swung the captain into the sea, praying that his men would catch him. I had no more strength left; I couldn't even stand upright. I remember seeing a blinding flash, hearing a deafening sharp crack of thunder and then feeling disintegrated into a million pieces. At the same time, the sea gobbled all the bits of me up with the ships' remains.

The smithereens of me somehow regrouped together into a phantom of my former self. I sighed in relief, seeing that Captain Zheng and the surviving crew managed to make their way to an island where they built a boat to sail back to China. When they successfully arrived home, the doctors cured my captain's sickness eventually. People have since then dug up my captain's ships and the goods we tried to bring home from the journey. And have sifted through the wealth of information and relics of his many voyages, the historical museums can finally tell of my captain's amazing stories. It is true that I have never been mentioned in any of his adventures, I am still tremendously proud of myself as one of the many unsung heroes who made the voyages a success.

A true hero never fades!

A Heart of Gold

Heep Yunn Primary School, Cho, Min Min – 11

It was a rather cloudy day. Ling sighed sadly.

‘Dad! Where are we heading to?’

‘Be quiet! I’m trying to concentrate!’ Ling’s dad, Shen, who was captain of their ship Raven, was leaning his big shaggy head over a complicated map. They were looking for an island where a lot of poor people lived. Although he had a kind heart and loved to help others, he was always having trouble *finding* his target.

‘Er, Dad? Do you have any idea where we are?’ Ling asked hesitantly because her dad was likely to explode when he was disturbed while reading his map.

‘Of course. We’re in the Indian Ocean,’ he replied grumpily.

‘That’s helpful,’ Ling thought moodily.

Rain was starting to pour from the gray clouds above them, with loads of fog clogging their vision ahead. Ling was starting to feel extremely worried. ‘Let’s just turn back, Dad. We don’t want to end up on the Evil Pirate’s island again, do we?’ The Evil Pirates were their greatest enemy, and they had once sailed to their island by mistake. Ling kept turning cold at the thought of them.

‘Nonsense. I know where we are heading,’ Shen growled.

‘But Dad, it’s raining cats and dogs, and a thunderstorm is on its way. We can’t see where we’re going,’ Ling cautioned in a slightly desperate tone.

‘We can’t be discouraged by just a tiny bit of rain! We have to sail across the sea bravely and help the needy!’ Shen yelled.

‘Yes, yes, but sometimes we need to care for our own safety. And this thunderstorm is more than “a bit of rain”. The waves are getting bigger and stronger and it’s *dangerous*. Let’s just come back another day,’ Ling pleaded, but Shen ignored her.

‘With a bit of luck,’ she mumbled to herself, ‘Dad’s miscalculation might hopefully land us back on our own island.’

After a few more hours of aimless sailing, the fog was starting to clear. Shen was getting excited as he believed that they had finally arrived at their destination. Ling, however, was not relieved. There was a massive dark shape ahead of them which looked sinisterly familiar. Ling squinted at it as the ship sailed nearer and nearer...

All of a sudden, the fog cleared completely, and in front of them was an impressive scene. It was a huge island with towering mountains on it. Wooden houses were built on the rocky land, which formed a circle. In the middle of the circle was a great wooden palace on top of which was a big flag displaying a scary looking white skull. With a sudden feeling of horror, Ling recognized they had sailed right to the island of the Evil Pirates!

Suddenly, the door of the wooden palace opened with a loud bang. Out came a gigantic figure with a big filthy beard on his chin. ‘It’s Ebit!’ Ling gulped. The leader of the Evil Pirates, Ebit was known for his cruelty, such that even his followers were scared of him. He smiled unpleasantly when he saw the Raven approaching, and raised his arms in a welcoming gesture.

‘Shen! How wonderful to see you again!’ he shouted out.

‘Oh, Ebit, we did not intend to come here. Shen had misread his map again. In fact, we’ll be leaving *now*,’ Ling called back hurriedly, putting emphasis on the last word.

‘Oh, don’t you leave now. My men have been desperate for some exciting little fights these days. So they’re going to have some fun now when someone wanders into our midst. Won’t they? *FIGHT!*’ As Ebit shouted the last word at the wooden houses. Right on cue countless men carrying guns and swords rushed out, yelling at the top of their lungs. They began to attack the men on the Raven, and the latter fought back. Within a few seconds, the air was full of yells and bangs of the guns.

'Dad! We have to stop them! This is horrible, we'll get killed!' Ling shouted to her father over the sounds of the battle. 'Stop this!'

But Shen took no notice of his daughter's words. He grabbed his sword and charged towards Ebit like a madman. Shen was very gifted at sword-fighting, but Ebit was good at it too. The two leaders began to fight furiously. Ling couldn't watch them for more than a few seconds – she was too terrified.

'I have to do something,' she thought desperately, trying to hatch a plan. Suddenly the wooden houses caught her eyes and a plan began to form in Ling's mind. She quickly grabbed a bow and some arrows, lit a fire on the latter and shot them at the wooden palace. Luckily, all of them landed right on the balcony of the palace. It took a while for Ebit to realize that his palace was on fire, and when he finally did, he was very mad.

'My treasure is going to be burnt! Put the fire out!' he yelled at his men. They rushed for buckets of sea water immediately, completely forgetting about Shen and his men. By the time Ebit remembered with a jolt of his previous fight with Shen, the Raven had already sailed away.

'I'll have you next time, Shen! I'll get you!' he roared at the sea.

Although some of the men were injured in the battle, luckily nobody was killed. Shen was hugely relieved after hearing this news.

'I'm sorry I didn't listen to you, Ling. I guess you should read the map for me in the future, I really am hopeless,' Shen said, sighing slightly.

They reached their destination at last. While Ling was happily assisting the poor people on the island, she couldn't help reflecting that it would be a lot easier to do so if they had lived a little nearer to Ling's home. She promised to follow her father every time he went to help others, so that she could also be brave and have a heart of gold.

The Missing

Heep Yunn Primary School, Chong, Colette – 11

Chang Ze and Zheng He had always been best friends. They used to play together when they were young boys growing up in a tiny, Chinese village in the Yunnan Province of China. They would often go on their own little adventures around the outskirts of the rural village, causing mischief but making the locals smile. They were inseparable, like brothers. As they grew older, the boys remained very close. Therefore, when Zheng was to lead a voyage of ships like no other, packed with gold, silk, fine art and other wonderful treasure, Chang thought he would never see his friend again but when Chang heard the news that he would be among the 30,000 crew, he and Zheng were delighted and talked of all the adventures they would have.

During the first year of the voyage, the young men had seen more than they could ever have imagined. They visited Vietnam and Africa, which they were in awe of! They saw animals that they had never seen before, giraffes, Hippopotamuses' and zebras. They even saw an ostrich, the biggest bird they had ever seen, they actually thought it was a baby cow and laughed once they discovered it was a bird. The first voyage was going smoothly until the sixteenth month, when disaster struck and things would never be the same for Zheng and Chang again...

Chang Ze:

It was an extremely rough day at sea and we had many jobs to do today in the engine room. I was just talking to Wang about the plan to fix the boiler in the engine room when pirates rushed onto the ship and began attacking crew members. I ran as fast as lightning to the weapon room but all of a sudden, I felt a thick, rope around my chest and was being pulled backwards. There was shouting, gunfire and mayhem all around and I could see pirates carrying rolls of silk and bags of gold off our ship. I was struggling against the rope and my feet kept slipping beneath me, "Where is Zheng?," I shouted desperately as I felt myself being pulled backwards.

"Pirate attack!"

It was no use, there was so much chaos going on around me and more crew were appearing from the depths of the ship and being attacked. It didn't look like many of my friends would survive, as they couldn't reach their weapons in time. I was pulled across the deck, a bag that was secured over my head was wet and I started to feel drowsy and dizzy, I was falling asleep, my eyes feel heavy...

Zheng He:

After hearing loud bangs, deafening gunshots and men yelling, I rushed up to the deck from the engine room and couldn't believe my eyes. Pirates were taking treasure but most devastating to see was the amount of bodies, how did they not see the pirates approaching? I looked around and saw so many of the men I had spent the last sixteen months with lying there dead. "Sir, the pirates have taken some of our men!" I heard as I ran to the back of the ship and I could see a black ship in the far distance. In the next moment, the thought of Chang hit me like an unexpected tsunami. "Where's Chang? Chang!" I bellowed. I felt crushed, a crew member missing his forearm ran over and informed me that Chang had been taken. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, I kept thinking over and over, why?!

Over the years and voyages that followed, Chang was never far from his best friend's thoughts, Zheng missed his friend dearly and felt guilty for not being on deck when the ship was brutally attacked. Zheng has never given up his search for Chang but has never come across a black ship since that dreadful day. He had no idea whether Chang was dead or alive.

10 years after 'The Black Ship Attack'

Zheng was on the twelfth voyage! He was now a grown man and had successfully completed many voyages. During all his missions, Zheng was always on the lookout for the black ship. It wasn't until one dreary day that among the huge waves and dark clouds in the distance, that Zheng spotted the black ship. It had to be the same ship that kidnapped Chang a decade ago. Zheng ran to alert the crew as the ship was edging closer but didn't have time, it seem to just appear. Once close enough, a few pirates jumped onto the ship and demanded, "We must speak to Zheng He."

"I am the Zheng He." Zheng declared.

"We believe we have something that you want." Snarled one pirate, as a man was thrust forward. He had very long hair, a long beard and looked much darker but there was no mistaking who it was...

"Chang Ze?" Uttered Zheng in disbelief. "Is it really you?"

Zheng staggered forward and the men hugged, many questions were exchanged.

However, when Zheng looked up again there were no pirates or ship in sight. "Where have they all gone?" Zheng asked.

"Don't worry about that." Said Chang.

Chang and Zheng spent the whole afternoon talking about the last ten years, it felt so good to have his best friend back, he couldn't believe it. He went to go and get Chang some rice as he seemed very thin. On his way to the kitchen, Zheng bumped into Wang and told him the brilliant news of the black ship and his friend being returned. Wang couldn't believe it and ran to the top deck to greet Chang but he was nowhere to be seen. "That's strange." Thought Wang, as he ran up to the captain's booth to ask if they had seen anything as they can see everything from up there.

"No sir, no ships or any pirates. Fortunately, we have barely seen another ship at all today and Sir, Zheng He has been sitting there alone all afternoon..."

"Alone?"

"Yes sir, alone."

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Fan, Wanika – 12

‘Good bye!’ ‘Have a nice journey!’ ‘We’ll miss you!’ I am Chu, a young boy of twelve, my friend Chi and I have joined the Ming treasure voyage, the biggest sea journey of our time. It was organised by our king, who wanted China to have more allies from overseas. Words of farewell ranged from the harbor, wishing us good luck on our voyage. As we finally set sail, I glanced back towards the harbor, which suddenly looked so far away. Will all of us come back? A random thought rose out of my mind. I shook it off. Of course we will, we are the best crew of the country!

Life on the sea was harsh, we faced a lot of difficulties. Sharks, storms, losing our way... Enough to drive anyone crazy. But life on the ship was even harder to stand. Smelly deck, bad food, annoying captain... Enough to drive anyone even crazier! But each time the sun rose, hope filled our hearts once more.

Our first stop was India. The locals there were full of passion as they welcomed us with open arms. When our captain went to see their king, me and Chi decided to take a stroll around the city. There were so much to see! Special food, crafts and even... ‘MONSTER!!!’ I yelled as I pointed at a weird beast with a long neck and a spotted pelt. ‘RUN!!!’ The local stared at me as if I was the monster. A few seconds later, they bursted out laughing! ‘This is no monster,’ said one of the locals as he wiped a tear from his eye. ‘It is a giraffe! Have you never seen one before? It’s usually used in the circus and their natural habitat is Africa.’ My eyes widen. ‘Africa? How do we get there?’ ‘You go east,’ The man replied. ‘After a month or so, you will see Africa.’ We thanked the man and went to tell this piece of information to our captain. But before we go, Chi took a quick sketch of the giraffe so he could brag about it when he got home.

The Captain was so delighted when he heard our news, he ordered the sailors to set sail immediately. Everyone was so happy, we all forgot one important detail: the African seas were full of pirates. After a few peaceful days on the African seas, one of the sailors saw something. ‘There is a British ship ahead, and I think they’re in trouble!’ He shouted. Sure enough, the ship ahead had a British flag on their ores, and the people on the ship were shouting as they waved their hands like crazy. ‘We need to help them,’ Said our captain. But as we sail closer, the flag of the other ship was pulled down. When it rose up once again, it was no longer a British flag. Instead, it has become the flag that we dread the most ----the flag with a skull and a cross bone. ‘It is the pirates!’ Someone yelled. ‘They are going to ambush us!’ As we cried in fear the pirates jumped on our ship and the fight began. I aimed at a young pirate and fired a shot. He yowl in pain as the bullet hit his legs. He turned around and charged at me, but I was faster. I ducked and thrust my dagger into his stomach, his cry of pain was cut short and he fell on the floor with a loud *thund*. I whirled around to face another opponent but was soon corner by a battle-scarred pirate. He held out his gun and fired a pullet. I closed my eyes to brace myself when a dark figure leap in front of me and got hit. I opened my eyes. There, laying in a puddle of blood, was Chi. Suddenly, a yell of retreat got the pirates darting back to their own ship. ‘We won!’ The whole crew cheered. I shook my head. The price was too high. The captain walked to my side and put his hand on my shoulder. ‘Chi died heroicy, he will be remembered for a long time,’ He began. ‘Now, you should continue this quest happily and finish it for Chi. Then he will be happy in heaven, knowing that his wish has been fulfilled.’ I smiled weakly. As I glance at the setting sun, I know that Chi will always walk beside me, and tomorrow will be a new day.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Ho, Viann – 12

After a quick taste of his eyelids the fly hopped over to his cheek, crawled drunkenly up onto his nose, did a little dance, and buzzed away. He opened his eyes and shut them again away from the glaring sun. His head felt like it was going to explode from the inside, and he had no idea where he is. Wait...who is he?! His eyes popped open and found himself in a small but warm room. He tried to sit up straight but failed. He opened his mouth to ask for help but scared himself because his voice was so soar. "He...hello. Anyone here?" He yelled as loud as he could.

After a few minutes, the door swung open. A tall man walked into the room, making his heart miss a beat. The man had lots of scars on his face, showing the pain he had had before.

The man then bent down and looked at him kindly. "Hello, sir. Do you feel better now?" "Much better...may I ask who are you?" He replied. "I am Zheng He, the captain of this ship. Who are you?"

A ship? How did he even get on there? He tried to think of his name but failed. "Yeah, who is he?" "I...I don't know," "Never mind, sooner or later you will recognize that. We found you on a beach, unconscious. Would you like to join our crew to deliver gifts to different countries?"

That would be a hard choice. He could just ask for a little amount of money and work for his life. He heard himself said "yes" and suddenly, he became a member of this ship.

A week later, knowing that his wounds had recovered, Zheng He gave him a job to be a mate of the ship. All he have to do every day is to take care of the fitting out of the vessel. He had a friend named Huang Ming which is also a mate and they often talk about the voyages of their captain, Zheng He. The crew had already went to Calicut for the first three voyages, and now the ship was sailing to Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.

The crew enjoyed a few weeks of peace and joy although something happened that ruined it. They met a pirate ship. He was still checking a rope hanging from the ship when Huang Ming rushed in with fear on his face. "Go to the deck immediately! We are under attack!" He quickly ran to the deck, surprised to see Zheng He facing a gigantic ship with a flag of a skeleton on it.

Choiseless, Zheng He ordered the ship was turning back as fast as they could, hoping that the pirate ship isn't able to catch up. But the crew seemed to have bad luck. The pirate ship reached them so fast as if there were wings on the sides of the ship. The crew are even able to see the pirates with a sword and ropes on their hands, ready to get on the ship.

Soon the pirates got near enough to the ship to hop aboard. The crew began to fight with the pirates. The crew has less people then the pirates, so everyone were planning to escape from the smaller ship for emergency. He was fighting a pirate while Huang Ming called him to pack something and get on the emergency used ship. He knocked him down and ran away to get some food and water. He was the last one to get on the tiny boat. Zheng He quickly row the boat to an island and settled the injured people. He was shocked at the death or lost numbers but what made him mad is that his best friend Huang Ming didn't make it to the island. He hates pirates now and is blood-thirsty. Zheng He had figured out that they are now next to Hormuz, so the crew decided to ask for some camels or horses for them to travel to the palace.

The crew had rented a group of horses to the place of Hormuz, with the emperor receiving the presents (saved by a random member of the crew), they were given a new ship although it is not as big as the one before. They would have to return back to China first for some new presents, than start their new voyage. On the way back to China, he spotted something so touching he would never see twice in his life. It was a baby shark out of breath, body floating on the sea. Its mother was still paddling round the baby's body, not believing that it's children has died. After flipping the baby's body, really seeing that it has went to heaven, the mother looked at its baby for the one last time with teary eyes (if sharks could cry) before diving back into the deepest part of the sea, hopeless, leaving the lonely body still floating on the sea. He was kept staring at the baby shark until it went out of his vision.

Afterwards, he still haven't found his memories but that is useless. He now got a group of friends and everyday they get on an adventure on the ship, delivering gifts to other places. He had no regrets on choosing to enter the crew.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Hung, Sophie – 11

A girl, who looked young was sitting on a rock which was a perfect spot for gazing at the mysterious and beautiful sea. On her palm, a coin was shining through the sun. She clutched the coin to her chest and then ran faithfully to the sea. Her journey was about to begin.

Eleven years past. 'What an easy job through these years!' said one of the crew. 'Not yet...' sighed one of the pirates. The pirate wore a hat with colorful feathers on it. A purple jacket surrounded her liked a queen. She was the captain and her name was Siu. Looking hopelessly on the map, she said, 'We need to go to the island where our enemies live and go to a secret place that nobody have ever discovered, which is underground and have a lot of gold. However, we can't let our enemies know because the underground is where our enemies laid,' The crew looked horrid and scared to face the mission they were going to encounter. A man stood up and encouraged, 'Listen up! We came through bad things together, why don't we take this challenge?' That man was called Kai, he was Siu's younger brother. All the crew finally agreed to accept the mission. Siu and the crew hopped on their ship and got ready to set off. The time had come.

The crew loved to feel the wind while sailing on the seas. The sea lived in their hearts. However, the sea brought them storms. 'Hold on crew! We're going turbo!' cried Siu. She held the steering wheel and turned it around and around. The crew held the ropes tightly for not letting their ship drown. 'Yikes! There is a waterspout ahead!' The crew looked horrified and closed their eyes and prayed, only Kai strived to help. Kai jumped onto a deck and tried to change the sail direction in order to skip the waterspout. Siu used all her might to steer the wheel, but it just got worse. One of the crew found that the situation was not getting better, so he called the other crew to help push a side of the ship. Whoosh! Kai threw himself off the air liked a bird and hoped to have a perfect landing on the ship but the direction of the ship had already changed. Instead of landing on the deck, he fell into the deep dark sea...

'No!' Siu cried with tears blinking. She felt very fear and unsteady. She looked at the clear, yet quiet sea. She never knew that the pretty sea had turned out to be her brother—slaughter. 'Captain?' asked a girl with a beautiful voice. That was Siu's best friend, Ting. 'We better keep going,' Siu answered. Splash, they sailed away. 'You are really fine?' asked Ting. Ting continued, 'You have never predicted the future. It has already happened. I know you have a lot of pain in your heart and that pain may last forever. You have to be positive and look at the sun, not the shadow. Remember Kai encouraged us to complete this mission, so we should finish it,' whispered Ting. 'Thanks Ting', smiled Siu.

They were approaching to the island and got closer to it. Siu and the crew got on the island and tiptoed beside a bush. 'Now here's the plan...' Siu whispered to her crew. 'Be careful,' Siu and Ting left after saying it. The crew left with a worrying face. Pump, pump, pump... Siu and Ting's footstep echoed down the cave. 'There it is the treasure!' Ting screamed in a whispering voice. 'This is a piece of cake!' thought Siu. As they were leaving, a creepy voice glued their feet on the ground. 'Won't get out so easy, ma'am,' they turned around. It was their enemy, a guy called Marcus. 'I thought our crew was taking care of them!' whispered Ting with anger and fear. 'Never mind that now, we have to get this treasure out so as to help those people in need,' after a single moment, they pulled their swords out and dancing, yet fighting with their elegant and cruel moves. Marcus started dancing with his big muscles and strong feet that weight hundred pounds. Marcus pulled Siu with his mighty hands and hit her with his hundred pounds feet. Poor Siu got flung out from the cave. 'Ah!' An ooze of red liquid spread out from Ting's body...

'Little Chiang, where are you?' one of the crew cried. Chiang was the youngest crew among them all. Poor little Chiang got home lost and got chopped off his hand by the bad guys so he got a shiny hook to replace it. But now he was lost. 'Hey, let's go and save Siu and...' A mighty person stepped out from the shadow. 'Your treasure meant us for a little Chiang and two nasty girls. Will you accept it?' Marcus put a sneaky smile on his face. 'What have you done to them?!' One of the crew screamed with tears blinking. 'Here's a message they left to you all,' Marcus threw them the treasure and a letter with it. 'Be brave and bring the treasure to the ones in need, Siu and Ting,' The crew left the island with a broken heart but they had to finish their last mission that Siu and Ting wanted them to do.

Water splashed towards the shore. The crew put a smile on their face and finished their very last mission. A rainbow appeared from the dark clouds. A familiar coin washed out from the sea. An old crew picked it up and smiled at the rainbow, 'Your heart was filled with love and faith, even rainbow can grow on clouds. Today we pirates finished your last mission, no regret we were in your crew.' The crew knew, no matter what, you need a kind heart. And they believed that little Chiang would come back one day...

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Lee, Mika – 11

It was 2018 and I, Zheng Wo, had to travel as a captain on the ship called Brave Explorers I. I had four gigantic ships beside me and there were all together one thousand people with me.

The journey was initially smooth until the sky suddenly turned dark. There was a thunderstorm! The waves were like angry bears fighting and the ships kept on shaking. Wind was blowing like a fierce lion and forced us to a wrong direction. We tried to use the global position system to seek for the correct direction but the signal was weak. We were frustrated and tired to find a solution. We had no way but sailed in the current unknown direction.

After a few days, the sea was calm down and we reached a strange island. There were strange little green elves and gnomes walking around. We tried to communicate with them but their language was queer. We used Google Translate and told them we were thirsty and needed some bottles or cans for water. In a flash, their faces turned red and started shouting at us (using Google Translate), 'How dare you are! Do you know that the rule here is to be environmental friendly or you will be in jail! But you are just visitors....'

I quickly apologized and asked for some advices. They disclosed that there was a legend about an eco-book with magical power that could gave us some guidance to know more about the environment. They had a mysterious map for the book. However, the elves and gnomes did not understand the map. In the past, some fearless villagers came out to find the book but they never came back. We felt curious of the book and decided to help them to find it out. They gave us the map so we set off and sailed to our next destination.

After some time, we landed on a bigger island. There was a castle and we went to see the King. We greeted him politely but instead of a welcoming reply, he shouted, "Get off of my palace at once. Don't make rug filthy, you dirty pigs!"

My general Ng Bak Sheng was extremely furious. I soothed his nerves awhile. But he didn't listen to me and pointed his gun to him. To our surprise, the king wasn't angry with us but looked at the gun in curiosity.

Though I told him it was a weapon to attack people, he asked for some guns to protect his citizens. We gave him 10 guns with 5 bullets each and he exchanged them with some gold and jewelry. We formed the ally nations and we sailed away to continue our journey.

On the ship, I scolded the general as he misbehaved and disobeyed my orders. I said, "It is fortunate that he doesn't know about guns or we'll have to start a fight! We will lose a lot of men!"

We sailed and sailed. We fought with nasty and terrible pirates and became friends with people on strange islands and got wonderful presents.

We sailed and sailed and went to our last destination, an island with lots of talking animals. They were cute so we decided to pet them. One of them said, "I'm the leader of the robots and we are very tired. We are almost out of batteries...." Then, it fainted.

I immediately know what to do. I took out one of the precious batteries from the electricity king, whom we met on one island, and tried it on the leader. It fit! The leader got up and sang happily. He gave us an exquisite box in exchange. It was the eco-book inside the box! We were delighted and realized how the neutral sea animal and the earth were harmful by the human. The eco-book also gave us a direction to go back to China. We sailed for months and went back to our home country, China.

We shared our adventures with the president of our country. From the eco-book we learned how to be environmental friendly. Otherwise, the world will be destroyed one day in future. We also persuaded the president the importance of environmental protection. We dispersed the seeds of Chinese culture and the president's prestige to different places on Earth.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Mitu, Cheryl – 11

In the early 1400s, a group of pirates from China determined to change the history of their ancestors – stopped looking for gold to steal. Instead of stealing gold, they started doing the exact opposite!

Feeling such an amazement, they set sail on a fleet of ships and carried cargoes of gold and other precious items for the captain and the sailors to give away as gifts. There were seven voyages by the Ming Treasure Fleet – and the people on board had many adventures.

Once, China's Emperor had a little argument with the Emperor of Russia and began an infinity war between the two countries. As it was too strong for China to beat Russia, China had to make new relationships with a variety of countries to realigned a coalition and dealt with Russia. Therefore, the group of travellers need to be dispatched!

The travellers sailed to the United States. They supposed to give away the wonderful presents they had brought from the Emperor, making new relationship with the U.S.A. However, none of the travellers wished to be the representative to give away the present. After consideration, a young man whose Dad was the Emperor took heart of grace and risked his lives to be the representative. Eventually, their plan was going very well. They convinced U.S.A. and realigned a coalition successfully. Relying on the military strength of the U.S.A., China defeated Russia.

Since then, the group of travellers started working hard. They used the tools to make silk and chinaware on board. In order to earn more money for China to buy more weapons, they sold all of them. All their hard work had paid off in the end. The ships finally carried military forces and weapons.

One day, when the group of travellers were travelling over the world and trying to meet some other peaceful people on board, suddenly a violent wave crashed against the ship, throwing the fragile ship into a full sway, causing it to tilt in a dangerous manner a while later. Soon, the ship started sinking. Most of the travellers fell into the sea. Struggling to survive, they swam everywhere they could. Everyone was in panic. Abruptly, the prince's voice rang out from the sea, " Stop being panic, we have to unite as one!" After hearing the prince's prompt, they understood that it was no used to be panic. They all calmed down and tried to grab some pieces of wood from the sinking boat as possibly as they can. Floating on the sea, they were all in a marvelous and wonderful mood.

Sooner later, they got to a desolate island. They had to wait somebody to pick them up. They sought for the several pieces of wood they had brought from the boat in order to make some fire to attract the boat that came to save them.

After a while, there was a glister of hope. There was an enormous ship sailing towards them! All of them were in excitement. They jumped onto the boat and went back to China.

As they experienced the incident above, they won for themselves a place in history and made a contribution to China. What an extraordinary travellers!

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Heep Yunn Primary School, Shek, Chloe – 11

‘Grandma, I’m studying about the Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyage, and you revise with me?’

‘Of course, actually I can tell you the details about it.’

‘What?How! It happened over six hundred years ago, you couldn’t possibly be that old!’

‘Hush, my child. Don’t ask, you will find out soon...’

‘I was a young girl back then, a few lucky ones were chosen to embark on the voyage, and I was among those few. Although I was just a mere scrubbing girl at start, I would never ever forget the beautiful sights I saw.’

‘Cool! Hey, Grandma,did you meet any buckling pirates?’

‘Yes,I did, my darling. Ah, I remember the first time I met pirates, we had just started sailing, just after a week, mangy pirates attempted to steal our loot. When I saw them, I screamed and screamed at the top of my lungs. Well, that was a huge mistake, the pirate king found me and took me hostage. But suddenly, a burst of energy burst through me and, boom! I was a half–demon and I took down the pirates single handed. That was when the crew found out I was not a mere mortal, even I at that time, I didn’t know what happened,I got promoted to a general immediately, and every time, I faced danger, I transformed into a powerful creature, like a half wolf, a demon wolf hybrid, just to name a few, I just couldn’t understand why. But all I knew was I couldn’t die and I was practically immortal.’

‘That is soooo awesome! What countries did you go to?’

‘Oh, we went a lot of countries. When we went to India to give them gifts from the Emperor, I still remember the gleaming white temples, the beautiful sunset, making all the temples red and orange, alas so beautiful. But one day, a precious artifact went missing, the Narcissus Star, and a very suspicious man blamed us for it, we got threatened and we were chased out with super sharp spears. And we went to Africa, I was starting to control my transformation, and I could communicate with different animals by transforming into that species of animal. The Africans were very welcoming hosts, we spent a great deal of time there, therefore by communicating with different animals, I was able to find out more information about different animals. But again, another precious artifact went missing again, then I saw the same sneaky man blaming us for stealing the Oriana Star. I couldn’t hold it back any more, I transformed into a demon and grabbed him by his collar, I asked him,“What do you have against us, why do you keep blaming us for stealing the artifacts?” he said,“ I, I was sent by an anonymous person to mess up your trip.” “ But why?”I asked,“ Why did you just steal these Stars, not any other artifacts?”“ I don’t know, Master just told me to steal these Stars...” In the end, these two artifacts were found in the house he was staying in. We explained to the Africans and Indians, our friendship was mended and the man was put into African jail which is very very strict.’

‘That is so cool, Grandma!’

‘Yes. And then, one day I received a letter with a lightning bolt on it, and it said that I was the goddess of transformation and I was invited to go to Mount Olympus Academy. I considered it for awhile, but I decided to go after I finish the voyages, and then the people on my crew found out that I was a goddess. They all congratulated me except for one girl, Zoey,who was my neighbour in my hometown. When she crept into my room secretly, I felt that something was wrong...’

‘What happened, Grandma?’

‘Ah, I will tell you. I followed her into the room, and hid next to the closet, watching her closely. Zoey headed towards my table beside my bed. And then, she took out a packet of powder and sprinkled it into my medicine. When she turned around to leave, I blocked her way, and I asked her,“ What is in that packet?” She stuttered,“Uh, it’s none of your business!” I said,“Actually, it is my business because you just put it in my medicine, so yeah, it is totally my business.” She finally confessed, “I was putting poison into your medicine.” I was aghast, I asked her,“Why, why did you want me to die?” She said,“I thought it was unfair, you got everything ,you became a general and a goddess and everyone likes you. All I am is a sweeping girl.” I told her,“ All you had to do was ask me, I would have gladly shared my power with you and now I will of course forgive you.” And then I forgave her and this incident was forgiven and forgotten. After all, there is a saying,“ Forgive forget “ isn’t there.’

‘Grandma, I think we’re getting off course. Although I want to know, am I a god?’

‘Well, technically, you are a demi–god, I remember that you were proclaimed the god of technology.’

‘That is awesome!’

‘Now, kiddo. Let’s just stick to your textbook or else you’ll be studying till midnight. I’ll tell you more after you finish your studying. Now let me see... Hey, your textbooks are wrong! It should be...’

The First Voyage

Holy Cross Lutheran School, Chiu, Ho Tsun Anson – 10

The evening before the first voyage, the emperor held a banquet. It was to celebrate Zheng He leaving China. There was lots of food on the table. It was a high class banquet. Everyone had to eat politely and wasn't allowed to spill any food, not even a tiny drop. There were some people singing and dancing. Zheng He ate very greedily because he knew he had to leave for a very long time. His friends and crew were nervous because they thought the pirates would attack and destroy their ships. Zheng He said, "Don't be nervous everyone, we won't let the pirates catch us." Everyone then calmed down.

Today was the day of the voyage. Everyone waved goodbye. The emperor gave Zheng He a lot of money in case he wanted to trade something. They then set sail; on the way to Sumatra they passed the Philippines. They waved to the people on shore. Then they saw some bananas on some trees. They traded some rice dumplings for the bananas and then continued their journey. Just as they were about to arrive at Sumatra, do you know what happened next? A lot of ships showed up! It was Chen Zuyi, the leader of the pirates and his crew. Then a war started. Five thousand pirates were killed. Ten ships got burned by the cannons and seven ships were stolen. Chen Zuyi and Zheng He were fighting. Zheng He was about to die, but thankfully a crew member saved his life by pushing Chen Zuyi off the boat. Zheng He and his crew arrived in Sumatra and found the treasure of the Ming treasure voyages.

On the way back to China, more pirates showed up. Somehow Chen Zuyi had survived. He wanted to steal the treasure. Zheng He fired cannons at Chen Zuyi's ship. Chen Zuyi's ship sunk to the bottom of the ocean! Zheng He and his crew returned to China. They gave the treasure to the emperor. The emperor said, "Thank you, but there are still more voyages." Zheng He and his crew took a twenty-four hour rest and then set sail again.

The Magical Journey

Holy Cross Lutheran School, Han, So Hyeon Ariel – 11

Have you ever thought about the history of China? Have you ever heard about the Ming Treasure Voyages? Well, our story takes place between 1405 and 1433, the time when Zheng He goes on the Ming Treasure Voyages.

In 1421, Zheng He started his 6th journey. This time, Zheng He wanted to explore more countries and let the world know how powerful China was. After the emperor had given the order, Zheng He started his journey as soon as possible because he was very excited to start this new journey.

After several weeks of sailing, Zheng He and his crew arrived at Oman. This place was very famous for its commercial port, for some businessmen and businesswomen came from all over the world to do business there. Because it was every businessman and businesswoman's 'dreamland', the king of Oman warmly welcomed Zheng He and his team and invited them to trade. After Zheng He read the Ming Dynasty's edict, the king of Oman traded things with Zheng He. They traded silk, porcelain and other things from China, for mastic, aloe and myrrh.

After staying for a few more days in Oman, they said goodbye and sailed to their next destination, Adan. Adan had abundant resources, there were many agricultural products and rare birds and animals; commerce and handicraft were very developed at that time. In Adan, Zheng He and his team bought cat eye stone, pearls, a coral tree that was 2 feet high and many rare and valuable animals and bird species. They also chatted and sang songs with the people there, making good friendships.

The last destination on the 6th journey was Bengal but while they were sailing to Bengal, a strong storm came. The storm made the waves bigger and the ship twist and turn. Luckily, one of Zheng He's crew members said, "Land! Look, there is a small island there! Let's stop by and wait until the storm ends." Zheng He agreed with his decision and quickly ordered the crew to prepare for landing.

Zheng He's team was surprised to find out they had landed on Atlantis, the mysterious lost city. They explored the incredible city, they saw they were underwater but they could breathe normally and there was an invisible shield covering the magical city. They could see beautiful fish and all kinds of sea creatures through the invisible shield. They were in awe! In the middle of the city, there was a beautiful castle made from coral reefs. While they were exploring, they saw some citizens of Atlantis. Zheng He asked them the way to the palace gates, but unfortunately, they spoke a different language. While Zheng He and his crew were worrying about how to communicate with the people of Atlantis, a little boy stood up and said, "I know how to speak Atlantis. I can translate for you!" Zheng He was once again filled with joy. Because of that little boy, Zheng He successfully entered the castle door and chatted with the king of Atlantis; he also discovered many things he did not know before. To celebrate Zheng He's arrival, the king of Atlantis threw a big welcome party. Zheng He and his crew tasted many new and delicious types of food there. The crew chef asked the royal chef for the recipes to make the yummy food. They felt as lucky as a person who had won a million dollars because they could have the chance to come on this special journey and visit this magnificent underwater world.

After a few days of happiness, it was time to go back to China, their homeland. Every crew member was very sad to end this incredible voyage full of surprises and magic. Zheng He, leading his crew, sailed away. In this adventure, Zheng He was overfilled with joy that he could visit Atlantis. He couldn't wait to tell the king his new discovery. While Zheng He and his crew were heading back to China, he looked at the big blue sea and thought once more about the wonderful memories the 6th voyage had brought to him. He wished he could visit Atlantis one more time in the future.

The Ming Treasure Voyages

Holy Cross Lutheran School, Lee, Pak Nok Max – 11

A long time ago, Zheng He is a Yunnan Kunyang people. A famous General attacked his village, and then he was distributed to one of the Kings to be the warrior. He fought well and won many battles; he ended up gaining the trust from the King who gave him a nickname of “Zheng”. Zheng He doubted that Hui Wang was dead in another country. So his King ordered him to make a big ship and go to find Hui Wang’s dead body. Zheng He knew that his king wanted to let every country realize China is more powerful than other countries but could not find Hui Wang’s dead body.

Zheng He’s ship had many weapons, food, porcelain and a lot of money. There were more than twenty thousand people working on the ships. They went from Zuzhou to Vietnam... Every place they went, Zheng He told the people that he has the greatest king and the greatest country. Zheng He had visited many places and gave money to all those places. But in the case of someone’s disobedience, his soldier killed them all. In the year 1408, they went to many places such as Java, Ke Zhi...etc. to build friendships. When Zheng He arrived in Ceylon, the King invited him to go to his palace to have a look. But the real objective of the King is to get all of Zheng He’s gold and all of his things. Zheng He was smart and realized his objective because he noticed that the city had no people. So he brought two thousand soldiers to attack the city in Ceylon and kidnap the king’s daughter and wife. Finally, he resolved this incident. Subsequently, he still had many journey around the world!

Unfortunately, Zheng He’s died on his ship because of overloaded. He was a great man who was the first one to visit many places in the world!!

An Unexpected Journey

Holy Cross Lutheran School, Man, Chun Hin Charles – 11

Six hundred and thirteen years ago, the emperor of China was Zhu Di. He was very curious about the places that he didn't know about. Therefore, one day, he asked Zheng He to help him discover the world, trade goods with other kingdoms and show them how powerful China was.

Zheng He then asked the emperor, Zhu Di, to give him a fleet of ships, food and armies. Then, he was ready for the trip. Zhu Di said, 'Good luck!'

Zheng He started the trip on 11th July. He wanted to find some treasure to the east. A month later, a typhoon blew strongly and blew away Zheng He's army ships and food ships. These ships were lost.

There was a Japanese pirate team called 'Skeletons'. They wanted to steal all the things in Zheng He's fleet because they knew that there were many expensive things. They quickly prepared their ships and weapons.

The Skeletons suddenly and quickly attacked Zheng He's ship. They easily boarded Zheng He's ship and tied him up with a rope while he was sleeping. They told him to give all the things on the ship to them. Zheng He said slowly, 'Okay.' Suddenly, he used his martial art skills to free himself and hurt the Skeletons. He was able to do so because he was a martial artist.

The pirates were scared by Zheng He's martial art because they hadn't seen that before. They surrendered and asked Zheng He to free them. Zheng He told them to follow him in his journey and lead him to Japan. Some days later, they met the lost army ships and food ships again. Zheng He was thrilled.

There was a big problem just after that. The food ships sunk suddenly and they couldn't stop them from sinking. They starved because they couldn't get any food. Zheng He was suddenly inspired. He said, 'Does anyone have some wood and pins?' People were confused about the usage of the wood and pins, except the leader of the Skeletons, named Yamato. He said, 'I've got some here.' Then he quickly brought out a box. Inside were many things including wood and pins.

Zheng He said, 'You guys are smart enough. You've just given me the proper tools.' After this sentence, he threw out his new tool and caught two fish. He repeated this action again and again for half an hour. He then stored the thousand fish he had just caught in the storing cabins. Yamato and his partners thought, 'It begs belief that this mysterious man can be so fast!'

Some more days later, they arrived at Japan at night. The pirates settled Zheng He down. Then, the Skeletons secretly went to the palace. They went inside the emperor's bedroom and talked about how powerful and mysterious Zheng He is. The emperor whispered to himself, 'You are arrogant, Zheng He. You hurt my 'Royal Skeletons'. I need to kill you!' Although he was extremely angry about that, he needed to act like he was appreciating Zheng He. He said, 'Bring me Zheng He tomorrow. I want to see how powerful he really is.' Yamato, his partners, all the ministers and generals around the emperor hated him very much. They thought that Zheng He will be killed by the emperor miserably. They were thinking of methods to save Zheng He because they didn't want to see any sorrow caused by the emperor they hated.

The next day, Zheng He was brought into the meeting room of the palace. The emperor said, 'You are Zheng He? Fantastic! Come drink some deluxe wine. We need to drink happily. It's your pleasure to come in and see my ministers!' A eunuch then quickly came in. When he walked past Zheng He's back, he tried to use a knife to chop Zheng He into two halves. Just at that moment, Zheng He grabbed his knife, sprinted to the emperor, killed him, went back to his seat and put the knife back into the eunuch's hand in the blink of an eye. Everyone was frightened. No one screamed, 'Assassins! Protect!' They just scratched their heads and thought about why the violent emperor they hated had been killed. After an hour, all the ministers shouted, 'Thank you, Zheng He!' However, they didn't notice that Zheng He had just gone for a minute.

Zheng He went back to the meeting room when he learned about how grateful the ministers were. The ministers then pushed Zheng He to the seat of the emperor. Zheng He was frightened because he had sat on the chair the old emperor sat on. When Zheng He tried to ask what happened, the ministers said, 'You are the emperor of Japan!' Zheng He said, 'I need to look around the community.'

When Zheng He walked past an old village, he found that the people there didn't know how to grow things to eat. Therefore, he taught the citizens in Japan how to grow crops and feed animals. Some months later, the whole kingdom became very prosperous.

The ministers wanted Zheng He to stay in Japan because he brought much prosperity. However, Zheng He needed to finish his journey so he packed up. One night, he secretly went out of the palace, met his armies and took his fleet back to China. The pirates wanted to come to China too. Zheng He said, 'It's alright. I think my king will really appreciate you. Let me recommend you guys to my king so that he accepts you.'

The emperor, Zhu Di, was thrilled when he knew that Zheng He was back and heard about the work he had done. He said, 'Great job! I think I need to build a temple to show appreciation of your effort!' Zheng He said, 'Maybe you can let the name be Jing Hai Temple because this means 'the sea was peaceful!'' Then they all laughed and went to sleep.

The Adventure to India

International College Hong Kong, Bentote, Imogen – 10

“Oh my gosh, thank you!” Exclaimed first mate Xing–Xing, now Captain Xing–Xing. She is 19 and has been at sea for 8 years of her life. She started out as the cooks helper and went up from there. This morning she met with the previous captain, and he said, “ Good Morning, Xing–Xing! I need to tell you something very important. You are going to be the captain of this ship, The Green Emerald! The Emperor has requested your presence, so we must go to see him right away.” So, Mr. Meng, the previous captain and Captain Xing–Xing set off to the emperor's palace.

In all her years serving the emperor, Xing–Xing had never seen his palace before and was absolutely amazed by the jade decorations and marble floors. Her family were very poor, so she had been sent on a boat that was going to find new lands when she was 11. Before she left, the only places she had seen were wooden boats and her small town of poor, damaged houses. “Oh, my! This is quite a dream!” Exclaimed Captain Xing–Xing, “It’s the most marvellous place I have ever been to!”

“Come along now,” Said Mr. Meng, “We mustn't keep the emperor waiting!” They stepped into the huge dining hall, where the emperor was waiting for them.

“ Sorry to keep you waiting, Emperor”, Apologised Captain Xing–Xing.

“ Ahh, no worries,” He chuckled, “ But now we need to get down to business. I am sending you on this trip because you are the bravest person in your crew. Remember this. You will be setting off a week from today. You are going to give gifts to the ruler of India so we can make peace. Okay?”

“Yes, of course.” So, Captain Xing–Xing and Mr. Meng left and went home.

A week soon rolled round and they were setting off. The crew helped to bring food, weapons and water supplies to last the journey, and of course, the gifts they were to give. That included luxurious gold plates and silk scarves, which were kept safe in the captain's cabin. Soon enough Captain Xing–Xing was hollering, “CUT THE ROPES, AND SAILS AWAY! LET’S DO THIS AND MAKE OUR EMPEROR PROUD!” This was greeted with a round of applause and cheering. They sailed for days. One of their 16 crewmen died of malaria, while they were still a few thousand miles away.

Suddenly, the lookout shouted, “Land Ahoy!” and everyone gathered on the deck to see. “Hmm,” mused the Captain, “ I think we are here!. Let’s dock and go to see if we can find their leader.” So, they did, and the captain and first mate went to find someone to ask for help. After wandering around and looking at nothing but trees and animals, they came across a small village. First Mate Li had been to India before, though was chased away by bandits, and knew a little of the native language. “Excuse me,” He said, “We come from China and we are here to talk to your leader. Do you know where we could find him?” “Of course, if you continue north from here, you will get closer.”, Said a Villager, “You will see a big palace made of white stone. You can ask for him there, and you will probably be allowed to talk to him. Just beware of bandits during the journey! It will take a long time, maybe over a month even. Goodbye.” The captain and the first mate began their long trip, of hard and tiring days.

One night, they had set up their camp, and was sleeping near a fire keeping warm, when First Mate Li awoke and heard a rustling sound. *It must just be an animal*, thought Li. Suddenly, there was a loud *twang* of arrows being shot and the captain woke up. “Li, get the gifts and hide them from the bandits. I’ll get the arrows then we need to get up and run!” So they did. They ran, and ran and ran! Before long, they reached a village that had horses. They offered the farmer a sword and bought the horses.

They sped fast down over the land and reached the palace. “Wow,” Said First Mate Li. “It truly is a magnificent sight. Let’s go in.” They approached the guards and stated their business. They were allowed in, and showed the ruler their gifts. “We come from China and hope to make peace. We have come with gifts of gold and silk.” The ruler agreed and took the gifts with thanks. Then the First Mate and Captain went off on their long journey once again, this time, with no bandits. They reached their ship safely and told their crew it was time to go home.

Their crew greeted them with joy and they started to sail back. All the food supplies had been used up, but thankfully, the First Mate and Captain had bought some fruits on the way back to the ship. The coconuts and durian fruits lasted all the way home, where they were treated like heroes. The Emperor thanked them all for going to India to make peace. Unfortunately, they couldn’t be wrapped up in their success for too long, as the Emperor had more jobs for them to do!

Stowaway on a Ming Treasure Voyage

International College Hong Kong, Lee, Nicholas – 8

The year was 1430, on a typical hot and long summer day. Keng Hung was walking back from school with some of his classmates. For some unknown reason, Keng Hung was not in his usual talking and playing moods. He felt something was wrong but did not know what.

As Keng Hung arrived home, he found his mother sobbing in the kitchen and the dinner was not prepared. His father was busy packing as if he was about to leave. Keng Hung asked his mother, “what is wrong and where is father going?”. His mother continued to sob and did not answer. Eventually, his mother got out some Man Tau that were baked over a week ago and soon all three of them were sitting around the dinner table, tearing up the hardened Man Tau and began chewing the hardened bread.

The father began explaining whilst they were eating, “Keng Hung, you are almost nine now, so listen to your mother and help her with the house work after school, feed the chicken and help to harvest the crops. I will be back after two to three years”. “Two to three years!”, Keng Hung shouted, “that’s a very long time! Where are you going father?”, Keng Hung asked impatiently. “Well, Admiral Zheng He is going on a long voyage for the Emperor and all able-bodied men of this village have to go to help to work and cook on the Fleet. We don’t have a choice, and if we refused to go, they will chop off our heads.”

Keng Hung could not bear the idea of not seeing his father for several years. So, he decided to pack some of his clothes, some hardened Man Tau, several books, and his favourite toy which was a small wooden horse that his father carved for him. He sneaked out of the house and walked slowly towards the harbour. At the harbour he saw many wooden ships. He counted the ships, there were sixteen ships in total, most were small, and one was gigantic. So, Keng Hung hid and waited behind some wooden boxes, trying hard to find a way to get on board. Then he noticed a large crack in one of the wooden boxes. He then ripped open the crack wider and hid inside the box. Keng Hung noticed that the box he was hiding in was half filled with bags of yam and white carrots. He moved the bags around to make himself more comfortable and then he eventually fell asleep.

When Keng Hung woke up, he was already inside the ship’s food storage cabin. It was really noisy and the smell of the food storage cabin was like rotten fish. Then he started searching for his father and wondered around the ship. He asked the captain if he had seen his father, and the captain said that his father was one of the cooks and was very busy cooking for hundreds of hungry soldiers. So Keng Hung waited and waited for a long while and at last his father came to him. His father wasn’t in a good mood. When his father saw him, he shouted, “What are you doing here?!”. Keng Hung replied, “I just want to stay with you.”

Somewhere in the Indian Ocean, the Navy Fleet came across some pirates. The pirates wanted to steal their treasure but once they saw that the Chinese Navy Fleet had such a big ship and a lot of weapons, they let the Chinese Navy Fleet go. But the pirates didn’t give up, they had a plan...

The Chinese Navy Fleet sailed to a little island named Sri Lanka, for a break and to get more food supplies. They were really tired and thought they escaped from the pirates but the pirates secretly followed the Chinese Navy Fleet.

The pirates boarded the gigantic ship after the soldiers went to the island. The pirates saw a water tank where the guards would drink from so they mixed the drinking water with a sleeping drug. The guards guarding the gigantic ship with the treasure drank the water, and shortly fell asleep. Then the pirates stole their treasure and left on their own ship.

Admiral Zheng He was unhappy and angry but he still had a schedule to visit India to see the Indian Queen. He quickly sent a small crew to recover the treasure. So, they sailed to India without the treasure. In India, the Queen was keen to see the treasure that was a gift from the Chinese Emperor so the Admiral told a little white lie about where the treasure was. The Admiral said they will do some Chinese cultural dancing for three days, as it was their custom before presenting the gift.

After two days, the Chinese crew found the pirates' hideaway cave and recover the treasure from the pirates by pretending and dressing up as pirates, and then poisoned the pirates' food. The Chinese crew quickly captured the pirates and took them and the treasure to the Admiral in India. Keng Hung felt sorry for those pirates so he asked the Admiral, "can you not kill the pirates because they have families too?" The Admiral agreed not to kill the pirates. After that, the pirates thanked the Chinese Navy Fleet for their kindness for giving them some foods, coins and let them go. They also thanked Keng Hung too.

On the voyage home, Keng Hung thought of his mother, he really missed his mother. After two months' time, they finally arrived back home. His mother had tears of joys and cooked fresh Man Tau for them. "Yummy," they all said. What an adventure thought Keng Hung. He had learned lot of things and had a real stowaway adventure. Keng Hung's biggest wish was to travel with his father and Admiral Zheng He all the time when he grows up.

Adventures In Time

International College Hong Kong, Yoong, Joshua – 8

Sixth Voyage, Yongle Year 19 (1421) Sailing along the seven seas, our crew were steering our ship to Africa, and so far we had a peaceful journey. We watched the horizon of China slowly fade, then started doing our chores. When we finished, we ate dinner and went to bed. When I was sleeping soundly in my bed, I suddenly heard a ear-piercing scream coming from another cabin. I thought I was dreaming, so I closed my eyes, but heard it again. I immediately threw my robe on, and stumbled onto the deck. When I saw the giant, terrifying monster that was towering over me, my mouth was open with bewilderment. The monster was around 40 CHI tall, and had spikes everywhere! He shot steaming acid at us from his mouth, and nearly destroyed our ship! We quickly retreated, and thought that it would be best to swim to a desert island, and shoot flaming arrows at it. But most of our crew couldn't swim, so we had to come up with a different plan. We quickly steered our ship, which was going up in flames, away from the monster. We then borrowed some materials from one of our team's ships and hastily fixed our ship. But disaster struck. A thunderstorm was coming, and as fate would have it, our ship took a powerful shot to the mast by a bolt of lightning. We sailed away onto a nearby desert island and tried to use bait to get that nasty, evil monster on land. The monster took the bait, and we stabbed him in the heart. But we still had problems. Another shot of lightning struck our boat, and it capsized. We realised that our captain Zheng He took a powerful blow to his waist. But at least we killed the monster. Two of us helped captain Zheng He to wrap his wound, and the other crew members built a fire and sent smoke signals and thankfully got rescued by a passing ship. We thanked them, and gave some goods to them in exchange for the rescue. They spotted a ship, and asked if wanted to get on that ship. We found out that it was one of our team's ships! We appreciated them, and got on that ship. We peacefully continued to sail across the ocean for some days, and eventually met a big fishing boat. They were friendly to us, so we traded fishes for steel so they could make more harpoons and hooks. We asked to see their ship, and they showed us. I noticed that they had brown skin, and black hair. They told us that their country is very hot and had lots of trees, has lots of rainfall, and has lots of fruit and vegetables. We told them we have snow in the winter, is hot in the summer and they were shocked when we told them we have snow. And we also told them we have a weird animal that is cute, black and white, called a panda, which only lives in our Ming Empire. After talking, we became friends. I wish I would see them again. After a couple of weeks, we arrived to Africa and docked our ship. We encountered lots of animals out in the jungle, even an elephant wrapped its trunk around me. After approximately 2 hours, we arrived at a village. The village was really big, and we walked around it and offered goods to the villagers. After a long period of time, we tried to go back to our ship, but was lost in the jungle. We first had to fight of a pack of lions, then needed to outrun a cheetah, and finally hid from a vulture. Whew! We continued to walk in the jungle, until someone asked, "Where are we going?" I thought we would be in big trouble since we couldn't remember where we docked our ship, until I heard that one of our crew members had left a trail. "Good." said our captain, Zheng He. He was happy at that particular sailor who said he had left a trail. Then another sailor piped up. "Um, captain Zheng, if we head east we will eventually find the boat." The captain's spirit rose when he heard that. So we went east until we walked into another village. We scrambled out of the village, and headed in the correct direction, back to our ship. We found a ship, but to our surprise we found it tattered and left in pieces. This seemed like the end, until we found out that it wasn't our ship. I sighed with relief. We continued walking down the east coast of Africa, hoping to find our ship, and there it was! After thirty minutes of walking, we finally reached our ship. We were so happy! Overall, I liked this trip because it was very adventurous and exciting, met people from other countries, but the most important part was that we were safe. Soon, We organised our ship and set sail for home.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Island Christian Academy, Cheng, Keziah – 9

Everyone knows that pirates set sail to only steal treasure. Pirates usually have only one hand in children fantasy stories, but that isn't true for real pirates. They have two hands with sharp nails making it harder to fight them. Story tellers always say that cabin boys walk the plank.

I believed all of that until I was finding a job after going to college. Mama kept on fussing about finding jobs easier to do and harder to do. I searched all day and night long. I still couldn't find a job. I was walking all alone on the street, sad and lonely.

I remembered how hard my father taught me to follow my heart before he died. I remembered him working as a military soldier battling Japan. I was so proud of him. Suddenly I heard a mysterious hiss, calling my name coming from around that dirty house. "Lin, Lin" I turned around and stared sharply at the houses nearby. I felt a hard tug at my ragged shirt and somebody pulled me to the nearest house. "I know you're looking for a job." said a man with an expensive looking robe. "How did you know?" I asked.

"I overheard your mother muttering about it, I was your dad's friend in the war, Uncle Lun." The man said.

"Do you still work in the army?" I asked.

"I retired a long time ago." Lun replied.

"But now I need to find a job." I said.

"Follow me, let's go to the emperor's palace." Uncle Lun said, flashing me a mysterious smile.

After a daylong walking, they finally arrived at the emperor's palace.

"ah... just the last person I need." said the emperor, grinning

"W-w-what do y-y-you mean." I stammered, shocked.

"I need you to go on a mission with my great explorers," The emperor explained, "I need you to travel around the world on a ship and —"

"Steal treasure...!? I am no pirate."

"No... but to do the opposite, that will be your job."

"But I don't know what the "opposite" means"

"It means you get jewelry to give away to peaceful people, not steal it. And you need to fight away our biggest and toughest enemies: The pirates." said the emperor.

I finally decided to do it. I and the explorers got trained, swimming to diving, sword fighting to wrestling and aiming to targeting. When the day came, I was covered in scratches and bruises. But I looked strong. We packed our clothes and food to survive. Then we set sail.

We got trained again on the ship, bowing, sword fighting, climbing, shooting and diving. We finally arrived in India, set up our camp and fell asleep.

"Wake up, lazy lads." called captain.

"Where are we going now?" yawned an explorer, half asleep

"We are going to the Navi Mumbai." Captain said. We undid our tents and packed it up.

"Everyone, grab your gear and line up!" Captain shouted, hurting my ears.

I grabbed my armour and tent and lined up in front of a big muscular explorer. We marched through the city looking proud. I felt nervous, and a little brave.

We gave some of our money to the poor. Now the most terrifying part was when the snake charmer whistled into his pungi and the cobra hissed at me! We soon arrived in Mumbai tired.

We gave peaceful people treasures from the emperor, silver, gold, pearl, diamond and spices.

We bought delicious smelling fruits from the fruit stall, gifts for Uncle Lun and Masor Tenga . I ate them for dinner, and they tasted good. We went back to camp and during one week, we had already given most of our treasures! On the last day, I bought a jade snake necklace for me. We packed up our stuff and climbed aboard.

" All aboard!" Captain shouted .

Yes , Captain " we said.

" To arrrrabbia!"

After a few hours to Arabia, Captain looked worried. "I see a skeletal flag nearby, there're pirates!" Captain cried, looking around.

"Get ready for battle!" Someone cried, hysterically waving his arms around.

I grabbed my armour and shoved it on. Clutched my sword so tight it sunk into my hand. We fired a fireball at the other ship, some of our men hid in the bottom compartment for a secret weapon. I shivered. We shot more fireballs in the air, but we only aimed one fireball at them, and missed for the others. The ship rocked as we fired. We threw our spears while they fired. Men below were firing rocks at them. Suddenly a whole flock of spears came flying through! We ducked as the flags tied up on our ship tore into pieces. The boat began swaying as the sky turned red. Men in the bottom compartment climbed up as we faced the terrifying looking head pirate, Ali Abbas. He had brown teeth, daggers and revolvers, in his belt, with a skeleton face hat. "Dare to face me, huh? Everybody wants to win against me, until they just give up!" The ugly pirate growled, "I am giving you a chance, you can go away or see the results when I win the war! Haw haw haw!" We tumbled on to their deck, and aiming and shooting our bullets at them. They chased each other, when almost ten people of our army began attacking Ali tougher than usual. Ali shot one of his bullets, he missed. When Ali had enough, he finally collapsed onto the deck, the pirates were terrified! They sailed away into the darkness. Although we won, we had blood all over our faces. We traveled to Arabia, eating peninsula and riding camels. We stayed there for two days. We gave our treasures to peaceful people. They thanked us in Arabica. We finally set sail back to China peacefully.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Island Christian Academy, Francillion, Piyali – 10

I woke up shivering with aching bones. It was early November. The sun was rising and the streets were quiet. I looked at myself on a piece of shattered glass. My face was black with yesterday's soot. I rushed to get ready for a busy day.

I went to see Mr. Cheung, a local Nanjing priest. His temple, across our hut, was massive and popular but Mr. Cheung remained humble. When I reached the temple he was on the dark end, lighting up candles. "Mr. Cheung!" I shouted. "It's me, Chen."

He turned around and smiled.

"Ah Chen!" He said. "I have been waiting for you. Come, son."

Since my father had died, Mr. Cheung was the one my family had to look up to and he was always willing to help us out.

We walked down the corridor which led to the priest's chamber. Mr. Cheung sat on one of the cushions and rummaged through his drawer while I poured some Cha¹ into two bowls. Finally, he sat down in front of me.

"Have you heard of Zheng, the famous Nanjing adventurer?" he started. "He is going on an expedition tomorrow but his designated helper got injured and he is urgently looking for somebody reliable. Zheng's willing to pay about 100 gold coins, lodging and food. I can recommend your name if you are interested." I thought for a moment and then nodded.

"Great! I'll tell your mother. For now, can you go dust the sculptures?"

The next day, after mom had finished packing my sack, I ran to the docks. There stood Zheng He. He looked very different than in the paintings!

Beside him was the ship doctor, Pang. He pushed me aggressively as he followed Zheng. Someone told me that Pang was Zheng's favorite in the crew. He was totally fascinated by the boss and disliked anyone else getting close to Zheng.

It was not long before we boarded the ship, excited for the adventure awaiting us.

Our first stop, a few days later, was the coast of Champa². Zheng's only intention was to refill our water tanks there and shortly after we sailed off to continue our route south.

After another week of travel, we reached a beautiful beach in Siam³. Zheng ordered the crew members to prepare our camp and to get some food for dinner. In the meantime, Zheng asked a few crew members to go swimming with him. I was among the chosen ones. Zheng was starting to have confidence in me and the complicity between us was growing. It did not take long before I got dirty looks of pure hatred from Pang.

At night, all of us gathered around the fire. We were quickly joined by locals attracted by our ship. Their leaders shared some fresh coconuts with us. In return, we gave them some of the treasures we had in our stock. We all enjoyed this moment of calm when we exchanged stories about our customs and traditions. And, after a hearty dinner of dried fish and rice, a quick round of checkers and a game of cards, we went to sleep.

When I woke up, everything was dull. I felt dizzy. I saw Zhao, my best friend on the ship, run up to me.

"Zhao. I feel... I feel..."

I had blacked out.

I woke up on a cotton bed, surrounded by people. Zheng and Zhao were there too.

Pang, the doctor of the ship stood in front of me.

"Chen, you have high fever!" He said.

I fainted again after hearing him mumble "He will die."

¹ Milk tea

² Central Vietnam

³ Modern day Thailand

At night, the waves churned and the storm shrieked. I woke up cold and hot at the same time. I saw a shadow. I heard footsteps. Someone was coming!
I gathered all my remaining forces to grab the holy sword from the drawer and held it tightly. It was the doctor! He held a knife in his hand as he crept through my room. He suddenly charged to me pointing the knife. I did the same except sitting up straight on the bed.
As soon as it had begun it had finished. I looked down to see him lying on the floor, dead.

The next day, after I had explained everything to the crew we set off again, happily.

About a month later, we reached Cochin in India. By that time, thanks to our newly appointed doctor, I had recovered.

What a relief to again be able to walk on dry land! With some friends, we visited the port. We met with snake sellers and charmers displaying their tricks. For the first time, we ate daal⁴ and chawal⁵, Hindu's⁶ favorite dishes which would become our daily treat during our stay in India.
In the meantime, Zheng had met with the head of the local army, Ranveer. Ranveer was a very welcoming person. He showed us around the jungle where we came across tigers, elephants and many other amazing animals.

After six months, it was time for us to return to to Nanjing and share our adventures with everyone. But our journey back home was threatened by our encounter with Chinese pirates near Sumatra's coast. Zheng once again revealed his courage. Heading our men, he fought like a tiger and maneuvered so well that it was not long before we took into custody the chief of pirates.

When we finally reached back to Nanjing, the crew was like family but I couldn't wait to see my original one. I rushed off to Mr. Cheung. He was waiting for me along with my mother.

"Welcome back Chen! I missed you so much!"

I smiled.

"Me too!"

At night we talked and joked. Happy, relieved and proud, I could not stop relating my adventures. As the fire dimmed, I shut my eyes and entered the world of dreams.

⁴ Lentils

⁵ Rice

⁶ A religion popular in India

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Kau Yan School, Hau, Yuet Ching Jovia – 9

“Quick! Sailor Lee’s temperature is too high. Fill the tub with cool water and we need to soak him in!” yelled Doctor Mak from the sick room.

Before I joined the Ming Treasure fleet, I had no idea what it would be like to sail for years. I was a twelve years old boy who worked as an assistant to Doctor. Doctor Mak was a kind doctor, but he was strict to me because he said, “Being a good doctor is about saving lives, you cannot afford to make mistake.” I learned a lot from him and I wanted to be a doctor like him. Doctor Mak was called by the Emperor to work on the ship, so I left my family and followed him.

The Ming Emperor sent a fleet of about 200 ships to visit different countries, to show his friendliness to them. We brought along many precious treasures and helpful skills, to share with them. We have different kinds of ships and people working here. We got ships for food, horses, weapons and most importantly treasures. Different people like sailors, chefs, soldiers, doctors and any kind of people you could name. It was like a moving city on the sea.

Days on the sea was very boring and tough. I was homesick and always sobbed at night in the beginning. Things got better when I met some friends about my age. I would gather with friends after work. We played card games and chatted about our adventures in different ships or horrible stories about pirates. Bob, who was also an assistant to Doctor Mak, had been very kind to me. He shared the same bedroom with me and would encourage me. “All your suffering now helps to build you into a better doctor in future.” Bob was right, with his words in mind, I felt stronger to handle the difficulties better.

“Are you listening? Move faster to get cool water!” growled Doctor Mak.

“I really don’t get it, why do our Emperor send us to the howling sea? Before we send out our kindness, we might all die. Who are going to show kindness to us?” I grumbled while pouring the heavy bucket of water into the huge tub. “I heard gossip from the main ship that we lost our way. I really don’t want to die here” murmured Bob.

It had been two months after we departed from last piece of land. The weather was getting hotter and more people got sick. Bob and I were busy helping Doctor Mak to take care of them. Things were getting worse when one of our ships sank, all the food and water on that ship were gone. We were running out of food and water, everyone was very frustrated and hungry. We were looking forward to see the land again.

Suddenly, I heard the special pattern of drumroll from the main ship. I clapped my hand to my mouth and Bob shouted to me, “Can you believe it? We are going to land soon!” Tears of happiness rolled down my cheeks. I was very excited about landing a new place because I was fed up with the sea.

After we landed on a beach, we were surrounded by local people, who spoke in a way that I could not understand and looked very unfriendly. They threw stones to us and shouted at us. When I thought they were about to attack us, they all ran away back into the forest and disappeared. I was very confused and terrified as I did not know what would happen.

While we were looking for herbs and food, I could feel the suspicious gazes from the local people but I cannot see them. I felt upset as we were not doing anything harmful to them. Doctor Mak reminded us that we were coming to share our friendliness and love to others. He told us to calm down, stay close to each other and be friendly to local people.

One day, Bob and I saw a fainted kid when we were collecting herbs on the hillside. The boy’s body was covered in bruises and scratches, he looked very weak and could not even open his eyes. We took him back to our camp and asked Doctor Mak to treat him. When the boy woke up in our camp, he was trembling in fear and sobbed miserably. After two days, the boy was getting better and stronger, he felt safe and showed smiles.

“Attack! Run!” Emergency horns were blown and we hurried down with the boy to an open area. We saw soldiers fighting with local people, and some of them were covered in blood. My teeth clattered and hugged the boy tightly. I was thinking how to run away with the boy. However, the little boy pushed me away and darted towards the local fighters. The local people were delighted to see the boy back again. The local people listened to the boy and their mouth hung wide open. They turned to us now with great big smiles and bowed to us. It turned out the little boy was their young prince, who was captured by their enemy! I could not believe I could be a friend with a prince!

Our captain gave them treasures to show our friendliness. The local people were very amazed by our skill to build a well, that could bring underground water to drink. We taught them how to build wells and they were jovial about this new skill they learned.

Showing kindness to others was not easy when we were in trouble ourselves. I was grateful to my teacher who teach me to stay kind and continue to share our love no matter what. It is the kindness that truly rules the sea, and I could feel the friendship that I shared with the all people I met.

New Tales of Ming Treasure Voyages

Kau Yan School, Leung, Ching Sum Maegan – 9

“Maegan, it’s getting late! Practice your ocarina and go to sleep!” Mum shouted loudly as I walked into my room. “Yes, I will!” I answered back. I played my ocarina as usual. Then, I smelled a scent of the sweet dream essential oil next to my bed and then fell asleep soundly.

When I opened my eyes, I heard splashing sounds of waves. I looked around, trying to figure out where I was. I then heard someone mumbling, “Captain Zheng He still hasn’t been able to sleep well for almost a week. What can we do?” Soon, a man dressed in ancient Chinese clothing walked slowly towards me. I realized that I had returned to the past! He leaned forward and asked, “Who are you? Why are you here?”

I stared at him nervously trying to find myself an excuse of my appearance, then I suddenly recalled the conversation that I just overheard and muttered, “I’m Leung Ching Sum. I am here to help Captain Zheng.”

“Oh! Thank you! Welcome to the our treasure ship! I am one of the doctors on this ship. We have a problem. Our captain, Zheng He, can’t sleep well at night. We have had used all our methods and even different kinds of medicines. None of them work. Do you think you can help him?” The man asked hopefully.

“Yes, I think I can help him,” I replied earnestly.

After that, he took me downstairs to see his captain, Zheng He. I saw him lying on his bed, but he was still opening his eyes wide.

The doctor bowed to him and explained, “Captain, this child told me that she can help you sleep.”

Zheng He stood up straight. He looked at me doubtfully and asked, “Really? How are you going to help me?”

I answered with slight confidence, “I will use the sweet dream essential oil and play a peaceful melody with my ocarina to help you!”

Zheng He suggested, “You can try them tonight! I want to know if they are effective.”

I nodded and promised, “Okay!”

That night, I was in the doctor’s cabin. I saw a sight that I will never forget. It was raining cats and dogs. I saw lightning flashing and thundering roaring loudly outside. Waves got higher and higher, feeling that our ships were going to turn upside down! I was frightened and my body was shaking.

Suddenly, a soldier knocked the cabin’s door and came in. He ordered me to go to Zheng He’s room immediately. So I took the sweet dream essential oil and the ocarina with me. Quickly, I followed him to Zheng He’s room.

When I entered his room, I bowed at Zheng He, handing the sweet dream essential oil and the ocarina to him.

Zheng He commanded, “Now, you can start your ‘magic’.” I carefully dripped two drops of sweet dream essential oil on his pillow. I moved my fingers on the ocarina to play a peaceful melody named “Amazing Grace” for him.

While I was playing the ocarina, Zheng He told me about his past, “I was born in a Muslim family. I loved listening to grandpa’s stories. But in 1381, Ming army’s soldiers came to Yunnan, a place where I lived. Unluckily, I was captured by them. I became a eunuch and began to serve prince Zhudi. In 1390, I began to serve a prince in a ...” He had not finished his story and fell deeply asleep.

The soldiers beside him were all amazed and whispered to each other. Then, they sent me back to my room. I peeked out from the window, staring at the still raining sky. I started to feel homesick.

The next morning, Zheng He came into my room and sat on my bed. “Your sweet dream essential oil and the peaceful melody really worked! You are one of the best doctors I’ve ever seen!” thanked Zheng He.

I smiled, “Captain, it is my pleasure!”

Zheng He took me to the deck and showed me different masts. There were totally nine masts on the treasure ship. Then, he showed me his other ships, “We have more than 200 ships, including treasure ships, equine ships, supply ships, troop transports, fuchuan warships and water tankers!” He looked at the sky and said, “Look at the ocean! The huge mountains waves are rising sky-high. In front of your eyes are far-off foreign lands covered in a faint mist. Our ships are in full sail. On and on we sail; day and night we sail. Our ships can ride on giant waves just as if we were walking on a smooth road.”

I opened my mouth wide. I said, “Wow! Which voyage are we on now?”

Zheng He replied, “We are on our first voyage. We are going back to China now.”

I nodded and asked, “Where did you go on this voyage?”

Zheng He answered with a warm smile on his face, “We went to Champa, Java Island, Malacca, Aru, Samudera, Quilon, Kollam, Ceylon and Calicut. We travelled to nine places in the first voyage!”

“You went to many places! I wonder if the journey was fun?” I asked curiously.

Zheng He laughed, “The journey was not fun at all. Sometimes, we needed to fight with the horrible pirates! Sometimes, there were storms and gusts of wind. But there was a time, I gave gold, silver, porcelain and silk for Swahili. In return, they gave us some novelties such as ostriches, zebras, camels and ivory.”

“So that means you had many presents in the first voyage!” I exclaimed.

Zheng He whispered to my ear, “Yes! But don’t tell the others because they may want to have the presents themselves. Take this as your reward for giving me a good night sleep!” He placed a gold coin in my hand.

“Thank you!” I bowed lowly and replied.

Just then, I heard mum’s voice, “Maegan, wake up! Or you will be late for school!” I opened my eyes and felt that there was something in my hand. I opened my hand and saw the gold coin. I beamed, “Wow! The gold coin travelled back with me in time!”

The Trip to the Western Seas

Kau Yan School, Sin, Yan Yu Adeline – 10

“Where are we?” whispered Yan Yan. “Shush, we’re in Emperor Yongle’s forbidden city. Emperor Yongle is about to talk,” said General Woo.

“You’ll set sail to the Western Seas tomorrow to discover new things and places. Good luck everyone,” said Emperor Yongle.

The next day, Zheng He, General Woo, Yan Yan and their tough warriors boarded a fleet of ships to the Western Seas. Zheng He was very clever and hard-working. General Woo was very good in wars, and he was able to guide his men and friends to safety. Yan Yan was General Woo’s daughter. She was a trustworthy and brave girl.

The weather was unpredictable. Yan Yan felt so cold and windy. People got seasick on the ships. “General Zheng, the men puke all over the ships,” said Yan Yan worriedly.

After a few months, there was a huge storm coming and the water was flooding everywhere! The waves came rushing forward to the ships. It was raining cats and dogs. People tossed and turned because of that horrible weather.

“I can’t sleep,” said the people unhappily. “We’re very tired too.” After a few days, the storm eventually stopped. “There’s a colourful and vivid rainbow,” said General Woo. People held a party to celebrate. “Hurray! The storm is over,” cheered the people on the ships.

Dolphins leaped and jumped out from water to show off their tricks. General Woo and Yan Yan laid down, gazing at the moon and stars at night. It was really a happy moment for them.

Arrived at a New Country

Yan Yan then found something missing. “Hey, where had the map gone?”. “I think the storm blew it off the ship,” said Zheng He. “I have no idea where we are going.”

The ships sailed across oceans. Then after a month, Yan Yan saw land. Zheng He ordered his men to sheltered the ships on the land.

“I suppose we’re in India, because there are elephants here,” said Yan Yan. Suddenly, an Indian girl tapped on Yan Yan’s shoulder and called them all to follow her. The little girl took them to a beautiful place.

A king was standing in front of them. He wore a Sherwani, with a golden ring in his index finger. He smiled and looked them up and down curiously. He tried to speak with them, but none of Zheng He’s men knew what he said. But he treated them nicely.

Yan Yan whispered to Zheng He, “the king is a nice person, and he is smart too. Why don’t we give him our gold and silk as presents to make good friends with each other?”

“Good idea,” said Zheng He. He ordered his men to get some gold to the king. The king was very pleased. After a while, Zheng He decided to leave and to continue the trip.

OH NO! Pirates!

The ships dangled on the peaceful waves. The sun shone down at the sea and the water sparkled. After that, disaster struck. Yan Yan heard booming sounds coming from the west.

About seven ginormous pirate ships were coming closer towards Zheng He’s ships. There was an enormous skull flag on each pirate ship. The pirates carried swords and ropes with them.

“Look! The world-famous pirate, Captain Hook, is on that pirate ship,” said General Woo. “Oh no,” said Yan Yan. “Calm down Yan Yan, I’m sure we will get rid of them in no time,” said Zheng He confidently. “Everyone, prepare for the pirates.”

Captain Hook was skinny and very tall indeed. He had an eye patch on his left eye. He had a pirate hat and his teeth were as yellow as the chandelier lights. He wore a white shirt, and he had a brown belt on his waist. He had a hook on his right arm, instead of a hand. He also wore baggy trousers.

“You won’t win,” said Captain Hook brusquely. The pirates grabbed the gold from Zheng He’s ships greedily. There was a big fight with the pirates. They finally took Zheng He, tied him up and placed him on Captain Hook’s big pirate ship.

When Captain Hook and his men were about to leave, there was something pulling the pirate ship and it wouldn’t let the ship go. What happened to the ship?

The turtles and their friends

There were a bunch of turtles surrounded Captain Hook’s ship. People were flabbergasted. “What will the turtles do next?”

“Ahhhhhhhhhh!” screeched Captain Hook. When Captain Hook was about to jump onto another ship and escape, the turtle leader blew a whistle and two sharks, Mrs. and Mr. Shark swam towards Captain Hook, so he couldn’t escape. Zheng He and Yan Yan roared with laughter. A turtle crawled on the pirate ship slowly. It bit off the rope and freed Zheng He. When everyone wasn’t looking, General Woo jumped to the pirate ship and took the gold. He placed them back on Zheng He’s ship.

“I have no time for those silly games and I’ll get you all next time,” said Captain Hook through gritted teeth. His face went purple and red. Then the crowd of pirate ships disappeared in the darkness...

“Thank you, thank you, this was a really good job,” said General Woo holding a big thumb up for the turtles. “How can we repay your kindness?” asked Zheng He and Yan Yan. “We don’t want the Emperor to eat shark fin soup again because two of our friends had become Emperor Yongle’s lunch,” said Mr. Shark sadly. “I’ll promise you,” said General Woo. Then Zheng He, General Woo, Yan Yan and their men continue their trip to the Western Seas.

So, from now on, Chinese people love sea creatures and they won’t eat shark fin soup again, ever and ever.

An Unforgettable Adventure

Kau Yan School, Wong, Hou Man Cheryl – 9

Long time ago, in 1403, the Emperor ordered the construction of a huge fleet of ships capable of travel around the Indian Ocean. He put his trusted retainer, the Muslim eunuch Zheng, in charge of construction. After an offering of prayers to the protective goddess of sailors, George, the fleet set out for India with the newly-named admiral Zheng He in command.

From there, they went to the island of Java (Indonesia) carefully avoiding the fleet of pirate Tom. The fleet made further stops at Islands.

When Zheng arrived, the people were very kind to him. The people gave him some food to take it back to his country. Zheng was very grateful and offered them a bag of gold and silver.

On the way back to China, the Treasure Fleet confronted the pirate Tom at Indonesia. Tom pretended to surrender to Zheng, but turned upon the Treasure Fleet and tried to plunder it. Zheng He's forces attacked, killing more than 5,000 pirates, sinking ten of their ships. Tom and two of his top associates were captured and taken back to China and were beheaded.

On their return to Ming China, Zheng He and his entire force of officers and sailors received monetary rewards from the England Emperor. The England emperor was very pleased with the tribute brought by the foreign emissaries, and with China's increased prestige in the eastern Indian Ocean basin.

After presenting their tribute and receiving gifts from the China emperor, the people needed to go back to their homes. They were very hungry so they wanted to catch some fish.

Suddenly there was a scream from the deck "HELP ME "shouted the people, it was a big squid, they ate it up, but they did not know it is the friend of the sea king.

The sea king was very angry and attacked the ship, making the waves rough. The people on the ship were frightened and scared, they ran to the places where the sea king can't see them. The waves are so rough that it even broke the foresail, the people felt hopeless because the boat will sink soon. "What shall we do?" complained the people. Suddenly, the sky was no longer dark, a piece of wood killed the sea king, the people fixed the foresail and soon, the great fleet set sail once again.

Some pirates from the first voyage had not die, and they wanted to kill Zheng. They crept onto the ship when the people are asleep. They put a small bomb inside Zheng's room. In the morning, the pirates cheered, but when they find out nobody got hurt, they were very angry.

Zheng wanted to find out who did this, so he squeezed some sticky ink on the ground and on the door.

At midnight, the pirates came again, they silently push the door, then they quickly run inside but find out their feet could not move, they cried " Help! It's a trap!" Then, Zheng he woke up, when he saw them, he called the guards. and the pirates were beheaded soon.

On the way to Muscat, one night, all of the people were having fun, when a ship went out of control, it drove with breakneck speed and crashed into another ship, the ship overturned. Some people swim up to the top and called other ships to save them, they rescue Zheng he from the water.

They went to a lot of amazing places to travel and everything went fine after. Zheng he exchanged money with exotic goods and creatures, famously including giraffes, which were interpreted as the mythical Chinese creature the *qilin*.

On the fifth and sixth voyages, the Treasure Fleet followed much the same track to Arabia and East Africa, asserting Chinese prestige and collecting tribute from as many as thirty different states and principalities. The fifth voyage spanned 1416 to 1419, while the sixth took place in 1421 and 1422.

In 1424, Zheng He's friend and sponsor, the Chinese Emperor, died while on a military campaign against the Mongols. His successor, the happy Emperor, ordered an end to the expensive ocean-going voyages. However, the new emperor lived for just nine months after his coronation and was succeeded by his more adventurous son, the happy Emperor. Under his leadership, the Treasure Fleet would make one last great voyage.

The Happy Emperor ordered preparations for a final voyage of the Treasure Fleet. He appointed Zheng He to command the fleet, even though the great eunuch admiral was 59 years old and in poor health.

This last great voyage took three years and visited at least 17 different ports between China and Kenya. On the way back to China, in Indonesian waters, Admiral Zheng He died. He was buried at sea, and his men brought a braid of his hair and a pair of his shoes back to be buried in Nanjing.

The Treasure Voyages

Kennedy School, Chow, Hana – 10

Chapter 1: what this is even about

The salty air and the cool breeze blew against my face. The whole crew was busy doing bits of work and chattering away. I decided to enjoy every memorable moment. We all clearly knew he was eager to trade goods from the emperor such as silk and tea for something we desired all his life: gold. That's what he wanted. I was on the ship named 'The Greatest' full of riches. I mean there were far more riches and goods from the honorable emperor than the crew on board. I'm probably the youngest one here. I'm weak and I'm thirteen. But father always believes in me.

"I believe in you more than I believe in myself kid," reminded my dad over and over again.

Our destination was Africa which was very far and we were hoping we might be the first people to reach Africa. Of course I knew it was going to be very tiring. But I had to complete this journey and I still remember the very day I made up my mind. Father handed me a piece of paper, old and crumpled. It was a map.

"Chen, use this even though it may look useless, I've kept it for many years and I believe you will find this handy sometime" he said

By looking at the map, it seemed like a long way to Africa. Whatever it was.

Chapter 2 :enemies?

Few days past already, quickly and so far we'd reached India and Arabia, getting a chance to be one of the most historic historians. I met amazing people and tried the delicious mangos. I thought I would have a nice time, peaceful and calm lying down on my hammock because so far I'd experienced all the marvellous things I was silently and carefully studying the map father gave me, thinking deep thoughts.

For dinner, all of us quietly gathered out on the deck watching the beautiful horizon. All of a sudden, something not quite right was blocking the entire charming view. Another ship. The captain scowled without stopping and suddenly he looked angry. The whole crew went crazy and a second later it was just shouting.

"The bombs! Load your guns!," ordered the captain busily walking around. We heard deafening noises of bombs shooting our direction. Many strong men of the crew started fighting back.

A load of fierce looking people got on our ship, and things got insane. They were searching for the treasures throughout the depths of the ship. Soon after, the vile enemies carried our silk and our belongings. One big bulky woman was holding something familiar. My map. I could never in a billion years let someone take it.

"THAT'S MY MAP," I screamed to the top of my voice. The pirate noticed me.

The pirate smiled smugly showing all of her menacing disgusting teeth.

"You're not afraid of me young lad?," she asked. She punched me hard on the stomach and I drew my sword as I stabbed her hard. She jerked away, the map slipping of her hands. I snatched it. Afraid, she ran away. At least I had the map. I noticed a large piece of glorious silk, that I could not ignore. It seemed to be the only wonderful thing in the middle of this chaos. I snatched that too hugging the belongings tightly, letting no one take it away. I shed a tear in pain because the pirate had left a colossal scar on my back. My head was throbbing with pain and I was unable to do anything but lie down.

Chapter 3: Hunger, shock and grievance

First of all, people were cursing. Next moaning of terror. I'd sort of saved the crew by holding on tight to the goods. What was the whole use of this voyage? A few moments later, still screaming in agony the boat started sinking. I did not want to pass away in a voyage we were supposed to be famous for! Soon most of the pirates were swimming and clutching tightly on their precious belongings. I shoved half of the map in my mouth, hoping it would not dissolve. The green tea was hanging on my shoulder about to fall. I tightened my grip.

"Swim! Swim!," shouted my father from the top his voice.

Immediately, grasping onto the small log I swam for my life. If the other pirates couldn't reach Africa, I would. No doubt.

Chapter 4: Cave

When at last I awoke, it felt surprisingly homely again.

“Were safe,” assured father giving me a cup of hot green tea.

This was clearly not home. I was in a dim, damp cave. With a single comforting candle. I was too distressed, not knowing what to do. Wrapped tightly in a warm blanket, father comforted me.

“We’re okay,” he whispered.

I looked around the cave it was not okay. About sixteen from 28 were left. Some were crying and weeping for losing their loved ones. Co-captain, yi wei, was in a dreadful mourning. I just kept asking myself over and over. ‘How are we to return to china with the traded goods?’

Chapter 5: The zulala tribe.

My back was painful from the rocks and all we were doing for an endless tiring one hour was wait for hope. People threw up of homesickness, people were weeping and some fast asleep. I still remember it. Painful. Utter misery.

All of a sudden, we heard music, drums laughter. It seemed like the people who were doing this were having fun. For us, fun was unimaginable in this kind of horrific situation. The noise kept going our way and eventually we were face to face with a group of colourful people. They hooted and cheered. The only thing we understood was them chanting out loud,

“Zulala tribe! Zulala tribe!”

They stared at us for a long moment and gently felt our precious chinese silk. I thought they were going to trade us something, and that’s exactly what they did. Offering something even better than fruit. Soon, our silk, tea and gold was gone but us pirates had parrots, gold from the africans and jewellery. Even better, a boat. We were crying for joy. What the Zulala tribe did was unthinkable kindness. I mean who would’ve done that for us if the zulala tribe didn’t?

Later that day, we happily communicated by actions, while having a fire by our side. I vowed that I would always remember the zulala tribe forever. It brought all of us happiness and taught us how to be grateful. I sat thinking about it the whole time.

Chapter 7: home sweet home.

“China!,” they exclaimed. Father hugged me tightly without saying a word.

I finally had the chance to meet mother.

“We did it son. we did,” he said proudly.

We were soon appreciated by the emporer and all got a bag of gold.

I still remember everything I took from this experience. hope, fear and joy.

We hoped,

We tried,

And we did.

Ming Treasure Voyages

Kennedy School, Chua, Emma – 9

One winter morning, when the Ming emperor still ruled, a young Chinese boy named Xiaoming was on a journey to India. “Maybe, in India, I can get herbs to cure my mother.” His mother had been ill for many years and he had heard from the doctor that the cure was a herb only found in India. Xiaoming was only 16 years old and was traveling with his father, one of the chefs of Admiral Zheng He’s ship. Xiaoming’s job was to wash the dishes.

Days, weeks and months went by before they finally reached their destination. Calicut. The sky was starting to get dark grey. “Prepare for a rough day, I think there is a storm coming in” one sailor warned.

Despite the warning, Admiral Zheng He ordered “Anchor the ship. We’re getting off.” Xiaoming had just started doing the dishes when he suddenly heard the clash of swords. He looked out onto the deck. Without hesitation, Xiaoming got up and grabbed a ladle, so he could help. He was immediately caught up in the fight.

A sharp sword flashed over his head. In the corner of his eye he saw the Admiral fighting. Xiaoming ducked and hit a pirates leg. Xiaoming raised his ladle and jammed it on another pirates head, with such strength that the pirate was knocked out, unconscious. Then, Xiaoming felt the ship rocking heavily under his feet. The sky had become an eerie grey. Thunder started. Lightning appeared. Suddenly, a petrifying cry rang out. Xiaoming looked, and saw gigantic waves rising from the sea. The waves crashed heavily on the sides of the ship. Xiaoming saw silhouettes of pirates with pointy hats fall off board.

When the storm was over the Admiral continued his journey in Calicut. Luckily, for the sailors, though not all of them had survived, the pirates had been knocked off board by the powerful waves. Xiaoming tread on something hard and round as he walked to the ships edge. He looked, and down beneath his feet was a glass bottle covered in dirt and a whiffy stench. Could it have been left behind by a pirate? Or could it have been carried on board by the waves? This would be a secret no one would ever know the answer to. Xiaoming took it to his cabin and wiped the mysterious bottle. That’s when he realised there were small, green herbs inside. The herb he saw was identical to the drawing the doctor showed him back in China. Xiaoming was so excited. “*Fantastic! This is just what I need to cure mother.*”

They had returned to their homeland, China. It had already been 1 ½ years, but it only felt like a few days. Xiaoming and his father rushed home. His mother cried “Xiaoming! I’m so glad you’re back.” from under the sheets. “Look what I found! It can cure you, mom!” Xiaoming said.

With permission from the doctor, Xiaoming let his mother consume the antidote. His mother was gradually getting better. Xiaoming and his family lived happily and well for a long time and maybe you will visit the very ship they were on the next time you go to China..

Treasure Surprise

Kennedy School, Ho, Hilary – 9

It was another one of those boring Friday nights at old Aunt Martha's house. We just can't stand the scrabble game she made us play over and over again nor the moldy smell in the living room. Also, her old toothbrush she always carries around because she thinks it's too special to leave at her house incase someone steals it. Every week mom and dad party and hang out with their friends ,so they send my sister, my little twin brothers and I to aunt Martha's farmhouse. After dropping us off, mom spoke to my sister.

"Sorry, Angela, Sweetheart. Daddy and I will be off in Hawaii for just a week. You are the eldest one, and I am trusting you to take care of the smaller kids. OK? Love you, bye..."next to mother, dad gave a weak smile to Angela and waved goodbye. My sister walked inside miserable and told me that whenever they say 'love you' so carelessly, a little of her heart breaks away until it is nearly no more. We all sat down and stared at the boring and plain cabbage soup Aunt Martha gives us for every meal. The twins groaned and then there was absolute silence. It was so quiet, you could even hear a mouse's footstep. A big, loud and smelly *buuuuuurrrrrp* from Aunt Martha broke the silence.

"Sorry, my dears...but I have something special to show you all. All that soup reminded me of it." said Aunt Martha's wobbly voice. Our faces lightened up. The twins—Jacob and Jack were particularly interested. Aunt Martha carried on: "You see, children, I've found this magnificent map in my special book of wisdom." She unfolded the piece of paper in her hand and spread out the ancient map on the table.

"And also that every time I want to find a random page, my book keeps on opening to this frame." aunt Martha added. Since Angela was 13 and very smart, she was able to find a clue. On the back side of the map, there was a mysterious rhyme that appeared with a flash of light. Angela read the rhyme aloud:

Collect two things, silk and gold. Give it to a man that's bald.

Save his terrible life aboard, at the ending of a cord.

Teach them pirates the lesson, don't watch them slowly have progression.

Leave at night, take a bite

Of what's in front of you. Do what's right!

Slowly, it disappeared. Angela just stared at the map for a really long time.

"Maybe we need to somehow jump *in* the frame to get wherever this will take us," suggested Angela. The twins volunteered to jump in first. A few surprising moments later, we heard their echoed voices saying that they are on a beach. I was next.

"Auntie, are you coming with us?" I asked.

"Dearest Olivia, of course I am. Don't you little dumplings worry." comforted Martha. I took a deep breath and jumped in. Tossed and tumbled until I hit boiling hot sand. A gruff voice made me jump.

"Ta men shi ni de di ma?" asked a chinese pirate—looking guy pointing to my brothers. I surprisingly understood what he meant. I tried to answer back that they *were* my younger brothers but what came out of my mouth was fluent chinese.

"Who are you all? Why are you here?" asked the pirate suspiciously. He gestured to the men behind him as they roughly grabbed us by the ears. They tied all our hands together and marched us into the rowboat to go to the main, grand sailing ship. The suspicious man brought us to what seemed like the leader who was now glaringly eyeing us. He didn't seem to be happy that we showed up in the middle of eating his cabbage roll lunch. He stood up and wiped his mouth.

"Who are you? Are you a friend or enemy of China?" the leader demanded. Aunt Martha stepped up.

"Hi, Mr.Suspicious Weird Beard. We have come in peace and would like to join your fellow crew," said Aunt Martha trying to sound not scared. The rest of us gasped. The captain narrowed his eyes at us. He looked as if he could read Aunt Martha's mind—if she is trying to trick the captain or actually meaning it. Finally, he said:

"Ms.Old And Stinky, I have some questions for you,"

While the captain and Aunt Martha were having the conversation, the twins, without being noticed, were excited began exploring the ship. They found some colourful cloth and shiny coins to play with. When the captain was asking questions, Aunt Martha noticed the cabbage stuck in his teeth and the captain looked terrible. The captain's face went red with anger when everyone he could see was laughing. She thought of her toothbrush she had with her. "Sorry to interrupt, but I have something that can clean your teeth," said Aunt Martha.

"I can lend you my bristle toothbrush if you like," she continued.

"Lend me your what?" asked the confused captain.

The captain snatched it from her and used it to clean his teeth. The cabbage got out and the pirates stopped laughing. At that moment, the twins spotted a pirate that was bald and looked tired and bullied. They asked the bald pirate to play with the. When the twins were handing that pirate cloth and coins, someone spotted

them. The bald man noticed and grabbed some rope and jumped into the sea. Me, Angela, aunt Martha and I heard and saw his splash.

“Thank you, Ms.Smart! You are accepted to join our cr—”

The pirate that saw the twins and shouted, cutting short the captain’s sentence.

“THIEVES! THE BOYS ARE STEALING OUR SILK AND GOLD!”

The captain demanded at once:

“Tie them up!” then he turned to Aunt Martha.

“You, Ms.SmartyPants! Trying to steal my treasure! You can’t outsmart a villain like me.Fellow pirates, let’s PARTY!” The pirates cheered. They painted their faces with the powder of crushed seashell then danced and drank. At night, when everyone was asleep, we were staring at the leftover spilled seashell powder all over the deck. The twins liked the colour of the seashell powder. They were determined to taste the powder. As soon as the powder touched their tongue, they disappeared before our eyes. A few minutes later, we were all back at Aunt Martha’s farmhouse. After that week, every Friday we couldn’t wait to go to Aunt Martha’s.

... and to this very day, the Ming Dynasty is known for inventing the bristle toothbrush.

The Dragon King

Kennedy School, Liao, Sofia – 8

Once upon a time in a magnificent palace there lived a dragon family. They had a son who was named Drake. He had shiny blue scales, golden horns, black eyes and a long lashing tail. His mother had purple scales, green horns, blue eyes and a yellow tail. His father had green scales, blue horns, orange eyes and a short tail. Darke inherited the beauty from his parents as Darke was an obviously handsome dragon.

The young prince did not realize that his parents were both treasure hunters. One day Drake's father told him "Me and your mother have to go out for business and we promise to be back in two weeks. Little did young Drake know that his parents were going to jump in a volcano under the dangerous sea.

Soon they were rumors everywhere that the dragon king and queen were dead. The young prince was left to rule the seas alone. After many years Drake who was now known as the dragon king has been trying to look for his long lost parents. But he has no clue how to begin the searching in the vast open sea.

One day, in his father's study room Drake found a staircase leading down to a secret chamber. Once he was inside a chamber, Drake found a heavy book and inside there was a map which said where his parents had gone looking for treasure.

Drake followed the map and he eventually came to a halt in front of a treacherous volcano under the sea near Mariana Islands. He dived into the volcano where his parents had jumped in long ago. The dragon king found a path which led deeper in the volcano. At the foot of the path he found a lake. He slowly swam through the lake and climbed up onto the bank.

After he had got the water off his scales he started to shout "Mommy daddy where are you?" Then he saw a shadow and started to fly towards it. It was his mom and dad!

Drake saw his parents wounded and lying on the ground. "Mom dad are you okay?" he called out to them. "Drake" his mother called out to him "get out of here, there's a black dragon king lurking in the corner and he's very evil and powerful. Run or he is going to kill you!" Young smart Drake thought "I might not be able to fight the black dragon king but if I lure the black dragon king out of the volcano when it erupts the black dragon king will fly into the hot lava and he will be de

So the young dragon king decided to give it a try. He shouted to all four sides of the volcano and the black dragon king came out. "What do you want?" he rumbled. "I want to challenge you", Drake replied casually.

Soon Drake had led the black dragon king out of the volcano just as it started to erupt. Ducking it just in time the black dragon was dead by the eruption. Then Drake found out the treasure his parents had been looking for was actually a crystal ball that could foresee the future. He rubbed the ball gently and it showed him his parents safely back at home with him. So slowly he carried his parents back up to the palace.

With the help of the crystal ball, Drake can foresee when the volcano will erupt or when tsunamis happen so his people can run away or be prepared earlier. All his people are now safe from earthquakes and tsunamis. Drake become the King of Seven Seas!

The Ming Voyages – An Insider Story

Kennedy School, Pandey, Avani – 9

My name is Avani Chung and I have heard many stories but one real-life story has been the most fascinating to me. It is that of my ancestor when she was a young woman in the 1400 AD and her name was Lin Chung. She had dared to disguise herself as a man to work on a ship and explore the world considering that women had no freedom whatsoever in that period. Our story begins when the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty was ruling China. He had just ascended the throne having overtaken his brother and hence did not want people to think he was cruel. So, he asked his top minister, Admiral Zheng to lead seven voyages in the Indian Ocean to distribute gold, silver, porcelain and more to spread goodwill and the mightiness of the Chinese Empire. When the King's messengers spread the message to enlist crew members for this massive voyage, Lin heard it as well and longing for adventure, she cut her dark black hair, posed as a man and got herself a doctor's job since she had learnt the art of traditional Chinese medicine from her father. The waves gently rose and fell as the heartbroken families said goodbye to their sons or husbands who were now boarding the treasure ships. With a last look at her home, Lin boarded the ship as well. It was too late to change her mind now, the anchor had been lifted. It seemed that her fate was sealed, Lin was going to sail after all. The people on the shore watched in amazement as the 317 ships, all heavily armed with weapons sailed away with 28,000 men including doctors, scholars, soldiers, etc in it. The ship sailed for weeks without a single sign of storms when the crew finally saw a welcoming sight, land! The map indicated that they were approaching Champa in Vietnam. A sailor dropped the anchor as they neared the port. A large crowd of fishermen had gathered to see the arrival of the large fleet of treasure ships. Admiral Zheng formed a group of important people including Lin to see the King. News spread fast in the little village about the Chinese's arrival. The Chief Minister heard the news as well and came to welcome the newcomers. The village was surrounded by small huts that lay on lemon green grass. Villagers chatted with their friends or worked at home. The group carried on walking until they heard the busy chatter of the marketplace. Pushing through the crowds, they found themselves admiring the bright vegetables and juicy fruits in the stalls. At the same time the Minister had entered the marketplace as well. Spotting the Chinese, he rushed to join their side and lead them to the palace. Once inside, the minister asked, "Pleased as we are to have the mighty Chinese visit us, may I ask what brings you to our humble kingdom?" "We have come from the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty to give your King, Huang Kieu these gifts", replied Admiral Zheng. "We also hope that both our kingdoms can continue to trade in peace", he said. The minister sighed deeply and looked at the floor. A little puzzled, Admiral Zheng asked what had happened. The minister sighed again and explained that their King was ill. "Yesterday morning, the maids served breakfast to the King. They had made scrambled eggs for the first time. After breakfast, the King grew extremely ill. The court doctor seems to be getting nowhere in diagnosing the reason. We would be grateful to you if you could cure our King" he added. With a nod, Admiral Zheng ordered Doctor Lin Chung to treat the King as soon as possible. Lin checked the health and symptoms of King Huang and spent some time understanding the routine of the King before he fell ill. Predicting that it might be an allergy due to eggs which the King ate for breakfast, Lin also verified the symptoms and cure in the palace library. She told that the King must eat 'Hoa Sen' or lotus seeds mixed with rose petal juice to cure the allergy. The minister thanked Lin for finding the cure. Once eating the concoction, the king's eyes opened with energy. The entire palace rejoiced at the turn of events and hailed Admiral Zheng and the Chinese Empire. Both the kingdoms traded their gifts and King Huang promised that Vietnam would always stand by the Yongle Emperor. Admiral Zheng and his group of noble men returned to their ship with a proud feeling. As they boarded the ship, Admiral Zheng praised Lin for her skills and rewarded her with gold. Happy to have been rewarded, she was also however relieved that her disguise remained a secret. Once again, they were sailing into the deep ocean. This might have been her first adventure, but Lin knew there were many more to come in this long voyage. She breathed in the cold night breeze and went inside the cabin.

If you have read the Ming Treasure Voyage History, you might know that the ships went to many places like Siam, India and Sri Lanka. Like my ancestor Lin predicted, they had many more adventures during that voyage that lasted for a year. But I guess the rest of the adventures is for another time for me to tell!

Ming Treasure Voyages

Kennedy School, Roberts, Poppy – 10

April 3rd, 1421

It was a dark and stormy night, the wind was blowing in my face and through my hair frantically. I had no choice, I had to keep going. If I stopped, I would be letting my whole family, team and village down, not only to mention we would be letting our enemies, the Dead End Pirates, win this battle. I needed to get it, I needed to find the treasure.

May 26th, 1441

My grandmother died when I was a baby, she was the leader of our pack. She had kept our legend up, she inspired many people to go out into the world and find hidden treasure and to stand up to any enemies you may have. On April 3rd, 1421, our treasure was stolen by the pirates. It was all calm that night, peaceful and relaxing, that's what we thought it was anyway. Round about midnight, the pirates struck, they climbed in through my grandmothers bedroom and looked in all of her 3 drawers. They couldn't find anything, until they opened the last drawer because in that drawer was a big colourful box, painted in the most magnificent colours and beautiful stars stuck all around it. When the pirates finally managed to open the box (with much difficulty and struggle) they took a super quick glance at the treasure and ran out, taking the treasure with them and setting the alarm off as they ran. My grandmother woke up at the sound of the alarm immediately. Then, as quick as a flash, everyone woke up, the village guards were up and all ready searching for the treasure because that is the only thing anybody would ever want. When they found out that the treasure had been stolen, my grandmother was in serious pain, struggling with anxiety and the anxiousness of finding it. The next day, she made up her mind to go to the ocean, alone, in search of the pirates and her stolen treasure. She wasn't prepared at all, my mother begged her not to go but, she didn't listen. She went off alone. A couple of weeks later, when she didn't return, the police and a group of people went in search for her, but they didn't find her, all they found was her dead body lying on the floor near a big, green oak tree at the edge of the water. Her body had been pulled apart and teeth marks were visible. Not only had the pirates stolen the treasure, they had also stolen her heart.

Present Day

"It's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair" I moaned out loud in my bedroom. "It wasn't her fault the treasure was stolen, it was completely and utterly the pirates fault." I had just read about my family's history and found out about a famous female explorer who was my ancestor. I was so upset about the whole situation, finding out that she had run off to fight the pirates and had to gain the treasure back by herself. I was frightened when I thought about it, just imagining how scared she must have been and what a difficult decision it was for her. To stay here where it is safe, or go off into the ocean in a wrecked old sailboat in search for the treasure, knowing that if she left, she may never return. My dream is that someday I will be famous and to accomplish my dream I have go off into the ocean and defeat the pirates as well as gaining that treasure back. Somehow, I don't know how, but somehow, I intend to.

The next morning I awoke at 2:30 because of ancestor. In my dream I saw her, lying in her bed, knowing that she is already dead and speaking to me. She said that I should go off onto the ocean, alone, and find the hidden treasure and kill or capture pirates. If this was somebody else in my dream I would immediately would have gone back to sleep, but this was the ancestor that I had just read about so without any hesitation, I packed my duffel bag at the speed of lightning, ran out of my room and encouraged my pet dog, Lucy, to come with me. As I dashed out of the Bel Air gates, with my bag on my back and Lucy trotting at my heels, I began to wonder if this was such a great idea, but, like I said, it was my ancestor visiting me in my dream, so I walked down the little Bel Air hill with wonderful grace and with an extra big smile on my face.

As I opened the dark and crooked old gate that lead to the boatyard, I heard the whistling of the trees swish behind me. I thought it was just the wind but a couple of minutes later it happened again, and again, and again. The trees were swaying side to side faster than ever now, it was like somebody was hiding in those trees. Then, as I turned to look at big bushes, a hand went out the bushes and then back in. All of a sudden a thought exploded into my brain, I knew what it was, I needed to run. I ran past the the trees and bushes as fast as my little legs would take me. It was them, it was the pirates. Behind me, I could hear the footsteps and my heart thumping. How was I supposed to get the treasure? I needed to. I was about to start a new chapter on the Ming Tales Voyages. Everbody now depended on me.

The Magical Eye of Island Mocha

Kennedy School, Subramanian, Thiya - 9

As we crept silently towards the boat, I wished dad had finished what he had started. Once we reached the boat everyone pushed it into the water and then we sailed away.

The night wind was cold and the boat was rocking like crazy in the waves. After two long days of sailing on the blue ocean, I saw the green Island of Mocha sitting on the horizon. I nearly shouted with joy.

We reached the shore of the island in the afternoon and unpacked all our tools, gadgets, food and clothes from the ship onto the sand. Then we wandered around the island looking for a cave or a large space where we could pitch up our tents. Jacob and Richard stayed on the sand keeping an eye on the supplies.

After maybe 30 minutes Lennie found a large cave. It smelt like fish guts but we decided it was best we stay here. Soon we settled in.

The sound of swishing waves coming now and then was so relaxing. We set up a fire and began discussing how we would find the treasure while roasting the crabs that Richard caught on the beach. When the sun was setting we sat on the beach quietly thinking about treasure.

We woke up early in the morning so we could have a full day to look for the treasure. After having cookies and juice for breakfast we split into groups to search the island. I went with Jacob and Richard, Lennie with Maya and Lizzy. We put on our hats and took our torches and emergency backpacks and left the cave.

My group decided to hike to the top of a mountain where we could look for clues on where to find the treasure and to have a bird's eye view of the whole island. Maybe we would see a place the treasure could be hidden.

"Where do you think the treasure could be hidden?", I asked Jacob as we hiked along the trail. "I think it would be in some kind of cave or may be hidden under the sand!", replied Jacob. "I wonder how the others are doing.", enquired Richard.

The other group had decided to follow paths in the jungle to look for clues. "The scent of the flowers is heavenly but we have been walking forever! Hey look there, it seems like some sort of a clue...!", said Maya. The girls saw a small rock with something written on it. "This is perfect! I think we are onto something. Someone read the clue.", said Lennie excitedly. Lizzy read expectantly, "Where the sound of water is heard, press a button and you will see...". "I can't read the rest, it's faded." she complained.

Meanwhile the boys had found another small rock with the same thing written on it. After a while, the groups returned back to the cave and ate lunch while discussing their clues. Suddenly Lennie shouted, "The clues are the same. This is very weird." "Let's use our invisible seeing glasses to see if there are any words written in invisible ink!", suggested Lizzy. Lennie removed her invisible seeing goggles. She put them on and said, "Hey, I see some words! It says, The heart of the island is a cave. So we must find the heart of the island cave." "But there may be more to the clue. I think we should keep exploring." exclaimed Richard. The Next day we all left but this time together to the other side of the island. It was a long walk. We reached there at noon. We climbed trees and dug in sand but couldn't find anything. While climbing a tree, I accidentally stepped on a something sticking out and everyone underneath got stuck under a net. I pulled the net as hard as I could but it was stuck.

After thinking for a long time I got an idea. I found a sharp piece of wood and used it to cut the net. Good thing my plan worked and we got back to searching.

While we were talking and walking, we fell into a deep hole. Since we had no equipment, we couldn't get out. It seemed like we were stuck in there for hours together. Then Lennie devised a plan, "You all make a wall and I will try to climb up and out of this hole. Once I'm out I can throw our rope down and pull you up one by one." said Lennie. We decided to try Lennie's plan and we all came crashing down.

Then Lizzie got an idea. She said, "We can try to climb up and possibly reach the top. Then we may be able to pull ourselves up and out." The plan worked and as we climbed up, I noticed a cave.

I told everyone that the cave looked suspicious but we all wanted to go in and explore. As we got deeper, the cave looked more and more familiar and we realised we were in the same cave which we were using as our home away from home.

"Do you think we can find the button here?" suggested Jacob. We all searched and somewhere deep amidst the many rocks, I found a red button. I couldn't wait to press it! I gathered everyone near the button.

As soon as all of us were together, I pressed the button and the magical eye of mocha came tumbling out into my hand! We couldn't believe our luck and were running out of ideas as to how we were going to use the magical eye!

We should get a good rest before heading out home. How we could use the magical eye would have to wait until we got home.

We slept in the cave for the last time. The next day we ate our last breakfast on the island and set off after collecting as many fruits as we could for our journey back. The journey home was really tiring but we were all exhilarated after our big find.

A New Tale of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Kennedy School, Tse, Chloe – 10

The ocean waves were soothingly crushing up, then falling down. The noise was nice, but irritating, as it kept repeating, sometimes louder, sometimes softer. A tall girl walked on the sand, her toes getting scratched by the shells scattered around. She had long, jet-black hair, which flew loose in her face along with the gentle breeze. Her skin was pale, but suited her. Her thin lips were in a light shade of crimson. But it was the eyes, that looked. . .frightening. They were dark, and empty – hollow. There was always a glint in them, which always made her look rather eerie. If it weren't for them, she would have looked beautiful. She was covered in a black hooded cloak, and a thin short navy-blue dress. Her arms and feet were bare.

Her name was Evly.

She walked to the shore, letting bits of shell and dried-up sand prick her feet. She sat down, letting the salty water touch the tips of her toes every now and then. But then she heard footsteps.

Her mother and father were coming down, along with her two elder sisters, Alethia and Clarina. They both had her eyes, her skin, her hair and mouth, but their eyes were gentle; Evly envied them for that. But her father was carrying along a suitcase, which had no wheels – it was probably very heavy. He had a pair of loose, baggy pants on, and a t-shirt. He also had a cloak, which was black. Evly's mother gave her father one last hug, before he picked up his suitcase and walked to the shore, to meet Alethia, Clarina and Evly. He hugged Alethia and Clarina silently, trying not to ruin the moment. But Evly was clueless – *why* was he carrying a suitcase? But before she could say anything, she too, was crushed into a huge hug. "Where are you going to go, papa?" she whispered. He smiled. "Somewhere nice, I hope. But don't worry. I'll call you every other night, okay? I'll be back in just a month." Evly smiled a fake smile. A month. A whole month. At sea. With one suitcase. Without Evly. Or Alethia. Or Clarina. The *one* month part wasn't *that* bad, compared to how long her mother's many journeys took. But when he climbed into the huge ship, tears began to well in her eyes. They slowly poured down her face, each one bigger than the next. Her father was at sea! Absolutely *anything* could happen to him. *But he's going to be safe* thought Evly. *But he's going to be safe. He. Is. Going. To. Be. Safe.* But she couldn't take it anymore. She ran into the house, and up to her room, slamming the door behind her, ignoring the voices of Alethia and Clarina. She cried into her bed for hours, letting her tears run down her face.

★

"So, *this* is where all the portraits are kept," I said, hustling the thirty-students fifth grade class in front of a brand new painting and photo of my late father – and his instant family. It was my pride and joy. My mother and father were standing up, with their hands on Alethia and Clarina's shoulders. I was on a chair, with my hair combed and gelled (It was strange to have tidy hair for once). "Why are you so obsessed with Zheng He?" one of the kids asked. I smiled. "Believe it or not, my father *knew* Zheng He," I said proudly. "That painting is of me and my family, after he returned from his voyage!" The teacher looked at me, with a kind look on her face. "*Sorry*," she mouthed.

Why am I so obsessed with Zheng He, you ask? Well, that's an easy question to answer.

Because he's amazing. He was brilliant. He was brave.

He. . . was just like my father.

lying down in the ship, feeling relieved. Yi Hang handed the Captain the treasure and the captain held it up in the air, like they've won a trophy. Suddenly, the sky had different colors in it, now! The ming treasure voyages couldn't believe it. It was an aurora borealis. They've never seen such a beautiful sight before. This, was the magnificent moment the ming treasure voyages could never, ever forget. The ming treasure voyages soon set off, heading back home. Once they returned back to their village, the ming treasure voyages showed everyone and the Emperor what they had found. The Emperor and everybody else were impressed and very pleased with these courageous men, they have gone through so much and never gave up. Until then, the Ming treasure voyages have another journey to accomplish, their destiny awaited them near the bright, blue sea...

Diary of an Explorer

Kingston International School, Chan, Venus – 8

One day, I was in my grandma's attic, finding things to do. Then, I found a small book. On the cover, it said, <<鄭和的日記>>. Translated, it says “Zheng He’s Diary”. This book was Zheng He’s, the captain of the “Ming Treasure Voyages”? I decided to read it. I translated it from Chinese to English.

.....

1405 June 19

The Emperor of China made me the leader of the “Ming Treasure Voyages”! It happened this morning. I was asleep, and there was a knock at my door. I opened it, and there was a messenger at my front door. The messenger told me: “You, ‘Zheng He’, has been selected to be a captain of the ‘Ming Treasure Voyages’, by the emperor, ”. I was like, “Sure!” (The “Ming Treasure Voyages” is about exploring the world.)

1405 June 20th

So, I guess I’m in charge of having a trade between countries. I’ve decided to go next week. I brought a boat called “Bao Chuan”. But first, I need to pack stuff to go on our trip. Cannons? Maybe I’ll decide tomorrow..... We also brought presents from the Emperor, like silk. We need to prepare items to go on this trip. These are called the “Ming Treasure Voyages”. We have military forces and weapons, in case of attacks.

1405 June 29th

Today, we visited this place called “Frosty Island”. What did they had? Ice, silk, and food. (The food was mainly frozen eggs.) They also wanted to make peace, so we traded items. We gave them gold, and they gave us silk. We decided to stay at “Frosty Island” and then go somewhere else tomorrow.

1405 September 30th

3 Months Later

We’ve been drifting in the sea for 3 months. We are in this place called “Kinda Amazing Island”. When we arrived, they started shooting arrows at us! We told them why we were here, but they ignored us and kept on shooting arrows. So we had to shoot bombs from our cannons, too. We called a truce, and traded items.

1406 February 27th

5 Months Later

We've just had a shipwreck. I was just walking around the ship. But then, we hit something. It was something cold! One of my crew members called "Cheung Sha" yelled, "Iceberg!" The ship flipped, and went into the depths of the sea. I saved this diary just in time! We all hopped into different lifeboats. We then made it to a island. I took roll call. Thankfully, no one was missing. But there were 4 broken arms. I helped push them back into place. We sent 4 crew members to get help. They went in our only lifeboat. Meanwhile, we sent 5 crew members to look for food, and the rest of us got the fire ready.

1406 March 01st

I found some animals on this island. They look like birds, but can't fly. They are grey, and have yellow beaks. I'm calling them "Penguin"s. We had to eat fish on this island to survive. And it's very cold here when it's supposed to be spring. But somehow, we're surviving! I think I should call this place "Antarctica". We found people living here. We traded our leftover silk for food. They were very nice. They wore wool coats, and spoke English. We had a crew member who was a translator, and he translated the words for us. We talked about why we were here, what it was like in "China" and "Antarctica". This place was originally called "Icy", but they liked our idea and changed it to "Antarctica" instead. They also decided to call themselves the "Antarcticans".

1406 March 02nd

Meanwhile, we decided to explore "Antarctica", so the Antarcticans gave us a tour. Later, they brought us to see their leader. He was called "Nick". We told him our story, and he told us theirs. The Antarcticans were originally explorers from "Frosty Island", but then on a trip to "Kinda Amazing Island", their ship somehow hit a iceberg, and the Antarcticans managed to survive with the help with some penguins (The penguins made a little drawbridge with ice). Their lifeboat went missing, so they were stranded. They had been living in "Antarctica" ever since. They were homesick. I said, "When our helpers came back with a ship, we could take you guys with us!" "Sure!"

1406 September 03rd

6 Months Later

At last! Our 4 crew members who we sent to find help has came back! They brought back:

- 1 new ship named Bing;*
- 80 pieces of silk;*
- Food;*

They said they discovered a place called "Tasmania". We said "Bye", to the penguins, and climbed aboard the ship with the Antarcticans.

1407 April 06th

7 Months Later

We found this place called “Funny Island”. It was far from “Antarctica”. That is where all the comedians are from. We just got off the boat, and the people there started telling us jokes. Like this one: What books do skunks like to read? Best smellers! We traded items: a joke book from the people, and silk from us.

1407 July 30th

3 Months Later

We left “Funny Island”, and we are in this place called “Music Island”. We traded this instrument called the “Cello” for silk and gold. What they did on “Music Island” was playing instruments all day long. We learnt to play instruments here.

1407 September 20th

1 and 1/2 Month Later

What happened today: We got back to “China” and told the Emperor about the places we visited. P.S On the way, from “Antarctica to “Funny Island”, we dropped off the Antarciticans at “Frosty Island”.

.....

After reading this, I showed my Grandma, and she said: “Oh, yes. Zheng He’s grandchildren used to live here! “What about Kinda Awesome Island and Frosty Island”? I asked. “They floated away.”

The End.

Or, as put in Chinese,

完.

Zheng He's Fleet to Dragon Island

Kingston International School, Doo, Damian – 9

Once upon a time, in Ming Dynasty, Emperor Ming told Zheng He to form a relationship with Dragon Island because the Dragons have a lot of rare potions and medicine. Zheng He told General Doo to order his army to build strong ships. Two months later, they put food, gold, money and weapons in the ships. Zheng He was so delighted. They set sail to the Dragon Island.

The fleet sailed for three weeks and the weather was getting warmer and warmer. But one night, it became minus 4 degrees Celsius. It was freezing cold. Zheng He was asleep and he heard a loud “boooooom!” He quickly woke up and saw two gigantic pirate ships coming toward his fleet.

“Aye, aye! Give me your gold. If you don’t, I will kill y’all.” The pirates said greedily.

“General Doo, wake up! The pirate ships are attacking us! They are using arrows to shoot us. They have powerful shields for defense!” Zheng He said anxiously.

When General Doo woke up, he yelled at the soldiers to bomb the pirate ships. “Hurry up yo slow poke!” “Can’t you be stronger, dummy?” He ordered the soldiers furiously. The bomb didn’t work because of the pirate ships’ shields.

“Nah, nah–nah nah–naah, you cannot beat us,” the pirates giggled.

General Doo was extremely annoyed. His whole face turned red like an apple. “You guys are very impolite and dumb. We will find a way to defeat you, weirdos!” General Doo replied grumpily.

With his special binoculars, Zheng He saw that the pirates loved wine. He took out a bottle of wine and put a tiny bomb inside, and then he threw the bottle in the sea.

“Wine, wiiiiiiiiinnne!!” the pirates said crazily. They swam to it. Then, one pirate touched the bottle and... BOOM!! All other pirates were dead too because the mighty waves pushed them to the dangerous bottom of the sea.

The sailors cheered for Zheng He. Suddenly, a monster rose up in the air from the sea. They all were shocked. It was the legendary monster Sharkpedo.

“Catch the Sharkpedo, General Doo! Hurry up!” Zheng He cried out.

“Why?” General Doo asked.

“This monster is very rare. It can find the rare potion under the sea with its epic nose. We can trade it with Dragon King.” Zheng He told General Doo.

General Doo shot a tremendous bullet to the monster. Then, the bullet transformed into a net and trapped the monster. They caught the monster.

That night, Zheng He dreamed about Dragon Island: he arrived on Dragon Island and asked: can we form a relationship with you? “Yes of c–“ ZAAAP!! Zheng He opened his eyes and saw enormous lightning zigzagging in the sky and rain pouring fiercely. It was a violent storm. Some ships almost flipped, like someone doing a cartwheel in the sea! General Doo was scared as a mouse. He ran dizzily around the ship eleven times because he got seasick. The engine was about to break. Zheng He was still calm and told General Doo to turn off the engine and simply follow the waves. General Doo told the other ships to do the same. They tried and hoped it would work. Luckily it did! They finally left the storm. It was almost dawn. Everyone gathered around the deck to see the charming and beautiful sunset. It was peace, quiet and nothing in the sea except Zheng He’s fleet. At night, Zheng He saw thousands of stars in the sky. It reminded him of when he was five years old. The stars formed a shape, it was meant for good luck! Nobody knew, except Zheng He.

“Follow the stars!” Zheng He pointed to the stars and ordered General Doo.

One week later, they arrived at Dragon Island. The island looked like a Dragon’s head. There were hundreds of hard-working dragons. They did not use metal or anything that was man-made. They used wood, leaves, soil and bamboo trees to build. Very fascinating!

There was a temple guarded by some Dragon soldiers. Zheng He and General Doo stepped in the temple.

“Who are you?” the soldiers asked.

“It would be my pleasure to meet the Dragon King.” Zheng He answered sincerely.

The soldiers took them to the Dragon King. The Dragon King was old and kind. There were many dragons printed on his clothes.

“Why do you need to talk to me? Give me a good reason.” Dragon King asked slowly.

General Doo could not think of any good reason so he shouted, “Never, I will not give you a reason!” Dragon King frowned.

“Your Majesty, My name is Zheng He. We are from China, and we have a gift for you. Sharkpedo! Sorry, General Doo always gets mad. We heard about your kingdom, your rare medicine and potions. In China, people always get sick so we wanted to trade.” Zheng He said politely. The king smiled.

“Perfect reason! We will make a portal from here through to China, OK?” Dragon King asked.

“OK!” Zheng He answered gratefully.

When they went out of the temple, the dragon workers started to build a portal using some rare wood, potions and water. After one day, the portal was finished! Zheng He’s team stepped into the portal.

The portal went VEEEEEE and everything went black. Zheng He was back in China!

“Wow!” Zheng He’s team shouted surprisingly. Zheng He saw Emperor Ming.

“Mission accomplished! We have a portal to Dragon Island.” Zheng He said.

“Really?” Emperor said curiously.

“I will prove it! Dragons, COME!” Zheng He shouted.

At first, there was dead silence... Seconds later, “thump THUMP!” The dragons started running rapidly from the portal.

“Marvelous!” Emperor Ming said excitedly.

After this, China received the medicine and potions. Because of Zheng He’s an amazing adventurer, they were able to help many sick people in China. Zheng He taught the dragons how to make a compasses to help determine the correct direction. When the kingdoms needed help, they used the portal to help each other.

The Fleet of Ming Dynasty

Kingston International School, Ho, Shu Lin – 10

Saturday 4:45 pm, 19th January 2019

I'm now getting ready for my grandma's 91st birthday. Oh! I have a history project due on Monday! I still haven't thought of which Chinese dynasty I'm going to work on.

Saturday 9:00 pm, 19th January 2019

I will do my research tomorrow, I bet I have enough time! I'm going to sleep.

"Hi, I'm here to help you. I'm your spirit. What projects have you worked on before?" The spirit asks.

"Oh..... The Qin dynasty. The first emperor Qin Shi Huang had made a huge project to connect the different parts of the barriers on the North, which became The Great Wall. I also made research about the Tang dynasty. The Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang wanted to know more about the deep meaning of Buddhism. He walked a long way to India to learn from other Buddhists. Many merchants and officials then followed Xuanzang's steps to the west, to exchange culture and goods, and building good relationships with other countries," I explain.

"Both of these happened on land, is there any adventure on the sea?" I ask.

"I see your curiosity about sea adventures, so let me tell you about the Treasure Voyages of the Ming Dynasty."

"Zheng He (1371–1433) was a Chinese explorer in the Ming dynasty. He was famous for traveling on the seas for 28 years and made 7 voyages in total," explains the spirit.

"His real name is Ma Wen He, and he lived in a village in the Yunnan Province. One day, his grandfather and father went to an adventure and brought back a blue and white porcelain to give to Wen He. The blue color in the porcelain is really attractive. Wen He's grandfather told him that he didn't know where the special blue color could be found. Wen He admired the color, and really wanted to find the color and material. Finding the color and material was his dream. He decided to explore countries for the special material and color by sailing. So he started his training, and the emperor saw his bravery and assigned him as captain in the voyages."

"The Ming emperor wanted to build good relationships with the neighboring countries. Then they could trade their goods with other countries' goods! The Emperor noticed the bravery in Wen He and how he served the country, so he gave Wen He a new name: Zheng He, and also assigned him as the captain in the few voyages. There were 5 different kinds of ships used in the voyages of Zheng He. He went on: the Command Ship, Horse Ship, Troop Transport, Supply Ship and Patrol Boat."

“Zheng He was clever, he invited different people on the ships, those included: Crewmen, recorders, diplomatic officials, weathermen, interpreters, doctors, and pharmacists. Altogether, there were about 27,800 people on the ships! The people on the ships could send and deliver messages by lanterns and gongs during terrible weather, for example, typhoons and hurricanes. Those were some common natural disasters that appeared during their journeys.”

“When the ships arrived in the countries, they presented gifts to the country’s emperor and told the country about Chinese stories and explained the Chinese culture. Zheng He won trust from all the countries leaders, so they were allowed to exchange goods and materials with the local people. Soon the team had lots of goods, so they headed back to China. But none of them were the special color.”

“Later on, he went to several other voyages, and traveled to over 30 countries and regions. But there was no special blue color. After a while, Zheng He heard some news about a blue color. So he went to the place and finally found the special blue material! It was called Cobalt. Many loads of Cobalt were shipped back to China.”

“Zheng He died later on during his seventh voyage in Calicut, India, at the age of 62. He was remembered for building a good relationship with other countries, and starting a trading system, as well as introducing many countries to China. He was also always compared to Italian explorer Christopher Columbus.”

“What do you think will happen if there were no voyages in the Ming dynasty?” asks the spirit.

“Then there will be countries we will miss out on. And the shipbuilding industry may not be developed as well in the Old Shanghai.

“Yes, you’re right. And also, the voyages Zheng He went on is to benefit other countries, (eg. Vietnam),” the spirit continues, “Vietnam is one of the places Zheng He went to, the team traded with the local people, and also told about their countries, cities, and Chinese culture. During Tang dynasty, Silk Road was used to travel around to trade unique goods with other countries. When the voyages happened, it developed another efficient way to travel, through the sea. So, when China and neighboring countries built a good relationship, people in both countries can trade with each other by the route the ships went on. It will be much easier to trade with them because people could either walk Silk Road or sail in the route Zheng He’s ships went. Besides trading, and sharing culture, some of the crewmen stayed behind in the countries that Zheng He visited, to start a new life. So the voyages weren’t only to achieve Zheng He’s dream to find the special blue material, but was also to help the country with the trading system, transportation means, and also cultural exchange.”

Sunday, 8:30 am, 20th January 2019

“Okay, you may need to stop, I need to go write all this information down on paper.....” I ask, “Wait, was that all a dream?”

No one answers.

I open my eyes on the fabulous Sunday morning, as the sun shines on me brightly through the gaps of the window. I write down everything I have heard and design my project.

Resources:

The Ming Voyages- http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1000ce_mingvoyages.htm
He-<https://exploration.marinersmuseum.org/subject/zheng-he>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zheng_He#Cultural_influence
dynasty- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ming-dynasty-Chinese-history>
dynasty- <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-china/ming-dynasty>
dynasty and Qing (Manchu) Dynasty- <https://www.scoop.it/t/ming-dynasty-and-qing>

Zheng
Zheng He-
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The Ming Treasure Miracle

Kingston International School, Lau, Levia – 9

The warm salty breeze brushed against my face like the hands of the sea spirits as the fleet of ships gently glided across the sparkling sea. Even though, I, Chenyu served as an ordinary sailor, the land of seas amazed me just the same.

I knew little about the oceans and the wonders with bright sails that cut across the oceans. I've longed to traverse the seven seas as it brought me closer to freedom, away from captivity. This is why I am now on the fourth ship of the fleet and also and the entrance to adventure.

You are probably wondering: "Hey, why's this person's English is better than mine? Isn't he supposed to focus on Chinese?" Well, let me tell you – there aren't no language studies on board. Anyway, my first days were poisoned by awfully tremendous thunderstorms, savagely sickening sea-sickness and revolting slime. Luckily, I *have* pulled through the toughest storms (surprise, surprise), fought across the raging seas.

We saw people with skins so dark that they could have been easily mistaken for leafless trees. They celebrated our arrival with delighted faces and tasty treats that were really tempting. Also sly faced men with tangled beards that ignited a gigantic mutiny. Luckily, our fearless generals drew their swords, and reduced them to nothing but a bit of ash (like your bad tempered teacher, the generals, not the ash). But there was the biggest threat of all...

Facing the Emperor

When I mention the word "emperor", you might think of fearless, rich, mighty, and powerful, right? You never dared to think or look on the dark side of emperors and go: "Hey, he's pretty nasty and cruel!" because: a) emperors were meant to be looking after their citizens and b) you might go to jail. But one emperor decided that enough was enough, so he started toying around with his boats.

Emperor Hongxi was not the kind of person you would like to meet on the streets, as he ruled and conquered with fear. "China isn't in any need for the valuables of other countries, so why should we sail around distributing them when I seriously need a new palace?", thought Hongxi. It's a really cool fact that emperors can do almost everything, so his plan went into action.

My mind exploded, when the emperor's matey' scampered around spreading the news like pesky little cockroaches spreading germs. The mighty urge against the idea of leaving the Chinese navy forced a strong 'NO!!!' into my throat, but as I thought about my consequences, it was muffled into a silent scowl. But what could I do, a measly little weakling against a vicious conqueror who's word becomes reality. So that's why my cunning little brain picked up its oars and rowed away, into the plans of the cunning and the brave.

Voyage to Success

The next day, I woke up, to a new day where the action begins. I announced it to all the sailors, and we all agreed, as it honestly was the only plan we had. The plan was risky, and if a tiny detail went wrong, the plan was good as dead fish.

When the emperor's matey' came back, he flicked a few coins at us and told us to go back to our homes. After he turned the corner, we scampered to our secret hidey-hole to wait till' the plan unraveled.

Each day, one of us patrolled the town, updating us with news. On the first few days, the news was as plain as watery fish soup. But after a few weeks, rage began to boil around China. First, it was those hairy-faced men, seeking the gold that they were receiving per year. Then it was those dark men, demanding the silk we promised to repay them with.

The Chinese army were armed with fearless men, and protected their city like an unbreakable shield. But as many men were attacking from either side, our Chinese soldiers were taken aback, and were destroyed as the soldiers fell, like rain from the rolling seas above.

“All they wanted, was for us to repay them with acts of kindness.” I advised the troubled emperor. So as the battle raged on on the battlefield, we steered our way through the crowd, fulfilling their needs. Cries of happiness erupted as the smiling faces of the soldiers merged into one. As I was the one who sailed the seas, I knew their deepest needs, it wasn't greed, it was a matter between hunger and death. We didn't sail off giving them gifts, we gave them to the needy, so they could survive to see another day.

The following day, a huge ocean of people gathered around The Royal Stage. The air was still, silence was all around. My heart thumped heavily against my chest, to every word the emperor said. Finally, as the emperor agreed to continue the mission of the Ming Treasure Fleet, the silence was shattered by a joyful atmosphere.

My chest swelled with pride like the billowing masts as the ship glided on the smooth steady waves into the adventure waiting ahead.

New Tale of the Ming Voyages

Kingston International School, Wong, Joy – 9

“Pickles, quick! We have to get on the ship now!” Oh, right, I forgot about you. Well, my name is Joy, I am 8, I live in a farm house. My job at home is to take care of animals like horses, cows, pigs and dogs. So I don't have a chance to go to school because I am so busy at home. I live with my mum and my dad. I am the girl, that has a super power to talk to animals. The animals I am bringing is platypus called Pickles is especially close to me and she is my buddy. By the way, do you know why did the Emperor let me get on the ship? It's because I am unique, only I have a savvy to talk to animals. On the ship, I have loads of animals to take care of my best friends who are Pickles the platypus and Picker the penguin.

This time is our seventh voyage and we will bring precious animals like Pickles, Picker, seal, little hippo, snow fox, otter and a few others. We brought these creatures is to tell other countries that China is rich and strong. My job on the ship is to take care of all the animals, so none of them get stolen. On the ship there are members of the navy, a captain, a ship driver, animals and GOLD. My room is always going to be connected to the animals room or else people or pirates will steal them since they are very precious. Everyone in the ship was busy even though the ship was shaking hard. Hardly anyone is sea sick or talks to me. Well of course except animals. My job isn't as hard as the others, because I am just a kid. I am also the only kid and only girl in the crew ship.

When we started sailing, we spotted a ship coming directly towards us. Suddenly, we heard a cheeky shout: “Oh your boat looks precious I think there will be precious stuff inside.” We did not know what was going on. Captain looked with his telescope and he said “Is that... girl pirates?” Everyone freaked out. I wondered if there was such thing as girl pirates. Then the ship driver said, “Man it's just girls, I don't think girls are as strong as boys so don't worry.” Everyone agreed even though I am a girl. Since they are just girls the ship driver decided to ignore them, so we turned the other way. But they kept following towards us but it is still quite a far distance. Thirty minutes later, they caught up their ship were next to ours one of their pirates named Mary which was the captain she tried to crossover to our ship to steal the gold, but we drove away so she fell in the water. Even though their captain fell in the water, they have a vice captain which was quite bossy. Their vice boss doesn't want to cross over to steal some gold since the captain has an experience. Then one of their girl pirate successfully climbed over to our ship, when she was trying to steal the gold, while we blocked her the ship when shaking and tumbling I nearly fell in the sea.

In a sudden we heard a big noise coming towards us well the waves starting to get unusual the waves got bigger than usual, captain look with his telescope but this time was not just weird girl pirates. It's a... tsunami!! We were slow to move the tsunami was driving our ship crazy, everyone on our ship fell in the sea. Luckily we were wearing swimsuits, because we planned to dive but then we didn't. All our gold fell in the sea so we decided to get all of them before the girl pirates steal them, but then when I picked up one gold we saw diamonds in a line like a track that leads some where. So we followed the diamonds, it had lead us in to a water cave. We went in and a string pulled everyone including the girls. Then we saw a huge sea monster which has stolen rest of our gold, but he put in in a room like we are in jail. The girl pirates need help so they kindly ask us if we can work as a team, well of course we would but the problem is that we can't because we have no way. Five minutes later, bubbles floated in the water and I thought it was something scary but it wasn't. It was... PICKLE!! He was trying to unlock the jai doors, but then the sea monster saw it and Pickles nearly got stabbed which freaked me out. Pickle doge, punched and stole the gold, before he got hurt he got out the cave with some gold. I was fifty percent happy, because I thought he is going to save us but he didn't. After Pickle stole the gold, the sea monster was so angry, the sea monster tried to chase Pickles but Pickles was faster. We tried to convince the sea monster to get out like say that we will give him one piece of gold only if he let us out and it did work. We were happy that we worked together so the girls pirates joined our army, we swam out the cave as fast as possible. So the sea monster won't find out that the reason of getting out was a lie.

When we were on a island Pickles and Picker were so proud of us getting out of the cave but the biggest problem is that we have no ship to go back to the beach and back to town. Picker didn't care because he saw a ship coming towards us . Well it was otter, otter swim back to town to get another ship and he drove back to save us. Wow ! This journey was so adventurous the animals save the day! Well I am really proud of the animals. I can't believe a otter can drive, we better drive quick this time or else the sea monster will pop up any time.

“Finally we are back to town , we took quite a lot of days in the sea cave . Luckily we came back safe. This is one of my favorite adventure thanks for coming with us did you have fun , Because I did! See you in the next journey .”

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Korean International School, Hui, Kim Yee – 9

I am Zheng He, I am a fleet admiral, a Chinese diplomat and a Chinese Mariner.

Here is extract of my Journal in year 1405 ...

5th June, 1405

I discovered something on my friend's ship, a map, of the World with different countries – I am amazed!

6th June, 1405

Today was my day off! And I tried to study the map having look at the map. I discovered some of new countries. One was called Australia, one was called India, rest: unknown. This is exciting!

P.S I will try see what the other lands are called.

10th June, 1405

An eagle sent me a letter from Emperor Yongle regarding 7 voyages, sending me on a trip 7 voyages – around the World. How exciting!!!!!!

11th June, 1405 – 1st Voyage

So, I am on my ship with 17,800 men and one of them are captain Di (my closest friend).

We arrived at Iiujiagang. We gave them chests of money and gold in return of Iiujiagang's finest clothes; me and my crew took a break. I walked around Iiujiagang and saw different shops and ate some simple and yet tasty foods.

Then I chose another five people to come to a hotel called Bahedi Yaju (a Villa). The hotel was stunning, I was on my own while Captain Di and other four men shared two rooms. I stayed for another two nights in Bahedi Yaju.

13th June, 1405 – 2nd Voyage

Today we are going to depart Iiujiagang and go to a place called Calicut in India.

I met the King, Vasco da Gama, he spoke to me about Cotton-weaving, I was so fascinated I went into a Cotton-weaving factory. I watched as people wove different colour cotton, bringing home shipment of cotton cloth, handloom, fabrics and books of Zamorin (a Hindu Monarch).

16th June, 1405

For the past few days, I walked around local shops and bought some souvenirs. We had to leave tonight so I didn't go far and become tired.

In the evening, we left Calicut and went to Malcca for a short break. On the way to a place called Similan Islands, pirate fleet Chen Zuyi attacked me, and asking for golds and shipments from Iiujiagang and Calicut. I was so angry, I attempted to kill Chen Zuyi but failed. I swung my sword towards Chen but missed.

Chen and I were fighting. I then kicked his sword away and threw mine. We both fought but my military was too strong for Chen's crew, left Chen no choice but surrender. He left our ship and never came back. We waited until the morning and continue our journey. Danger encountered with pirates but we were safe.

21st June, 1405 – 3rd Voyage

We finally arrived to Similan Island, it was a glorious place. I went to the beach and even went inside a bungalow! I went into different shops too! I am amazed we are already in the 3rd Voyage.

In the evening, we went to Seaside Inn to stay (me and my Captain Di) for the next 2 days to rest.

23rd June, 1405

We are ready to depart Similan and go to Hormuz. We probably won't arrive until ... maybe ... three days later.

26th June, 1405 – 4th Voyage

We arrived at Hormuz and first I shall give my greeting to the Hormuz peoples. I gave them our gold and they gave us two large boxes. I wonder what is it inside the boxes? I didn't do too much this time, but I visited rainbow island. It has red, yellow, blue, silver ... colour of rocks. I then ate steak tartare (raw beef on toasted bread), something I haven't never tried, but it tastes wonderfully good.

In the afternoon, we departed Hormuz and went to Aden, in Yemen. Me and Captain Di went to dine in Pizza 24.

27th Jun, 1405 – 5th Voyage

We departed Aden and went to East Africa, I went to Victoria Falls and Amboseli National Park. The weather was very hot, the hotter I never experienced. The Victoria Falls was my favorite, it was fascinating. In the evening, I stayed in English Point Marina for two nights.

29th June, 1405 – 6th Voyage

This time I visited an East Africa city called Nairobi. I visited a colourful market with necklaces, fine cloths, souvenirs and jewelry. I then ate in Mr. Chicken, I got a letter and it read ...

Dear Fleet Admiral, Zheng He

Emperor Yongle died of a Stroke, and Emperor Yongle's grandson Xuande Shall is now the new Emperor.

Huang Fu, Emperor's Office General

I sighed and knowing Yongle was a great man and very sad day. I know how important the Voyage is for the former King and I shall continue my joinery.

30th June, 1405

Today we are in Krabi, Thailand I went to the beach and on a tiny boat! I went to stay in Thai Orchids for 5 days.

5th July, 1405

Today we are going back home, Nanjing.

In the evening, we very lucky to stay alive ... we got attacked some sort of Serpent Sea Monster!

It first splashed water on my ship, I leaped up on his head and cut his neck, but the Serpent swayed his tail at the boat nearly broke it. I dived underneath the boat and cut his tail, this cause monster huge pain, the pain must be too much for the monster and it swum away.

The moral of the story?...well...be a risk-taker (but safely) and be adventurous.

–but being a risk-taker means you also DON'T hurt yourself and say “mommy I hurt myself..... really badly”

The Voyages of Benevolence

Korean International School, Shum, Colin – 11

One day, Ming Dynasty's Emperor Zhudi, together with his advisor and general Chenghe struck up a conversation about his worries about the Empress' dire illness, the Emperor looked at the empty throne and said he would give anything away just to be able to see her next to him again.

"Your Majesty, I will do anything to make you smile again, I will search everywhere to look for a cure," and with that promise, Zhenghe set sail, braving waves to uncharted lands all over the world.

First, the fleet arrived at Sumatra. Zhenghe presented an exquisite vase as a gift to the King and asked if he has any cures. The King did not have any but presented some Batik cloth as a favour. Zhenghe did not give up and set sail again.

"We will sail further South and present more gifts. I have no doubt that one of these unknown lands will spare us a cure in return," Zhenghe cheered on whilst marching back to his ship.

Suddenly a small group of little children sprang up.

"We are orphans and have nowhere to live, can we join your ships? We promise we will work hard!" the children begged.

"Of course! And I have gifts for each of you too!" Zhenghe had always had a soft spot on children as he has none of his own. To him, children were all special and nothing made him happier than seeing them smile.

However, unbeknownst to the men, they were being watched. Two mischievous twins were watching them. Their names were Ru and Pran, and they wanted to steal all the gifts on the ship.

"So what's the plan?" asked Pran, turning to Ru.

"Listen up. The only way to get those gifts is by causing a distraction. Any ideas?" asked Ru.

"Explosions?"

Pran gave him a quizzical look.

"We will pretend to be one of them, get on board and grab the gifts!" pointing his fingers.

"Brilliant!" Pran said, his eyes glinting with greed.

Zhenghe kept on sailing in search for the cure. He saved many orphaned children along the way who worked very hard on the ships. Zhenghe was very happy seeing the children feeling proud of their achievements. Each year, he would give each kid a special present, and all the children looked forward to that special day.

Eventually, the ships reached Europe. As the sailors were getting ready, a loud boom came from the harbour. Some ships were on fire and strange ships surrounded the fleet were firing cannonballs at the boats.

"Pirates!" Zhenghe shouted, "Defend the boats! Don't let them take the gifts!"

With a mighty roar Zhenghe and his crew drew their swords and charged into battle. As the battle raged all around them, Ru and Pran crawled around Zhenghe's ship, searching for the gifts. At last they found them but as they fled the ship to escape, Pran tripped over a sword lying across the deck and fell headfirst into the ocean.

"Pran!" Ru shouted, dropping their loot and running to the side. "Pran!"

Suddenly, a cannonball struck the ship, toppling Zhenghe into Ru.

"Give me my sword, kid," Zhenghe requested. Just then, Pran climbed back from the portside of the boat and threw a rope to Ru.

"On the count of three!" shouted Ru whilst throwing the sword back to Zhenghe with his right hand, and catching the end of the rope with his left. At the exact moment when the duo shouted three, they swung the rope with all their might, which swept the pirates' swords out of their hands. Suddenly all the pirates were disarmed and in a panic, they all jumped overboard into the ocean.

Seeing as the danger had passed, Ru and Pran rose to the surface.

“The plan failed,” gurgled Pran.

“It’s okay” said Ru,

“Okay? We just lost our chance of getting those gifts!”

“Don’t fret. Remember plan B? I poisoned his food...”

“Who are you two?” Zhenghe with his men appeared out of nowhere. Zhenghe looked a lot bigger close up. The duo trembled with fear.

“You are noble children who saved my life!” Zhenghe said fondly.

“We are actually thieves.” Pran finally felt guilty and decided to come clean.

Zhenghe suddenly collapsed. By the evening his face had turned green. The doctor tried everything he could to help him but nothing seemed to be working.

“Should we head back home?” asked the navigator

“No! Keep on going! I must find the cure for the Empress, we must not let the Emperor down!” Zhenghe wheezed.

Days later, they arrived in an unfamiliar land of freezing cold. There seemed to be nothing and no one there except an orange light from afar. Zhenghu felt too sick to witness the beauty. The children surrounded his bed and looked at him sadly. He had been a great father to them.

“Ru come over here” Zhenghe managed

“I can feel that you are a bit different from everyone else, but you can be a leader where all the children will look up to you. Can you look after all the children and make sure they are good and happy?”

“But I was a thief and I poi.....”

“All is forgiven, son,” he interrupted, “just promise me to be a good leader from now on” “Certainly, sir”

“We will always be good and hard working!” the children said

“We will never forget you. We will make sure you go down forever in history” said Pran

“And we will give presents to the well behaved children on a special day”, said a little boy with bright white hair.

“What is your name?” Zhenghe asked with a twinkle in his eyes.

“Nicholas” and with his last breath, Zhenghe replied to Nicholas “好好好.”

“Look!” shouted Pran.

A herd of reindeer suddenly landed on the boat. The leader had a ball tied to its neck. Nicholas opened the ball, and in it, he found a pill. The cure had been found.

New Journeys to the West

Li sing Tai Hang School, Leung, Tsz Hei Ryan – 9

One day, there was an old voyager named Jung Youn. He used to tell old stories of the Ming voyages, from defeating black beard and giving away the jade jewel. This story begins when Jung first boarded the ship.

He always dreamed of being a member of the crew. Then he saw a person named Jack go into the ship. It was not ordinary, as only the crew members could go in. He did not care but stared at the door way, waiting if he would come back out. Two minutes later, the guy ran out with a sack. He saw a bright diamond and screamed “thief...”. The crew of the ship ran at him and was gone. Then a crew member said to him. “Hey, I am Rick and thank you.” That diamond cost millions of chen. He asked what Jang most desired and Jung said “I wish to be a member of the crew.” Rick thought for a moment and said “ Fine kid, welcome to the crew.” That night, Jung became a member. The other crew member all greeted him. Soon he knew everything about the ship and he was a captain after two months.

Jung sailed everywhere and gave riches to people as gifts. One day, he saw a cave of crystals, rich and shiny. He told the crew to lower the anchor and then they went in. They found diamonds, gold and rubies. Also, they found another pirate and he looked tired and sick. Then they mined until they saw a bag of glittering jewels. When they boarded the ship, they sold all the things they found and brought the poor man back to his home. Suddenly, the man jumped to his feet and got out a sharp cutlass and grabbed the jewels. “Take the gold, take the money, just be careful, you will be victim” said the man.

That night, he spent three hours with his crew to think of one. It took three days to build the tools they needed but finally they did it. Then they had to set it all up, thinking slowly about the thief. The plan was to first do the same coincidence, meet an old man. When he got the bag, called the crew and we built a fence, he could not jump off and they surround him and then tied him on a chair and tortured him until he told the truth. This time, the old man stared at the ship and smiled. But he got a small knife and cut it free and climbed the fence.

Then he tried to think of another plan. He finally thought of one. “I’ll use a tracker in a bag and located him where he was.” said Jung. He found the man and let him take the money after the sword fight and the rope and everything else. They waited for him and then tracked him. After few days, they saw a big cave with a door. They went in and saw the most shocking thing. The old man was not the old man anymore. It was Jack with a capital J. He wore a mask and he escaped. “You know Hung, if you had let me grab one little diamond, this would not have happened. But you just had too.” He grinned. “But now, it’s time for you to die...” in a flash, Jack pressed a button. “Goodbye, Jung.” with a boom. The cave exploded. Luckily, Jung and his friends were safe. They were not hurt but the others died. Jack had disappeared and Jung said, “Thank you to serve the crews, you will never be forgotten.” He gave everyone some food and water, just in case they could be alive. Then he left them and escaped successfully. Finally they sailed back to mainland China.

Zhang He's Adventure

Lingnan University Alumni Association (HK) Primary School, Chu, Jeslyn – 11

"Why me again?" shouted Zheng He, the great admiral of the Ming Dynasty. The walls of the Ming Emperor Place echoed his shout. "Shu... shu..." whispered the Yongle Emperor, the third Emperor of Ming Dynasty. He ordered Zheng He, a man he has known since he was young, to get the ever-aging pill somewhere around the world. "Does the pill really exist?" asked Zheng He with question marks on his face. Without the answer from the Yongle Emperor, he walked out the door with doubt quietly. It was never a smooth voyage. It was an adventurous voyage which Zheng He ever had. But with Zheng He's knowledge, faith, trust, courage and bravery, he overcame all the difficulties and obstacles during the journey.

As it is a secret mission for Zheng He, the Yongle Emperor did all the preparation for him. Yongle Emperor prepared a giant ship equipped with magnetic compasses, cannons and different kind of weapons. It was loaded with a lot of jewelry, gem stones and gold bars, in case the crew on the ship met the pirates. All Zheng He needed to do is to get onto the ship and sailed away from China.

It was a dark and stormy night at Persian Gulf. Zhang knew it would be a tough journey. The ship began to rock back and forth and rolled side to side. Zhang He's two hands gripped the handles and refused to let go. A mountainous wave rose up before him. The thunder rumbled and boomed overhead like psychos screaming loudly.

Looking at the compass and navigation map, Zhang found out he and his crew were around the Persian Gulf. The crew cheered happily. After an hour or two, the rain stopped. The sky became clear and clear and the moon was shining! Suddenly, an octopus-like creature which they had never seen before appeared in front of the ship. The creature lifted its head so high and started talking to the crew on the ship. "What are you doing here?" roared the sea monster. "We are commanded to find the ever-aging pill by our Emperor in China." Everyone was shocked that the octopus could speak in human language and they opened their mouth widely without speaking a word. Only Zhang stepped out on the deck and answered, "Please get out of our way. We don't want to hurt you or anyone." The sea monster dived back into deep sea. Everyone took a deep breath and continued the journey.

The sea monster popped up from the sea and carried a chest with its arms. "Take it!" Zhang puzzled. He just grabbed the chest and the sea monster disappeared quickly. Inside the chest, there was a poison. But he did not know what it was for. He kept it in a safe place and continued the sailing. He still could not believe what had happened just now.

Spending hundred days and nights over the sea, Zheng He and his crew finally saw the land. According to the map, it might be somewhere in East Africa. The Island was not filled with trees and vegetation but grey coloured woods covered a large part of the surface. As he walked through the island, his courage faded out gradually by the darkness and the piles of human bones and skulls along the way. He made his way through the bushes by cutting down the vines and leaves and tried to find an end to this endless bushes. Just as he was about to give up, he heard some noise ahead of him. A man suddenly showed up in front of him and then he collapsed on the grass and fell into a deep sleep. When he woke up next morning, he tried to sit up and move, but he couldn't. His arms and legs were tied up by a rope on the tree with a pot and fire underneath him. He was trapped. He wondered what to do next. Zheng He looked down and was surprised to see cannibal tribe. Zheng He begged the cannibal leader, "I came here for the ever-aging pill, don't kill me, please. I can ask my man to bring all the food and jewels for your tribe." The cannibal leader believed Zheng He. He let Zheng He go and gave him a small bottle with lots of bugs inside. Zheng He felt blessed that he could escape from the cannibal.

Zheng He boarded the ship and continued his journey as he still hadn't found the ever-aging pill. After sailing for many days, one of the crew spotted a large piece of land. Zheng He decided to get off the ship. It was an old city called Mecca. Zheng He led the crew walked through streets and alleys. Then, he reached open-air working market. There were lots of stalls selling herbs, dried fruit, carpets, camel milk and wood. They were attracted by the woman, dressing like a witch and a snake danced on the sound of a flute from the snake charmer.

"Maybe we can ask her about the two things that we got in the last two adventures. She seems that she knows a lot about magic!" said a crew. "Good idea!" shouted Zheng He excitedly. "Hello! I want to ask that do you know anything about these two things?" said Zheng He and handed over these two things to the woman. The woman's eyes suddenly glowed, she said "My name is Maria, please follow me, I have some important information to tell you. But the only condition is don't tell anyone about this. "OK, I will." promised Zheng He.

He followed her to a mysterious room, there were many glass bottles with colourful liquid inside. Then, they sat down in front of the long table. "I have visited different countries to find this potion and bugs because these two things are the most importation ingredients to make the ever-aging pill." Maria sighed. Zheng He yelled with surprise. "The ever-aging pill!" "I came here just for this. Now, I find it!" "To make this ever-aging pill, except the potion and bugs you gave me, some of my colourful liquids and spells are needed. If I can make the ever-aging pill successfully, I want my share of it." Maria said. Zheng He nodded his head and said, "Deal!"

Two hours later, Maria came out from a dark room, holding with a glowing green potion. She handed it to Zheng He and said "It is yours! Hope you have a great journey back to your country."

Zheng He returned to China with great triumph. He would be famous and be remembered in the history of China voyage.

The Ship that Saved People

Lingnan University Alumni Association (HK) Primary School, Liu, Ken – 10

In the early 1400, China's Emperor sent a crew to go around the world, there were three little boats following the main ship who was packed with different kind of wonderful China treasures. There were thirty sailors in the main ship and twenty men on each little boat, the name of the main ship was called The Angel. The Angel's captain was me, Ken. There were six cannons on each side on the main ship, and three each side on the little ships. We were supposed to give treasure to poor people and exchange gifts from other countries.

In 1403, the crew left the harbour and started to sail towards the sea. On the first day, the sailors delightfully changed the direction and sailed to East, and started to explore!

After two days of hard sailing, I walked to the upper deck and watched the sailors running and shouting orders. Suddenly, I saw a little black dot moving towards us! I thought that a sailor saw this too, because he shouted, "Red alert! All people back to position! Pirate attack!"

"Alert! Alert! Alert!" The sailor kept on shouting.

I dashed to the bridge and took out my sword and placed it on my table as I watched the sailors hurried to put the fire powder in the cannons. "Boom!" A cannonball flew right past our ships and landed into the sea! When I saw this terrible sight, my heart sank.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!" The cannonballs flew in all directions.

"KE-BOOM!" One of our ships sunk deep into the sea! Slowly, I watched it until it disappeared. Fortunately, two of the sailors survived, at the same time, one of our ships was smashed into pieces and nobody was alive.

After the first battle with the pirates, I decided that we needed more security so I put some fire powder in each and every of the cannon, so that when the pirates arrived, we would give them some surprise!

After two more days, we saw land! Yes! Real land! The sailors and I roared in excitement. When we were heading to the palace where the king lived, we saw poor people sitting or begging for money. We gave them some jewellery and money, they thanked us and prayed for us. We found that this place was very interesting because there were many things that China did not have. We attempted to taste some yellowish liquid. We each took a sip of it and spat it out quickly, because it had a terrible taste of chilli. I hated it! The aftertaste lingered in our mouths no matter how many times we rinsed our mouths! Moving forward, we saw a local bully attacking a poor woman, she was about to faint! That was outrageous and I felt indignant! I quickly yelled at the bully and shot an arrow at him. He ran screaming at the top of his voice. I rushed to help the old lady to stand up. I gave her some bread and some water. She thanked me with tears in her eyes. I was touched and I wiped a tear from my eye.

We finally got to the palace where the king lived, we came into the palace and it was filled with gold and jewellery. Some people were dancing, some people were telling jokes to the king. When the king saw us, he greeted us cheerfully and gave us something special, the yellowish liquid. The terrible food we tried earlier! It turned out that this place was called Indonesia and the liquid was called curry. A special food in this place. It actually tasted delicious if you cooked it with the right recipe! We thanked the king and started sailing again!

After four days sailing on the sea, we spotted a dot in the water, a big one! We fired at it, but we missed. When we got closer, I saw that it was a man! We pulled him on board.

When the man woke up, I asked, "What is your name?"

He replied miserably, "My name is Rex..."

And I ventured, "Do you want to be a sailor?"

"Of course! My dream is to become a sailor!!" exclaimed Rex.

I saw that he had dark hair and dark skin, he was an African.

Two days later, I found that Rex was very helpful. So I promoted him to be my executive officer. The next afternoon, a pirate ship really came! I heard loud fighting sound outside my door! I was unprepared. In no time, the door was flung open and there stood Rex holding a bloody knife in one hand and a head in the other. I recognised the head. It was not a pirate, it was one of my sailors!

Rex said coldly, "I tricked you, didn't I?" He came dashing towards me and I took out my sword to fight and my sword collided with his sword! But he was so strong and he poked me in the shoulder and blood splat all over me. Meanwhile, my people arrived in time and stabbed Rex on his back. Rex was dead.

In the end, we defeated the pirates. My shoulder was fine. However, one more boat sank and three man down. I was really sad because I lost three friends.

Days after days, we saw another land finally!

We went on land and we gave some money to the poor people and we found some very good food there. So we exchanged them with the imperial blue and white vase. We arrived a place full of poor people. We distributed food and money to them! They were all very thankful. We asked them where we were and the people said that this was Canada!

Our next destination, we reached to a country where many people liked to play football! We were interested of the balls they played with, so we bought one! We heard that it was Brazil. We brought some Brazilian nuts too! In return, we gave the poor people some money and the poor boys footballs too!

Finally, it was time to head back to China, we sailed cheerfully back to China. The journey back home was tough and uneasy.

“Boom!” A lightning hit a boat faster than you could think.

“AH!! Sinking boat! Pull down the sails! Put all the sails back! Change directions!” yelled everyone.

I said, “Calm down! I will take control.” and everything went back to place.

Now, it was just the main ship left. One more ship sank and three sailors down.

Finally, we spotted China! Good old China! We went to see the Emperor Ju Ding, he was pleased to see us and he was very surprised that there were so many presents from different countries!

After two days, my sailors all became the emperor’s guard, but I would still be a captain, the captain of my ship.

The Storm of Bravery

Marymount Primary School, Ng, Cherie – 10

“Wake up, YuLong! It’s time for breakfast!”

I groggily opened my eyes. TianMing, my bossy older brother, was standing next to me, his expression sour. I got to my feet and put on my hand-me-down boots. I then followed TianMing out onto the deck of the pirate ship.

My name is YuLong, and I am part of the Ming Treasure Fleet. Instead of stealing treasure, like your average pirate fleet, we deliver invaluable treasure from the finest silk to the purest gold to foreign countries as gifts from the Emperor. You can guess by my name, YuLong, that I’m a girl, and the only one on the ship. The captain decided to let me stay because my father was a well-respected member of the crew. He died of typhoid fever shortly after I was born, leaving me and TianMing in the hands of the fleet.

I shivered as I stepped out into the open air. The sky was covered with stormy gray clouds and there was a cold draft.

A crowd of pirates were chattering and munching on their breakfast. TianMing joined them while I sat in the corner with the boys about my age, waiting for the pirates to finish their meals so that we could scavenge the scraps. We were the slaves of the crew—those who did all the dirty work and got fed the least.

LungLi, our Sailing Master frowned as he eyed the dark sky. “There’s a storm coming,” he croaked. “I can feel it. Everyone back to your cabins after this meal.” He glanced at us. “Except for you skinny brats. Stay in the kitchen and wash the dishes.”

“The only reason why we’re skinny is because you don’t feed us well.” I mumbled under my breath. LungLi glared at me.

“What did you say?” the aggressive pirate growled, clenching his fists.

“Nothing.” I gulped, quickly scooting away from LungLi.

The next hour was exhausting. It was bad enough without the boys teasing me about being a girl. I was overwhelmed with relief when the Cook dismissed us to our cabin. I curled up in a corner and quickly drifted off.

I was awoken by a gigantic lurch. The ship was swaying from side to side. Everyone else must have felt it too, because nobody was asleep anymore.

A moment later, TianMing rushed in. “Everyone wake up! The ship just hit a rock, and water’s leaking into the storage rooms now. It can be fixed, but it’s not safe for you all to stay down here. Everyone out onto the deck!”

Everyone was in a scurry of panic. There was a lot of pushing to get to the deck first. It wasn’t until I had stepped out that I realized how violent the storm was. Rain was pouring down from the sky.

“Are you sure this is safe, TianMing?” I shouted sarcastically, but nobody could hear me over the roaring wind. The ship was tilting dangerously to one side.

Suddenly, the ship jerked to the other side, sending us stumbling. HoMing, one of the boys who had made fun of me earlier on, tumbled overboard, screaming. He splashed about in the water, tears rolling down his cheeks. I immediately ran to help him, but a hand grabbed my shoulder.

“Forget it,” KwokChi, TianMing’s best friend, said. “If you dive in, you’ll drown as well. Leave him be.”

“What?” I yelled, incredulous. “You’re just going to let him die?” Before anyone could stop me, I plunged into the waters.

Instantly, nail-biting cold overcame me as I struggled to resurface. I was frantically searching for HoMing when I felt a hand grab my wrist. HoMing. I then used all the strength I had left in my body to swim me and HoMing to the ship. We were almost there when my body numbed and couldn’t move. I screamed as I tried to fight back the cold, but it was impossible. I was wondering how painful death would be when a rough hand grabbed me and hauled me out of the freezing waters, along with HoMing.

The next hour was a blur. For the first time, the whole crew had their attention on me. TianMing, who had been the one hauling me up, dried me and brought me to his private cabin. He laid all the cloth and rags he could find on the floor, creating a makeshift mattress.

“You...saved my life,” I stuttered after I had recovered from the trauma. “Why would you do that?”

TianMing let out a sound between a laugh and a sob. “Because you’re my baby sister, of course. I know I might boss you around sometimes, and never seem to care about how the others treat you. And when you dived in to save that boy...I was terrified of losing you. You’re the only family I have. You know what, YuLong? You’re the bravest person I’ve ever known. And believe me, I know plenty about bravery. Now go to sleep...you must be exhausted.”

Tears formed in my eyes---happy tears. It was comforting to know that someone loved me. “TianMing, sing me the lullaby Papa used to sing us.” I asked. I didn’t have much memories of my childhood, but I still remembered how our father used to sing us to sleep each night.

TianMing frowned, but started singing softly. I closed my eyes and let the music consume me. I began to fall asleep as TianMing sang the last line:

You’re safe as long as I’m here.

Treasure Voyage

Norwegian International School, Chow, Jasmine – 10

While I was playing in the palace garden, I overheard a ceremony in the royal banquet hall. Oh, by the way, I'm Princess Changning, the youngest daughter of Zhu Di, the Chinese Emperor of Ming Dynasty. So, back to the ceremony. I saw servants walking around with plates of delicious food. Hiding behind a stone wall, I was curious and listened. "We will send a fleet of treasure ships to the South and make friends with the regional kings. We want them to recognise our might and power." I heard a familiar voice. It was my father, the Emperor!

Even though I knew that girls weren't allowed aboard, I desperately wanted to venture out. So I asked my father if I could go. Of course, it was a no. I didn't give up. "If I'm not allowed aboard, I'll secretly sneak aboard..." I thought. And that's how it all started.

I looked at the sundial and hurried to the study in the palace for my class. The teacher taught us about our country. As he took out an outfit that ordinary people would wear, an idea popped up in my head. "When the teacher isn't looking, I will take that outfit and wear it to pretend to be a boy for the treasure voyage!" I thought. That was what I did at lunch time.

The day after, the Admiral Zheng He told the crew to line up and we boarded the ships. The ships were like twenty times the size of my bedroom! I was assigned to be the cook on the third ship. I was good at cooking, so I was relieved.

I strolled over to the flight of stairs leading to the kitchen where I bumped into another cook! "Ouch!" the cook yelled. It was a girl's voice! She quickly clapped her hands over her mouth. I looked straight into her eyes and asked. "Are you a ...girl?" She shook her head. "I promise I won't tell." I whispered. She thought for a moment then nodded. I beamed and said, "So am I, but don't tell anyone. What's your name?"

"I'm Ling, daughter of Zheng He's assistant. I heard about this exciting trip so I decided to sneak aboard." She replied. I introduced myself and we soon became friends. Later on the trip, I found Ling pretty shy, but she was still fun.

When the ship sailed to the coast of Malacca, we found it to be a beautiful town with houses along the shore. As the others took out bags of gold and silver, Ling and I explored the place. We walked further and further away from the seaside and deeper and deeper into the woods.

"I think we're lost!" Ling said with a worried look. We looked around and something bright caught my eye. I slowly walked towards it for a closer look. Ling followed. Suddenly, the trail was brightened up by tons of glowing blue creatures. One of them greeted me, "Hello. I'm a little dragon of Malacca. I predict the future. Call me Scales." "Hi, Scales, we've traveled here to send treasure to the king. We are lost. Can you help us?" I asked Scales. "Just follow our trail." Scales pointed to the blue lights.

We followed the trail and joined the others. Scales slid into my pocket without a sound. Then we all set off to send treasure to the ruler of Malacca. He told us about the fierce pirates, led by Chen Zuyi. They were notorious for robbery and all sort of crimes.

In the bedroom that night, I whispered anxiously, "Scales, will the pirates attack us?" Scales looked a bit upset and said, "I'm sorry, I'm just a baby dragon, and can't predict that far. But, I know what you two will be doing tomorrow! You will learn to cook some local cuisine."

The next day, that was exactly what we did. First, a man showed us how to make coconut rice. We then learnt at least ten more recipes. They all tasted great. Rising over the mountain, the moon shone brightly as we served coconut rice for dinner. As expected, the entire crew loved it.

Later that night, Zheng He shouted from the first boat, "Grab your weapon and get ready to fight! The pirates are about to attack!" We ran down the corridor and took the bows and arrows hanging off the kitchen wall. We bolted up to the main deck. Scales cheered us on as we took our positions.

I took a deep breath and shot as far as I could, and it hit one of the scary looking men in the arm. Then just as I was about to shoot another, an arrow flew right next to my ear! "That was close." I mumbled to myself.

After shooting a few men, I found that I was good at archery! We had to dodge under so many arrows that the arrows could fill up the entire kitchen underneath the main deck where war was happening. We fought and fought, then I started to get worried. Just then, an arrow flew between my legs and hit a pole behind me instead. "Phew."

Suddenly, an arrow came in my direction. Just as I thought it would be my end, Scales created a magical shield in front of me. Scales had saved my life! We eventually managed to sink the pirates' ships. We won.

By the time we were to say goodbye to Scales upon leaving Malacca, Ling and I took some of Scales's glowing blue light which would allow the three of us to communicate with each other at all times.

At the next stop, Aru, we always talked to Scales when nobody was looking. Even now, in the palace, I talk to Ling and Scales a lot. Time passed. It has been two years since we met; our friendship kept growing. I wouldn't have ever met such marvelous friends if I didn't sneak aboard the ship.

Adventures of Yen Wu

Norwegian International School, So, Ocean – 10

Hello, my name is Yen Wu. I used to be a fisherman in a small village. On the day I was supposed to go fishing, the people from the Baochuan told me that some of the workers overslept and one fisherman couldn't make it on time. I told them I could replace him, and they dragged me on board. I told them I am a fisherman and I can cook. So I was allocated to the Liangchuan. On the Liangchuan, there were all the cooks and fishermen. They were responsible for cooking and preparing food for everyone, including Zheng He.

A few months later, we landed on our first destination. It was the international port, Port Vijaya, in the capital city of Vietnam, Champa. We gave them some of our finest China, the best spices, and our original oolong tea. They gave us some wonderful wool, colourful cotton and a lot of gold in return.

We traveled near Java, Indonesia, but we didn't stop because we had to carefully avoid one of the most feared pirates of all, Chen Zuyi. Then we went to stop at "Chen Zuyi-free" places such as Malacca, Semudera, and the Anderman and Nicobar islands to trade. They gave us silver and gold, but we didn't get any ivory which our emperor Yongle wants. Finally, we stopped at Calcutta, India. Calcutta was one of the world's major trade ports, so we traded a lot of gifts with the ruler. As India has Indian elephants, finally we got the most wanted ivory for our emperor and it was time to return home.

On our way back to China, we met Chen Zuyi near Palembang, Indonesia. I was just going to present food to Zheng He and I saw grapple hooks came up in an instance.

"Grapple hooks alert!" I screamed and the soldiers all lined up.

Everyone was freaking out! Even I was freaking out. I dropped my serving plate on the ground and ran in circles with my hands up. The other people went to the poop deck of the boat and chattered their teeth. Some of Chen Zuyi's men lost grip while climbing up and fell into the water full of man-eating sharks. The intruders that didn't fall into the water jumped on board. I joined my pals at the poop deck and watched the soldiers fight. The intruders had very little people so we won very easily. We came out and celebrated. We threw them to their own boat and we sailed away.

On the next day, Chen Zuyi suddenly came back to the fleet with a larger fleet of pirate ships. They used grapple hooks again but there were more this time. Many pirates were climbing up to our ship at the same time. Our soldiers were cutting off some of the ropes. Some pirates fell into the water and got stung by the box jellyfish and died, while others were successful and got up onto the deck. I was delivering food to Zheng He when I saw Chen Zuyi came up again. My pals and I panicked and climbed up the mast to hide in the crow's nest instead of the poop deck.

After a few moments of fighting, it seems like that Chen Zuyi was losing.

"I surrender!" Chen Zuyi said.

A few of our soldiers dragged him and as we walked to the stern going to the Captain's quarter, he wrestled his way out and he ran to the helm to steer our boat to his boat.

"Oh my gosh! He is just pretending!" I screamed.

Just when our soldiers were about to react, the men on Chen Zuyi's boat jumped from mast to mast until they got to our main mast. Then they jumped down with their swords pointing down. We called the soldiers to go help us and they dodged their swords that were falling down. My fisherman buddy and I wanted to help, so we went to the weapons room but everything was gone. All we can do was to use our fishing equipment! We used our best fishing technique to fight the pirates off. First we made a trap by putting our fishing net on the ceiling. Just when they came into the room, we dropped the net on them and

captured them. We then threw them into the sea to feed the sharks. My fellow friends found that this method works and they followed.

With most of Chen Zuyi's people on the Baochuan was thrown into the sea, he was bound to surrender. During the battle, our Zhanchuan sunk 10 of his ships that were full of their pirates and we took the other 7. Finally we captured him and threw him and his 2 associates into the ship's prison. and we went back to China. We ported at Nanjing and Emperor Yongle beheaded Chen Zuyi.

Emperor Yongle was so happy about Zheng He, his officers, and sailors that he gave the entire force monetary rewards. I got fully paid and have enough money to have a new fishing boat of my own. Because the fishermen and I did so well, we could go on the second voyage again.

Great Admiral Zheng He of the Western Seas

Peak School (ESF), Akin, Esra – 8

1

I was born a Muslim. My parents are Muslims, so that made me one; I guess it was meant to be that way. My father was an explorer, and my grandfather was an explorer too. The only thing that I didn't get was why there were so many explorers in my family.

Now I'm guessing you would like to be filled in so you understand the story... Back then, China was divided into many different chiefdoms, and each one had its own king or ruler. Together, it was called the Middle Kingdom. All of these rulers fought with each other regularly, and one sad day when I was eleven or so, our village was attacked.

The soldiers set fire to our homes! Suddenly, when the soldiers came, there were thousands of them coming through our city walls, and nobody had noticed that I ran to find my father. He had to know! Lost in my thoughts, I didn't notice the guards creeping up on me. "Zheng He, look out behind you!" said one of the people being attacked. I quickly gathered my consciousness and saw a large hand reaching over my shoulder to grab me. I slapped the hand away and ran for my life. As I ran, I found my father, he was in a terrible state...

2

Lying at my feet was my father. He had been screaming, but was now mysteriously quiet. I figured something was terribly wrong, and checked all his bones to make sure that they weren't broken.

Slowly I turned my father around and saw a large dagger lodged into his back. "No! No! No! Father, you can't be dead!" My eyes welled with tears, my head clouded... Time stood still. Anger surged through my veins.

In my sadness, the soldiers dragged me away to the great capital city called Beijing. When I looked around, there were many young boys who were captured. But they were all so small and weedy, and smelled really yucky! On the journey to Beijing, I dreamed of a life of adventure and boats. Since I had been raised as a Muslim, I could speak Arabic and Chinese, which made me pretty clever compared to the Chinese boys.

The emperor at the time was a curious young man, and wanted to find out about different places around the world. He wanted to know about strange animals that people in China have never seen! He wanted to build ships so he could leave land and go explore, make friends from far away lands! His naval architects were asked to make 300 ships, which he called 'Swimming Dragons'!

Now the emperor wanted servants to work on his ships. He came to look at the captured boys. "I want that giant one who is almost 2 metres tall", said the emperor.

3

Many years later, on one very average day, the emperor called me to his royal palace. "My loyal and very trustworthy Zheng He, I want you to be the admiral of these large ships I have ordered to be made. Go explore new lands, sail across the unknown waters and tell the people you meet about the Middle Kingdom". So since that very day, I was known as the Great Admiral Zheng He.

After a month or so, I went off for our first adventure with my crew of almost 30,000 men in 300 ships, each one with 9 sails, an underwater fish tank to keep fish fresh and healthy, rooms with fresh plants growing, live animals, medicine men, chefs, warriors, fishermen for each crew, and most importantly the most glamorous gifts the emperor could think of. You see, the emperor wanted to make friends with the most interesting people we met, and we did.

My first mission lasted from 1405 to 1407; we travelled to a strange country called India. Additionally, we sailed across the monsoon winds, passed India and went to Africa. We had passed some other villages and traded some more gifts. My favorite mission was discovering a unicorn, a magical horse with a long neck. The emperor would be amazed by the strange gifts I brought back from each trip, and his favourite was the unicorn.

4

We had to fight pirates stole ships. Each time, I thought I glimpsed the most feared pirate in the world, but then, there was another who was more vicious. On the front of the ship, called the bow, there were five younger pirates that were battling two of my men. I kicked one and waited for my men to follow me, soon the young men were rolling around on the floor in pain.

In the beginning, I went to the islands of Java in Indonesia, and Malaysia, then further and further to Oman and Arabia. I even attended Mecca, which is a place for a Muslim pilgrimage. My fleet and I were so adventurous that we went even further to Mombasa and Zanzibar, in East Africa! On my sixth voyage, I was nearly reaching 50,000 km.

5

On my seventh voyage, I fell ill. As I lied in my bed, with death approaching, I thought of my adventures and all the people I met along the way. My dream was that I had inspired these people to be curious about life beyond the horizon of their seas, and go forth to explore like I did.

My emperor was a big supporter of my voyages, but the Middle Kingdom was full of people who did not understand my journeys into the seas. So I made sure that all the friends I met along the way remembered me. They built mosques and shrines with my name, and also wrote about me in their books.

I am now ready to leave this world... my eyes close, I, Great Admiral Zheng He of the Western Seas, feel very happy to have seen so much!

My Adventure with Zheng He

Peak School (ESF), Barton, Jack – 10

Long ago, in the year 1417, far away in Eastern China, there was a boy who lived by the sea, his name was Sheng Si. He was 16 years old, and admired the great sailor Zheng He, who had traveled many miles to extraordinary places in Asia. Sheng didn't know yet, but he would soon be sailing alongside his favourite pioneer.

It was in the middle of the year when Sheng got the surprise of his life, a huge banner in the middle of his local village in big fat letters read: WANTED CREW MEMBERS. He read a little more and found that if he went, he'd be going to Africa, he also found the message was made by Zheng He. Sheng was so excited that straight away, he signed up, he would be leaving in three days. He packed and bought a sword and gun for protection as he knew it was going to be a bit rough. He said goodbye to the villagers, and was soon traveling to the harbour. Once he got there he was welcomed by about half a dozen of enormous ships, five times the average boats that you would see today, with about 900 cabins for the crew including a kitchen and a dining hall. Besides that, there was these strange gardens that grew vegetables. Sheng was one of the last people to board the ship, so not long after, they were off. Sheng soon found that his jobs would be one of the cooks. He also had to scrub the deck every morning. So the next day at sunrise, he got to work.

It had been nine months since Sheng had boarded Zheng He's ship that was going to Africa. So far the ship hadn't had any disturbances, but Sheng was about to get a surprise that he would never forget. It was about midday when a person from the crow's nest shouted "SHIP AHEAD!!!" Everybody turned their heads to see an enormous Indian ship speeding towards them. Then all of a sudden, the captain of the Indian ship, when close enough to Sheng's boat, yelled out loud: "YOU HAVE CROSSED THE BORDER BETWEEN DHAKA AND INDIA, SURRENDER OR DIE!!!" Which we replied back with: "NEVER!!!" The next thing Sheng heard was nonstop cannons shooting at the opposite ship. Sheng knew exactly what to do as he had prepared for this: he sprinted to his cabin, grabbed his sword and gun, and rejoined the fight, BOOM!!! Everybody tumbled over onto the ground. The ships had hit each other with great impact, though our ship was a lot bigger. It did get a lot of damage, but the Indian ship was extremely damaged, which gave us a big advantage. We were soon fighting again but with less people because of the boat's damage, the battle between the two ships got fiercer, and fiercer. Then, when all hope seemed lost, Sheng's crew started to drive the Indians back, they were soon jumping of Sheng's ship and swimming to their own, it was victory.

After two months they had finally reached the Coast of Eastern Africa, Somalia. When Sheng arrived he found it was hot, dry, and miserable. Besides that, it was amazing. The food was good, the culture was interesting, and the traditions spellbinding. The captain said that the crew would be staying in Somalia for three days. In the first day they would be showing the gold to the African King, the second day they would be in the local market buying something to remember the voyage, the third day they would be packing up and sailing away to Kenya. So the next day Sheng went with his other crew members to the African Overlord. He was a small man with a big beard in shining robes, he was also very pleased to see Zheng He, as they made a deal: as long as Zheng He's master gave him gold, he would keep peace between China and Somalia. For the rest of the day the crew just looked around the city. The next day the whole crew went to the local market. There were tons of products, animals, food, ivory and slaves. Sheng only had a little money, but lots of things in the market were cheap. There was a lot of things that Sheng could choose to get but in the end he was only going to choose a little bit of ivory that had been carved into a mini hippo that he found in a little shop. But by then it was getting dark, so Sheng looked for his fellow crew members to be surprised because Sheng's captain, Zheng He, had brought back for his emperor a strange animal that the Africans called a "Giraffe". Nobody in the crew cared about saying its real name, they just called it a unicorn. So the next day we set off on our journey to our final stop, Kenya.

Three days later they arrived at their final destination, Kenya. But this time only in parts of Kenya it was hot, in other places it was tropical. Sheng heard that the only reason why they were at Kenya was because all the other countries in Africa were friendly to China, but not Kenya, they were still hostile to China. Once they got off the ship, they headed straight to the African Palace where the king sat in his huge throne, wearing shiny purple robes. After 15 minutes the king shouted: "LEAVE ME ALONE AND DON'T COME BACK!!!" Zheng He told us that the African King refused for peace between China and Kenya. So the next day we set off back to China.

11.5 months have passed and Sheng had reached China. Once he was off the ship, he said: "Goodbye Zheng He, hope to see you soon." To which Zheng replied: "Yes, and goodbye, Sheng Si." They shook hands and went their own ways.

Ming Dynasty

Peak School (ESF), Chan, Jason – 8

Hi I am Zheng He, here is my story. I am a Chinese explorer but not any type of Chinese explorer: I don't take over land, instead I give gifts to others that need them. I am the captain of my ship. My ship is called the ship of the golden voyages.

Today I set off on my first journey, I was sailing to India to give gifts. I was there to donate gifts to the poor. Suddenly, I ran out of oil I had to get oil quickly. I was waiting for someone to come. All of a sudden my friend came. He brought me some coal and I burnt the coal he had given me, he had brought me the coal because I had given him gold in the past. So after that we became friends, that's why he came to help me when I had no oil and coal to burn. After I got my coal I continued my journey to India. I was currently in Thailand, I was almost in India. I had another problem for my friend to help me solve: I had no more gifts! Luckily, he came back and gave me some of his gold so that I could buy gifts for the people that live in India. My friend had loads of gold to spare he also had too many gifts to hand out. He needed my help to give out the gifts that's why he gave me some of his gold. I was giving out the gifts I had in India, my first destination. I had already given out 50 gifts and I still had some more. I had finally finished giving out the gifts that I needed to in India.

My next destination was Thailand that I had passed earlier on on my way to India. I was sailing in the Indian ocean to Thailand from India. I was ready to give out more presents because I had left some of the gold my friend gave me in the ship, so I could use that gold that I had stored in the ship of the golden voyage which is my ship. I was on my way to Thailand and almost there. I had finally arrived in Thailand to give some more gifts out in Thailand, everyone was excited that I was coming to donate gifts to them because they knew I was a good explorer and I didn't take over land. Instead I gave out gifts that were stored in my ship, the ship of the golden voyages. I just started to give out gifts to the citizens of Thailand, they were very excited indeed. I had given about 10 of my gifts so far, I was going to give many more. I thought that would be enough for the citizens of Thailand. They all thanked me as I boarded my ship, the ship of the golden voyages.

I decided that I was going to Taiwan, I only wanted to go to countries in Asia because I was a Chinese explorer. I was on my way to Taiwan, I was almost there. I was just a few meters away. I had finally arrived in Taiwan, everyone was excited and they were all greeted me. It was similar to when I was in India. I was giving out gifts because they were all so nice to me, I had given each of them 2 gifts. I had given out about 20 gifts now I gave gifts to 10 people so far but I was going to give more out. I had finally finished giving out my gifts in Taiwan, in total I given out 50 in Taiwan. The total of all my journeys I had given out 130 gifts if I remembered correctly because I had loads of stuff floating around my mind about where my next journey would be and other random stuff that I just randomly think of in my mind. I was done with Taiwan and I was ready for another adventure. I was once again thinking and thinking about where I was going to go. I made up my mind and I decided to go to Hong Kong.

My journey to Hong Kong was probably going to be my last journey in this story. I might have one more journey in this story, but you will just have to find out. Now my trip to Hong Kong was the best one out of all my trips I had been on. I was about to arrive in Hong Kong when I was finally there everyone greeted me just like in Taiwan and Thailand. I was about to start giving out my gifts in Hong Kong when all of a sudden I thought to myself about how to make Hong Kong the best and most interesting journey in this book. I had finally given out 10 gifts but I decided in Hong Kong I was going to give a total of 250 gifts I was going to give each person 5 gifts which meant that I gave out gifts to 50 people because $250 \div 5 = 50$ that is why I gave 50 people 5 gifts.

The Missing Piece

Peak School (ESF), Donovan, Iris – 10

1405, China Ming Dynasty

The wind blew against my face as the smell of the salty sea filled the air around me. I could feel the sweat run down my forehead. My arms were aching from all the rowing and rowing.

I've been trying to find land for about 2 days now. Everybody was looking for me in my hometown, where I ran away from. I ran away because everyday was plain, and everyday was the same. I had to work on a farm because my dad, the money maker of the family, was sent on a journey by the Yongle Emperor. My dad was honoured to be a part of the treasure fleet and he excitedly went off and never came back. So I have gone to Calicut, India to try find him.

But then I saw it! I saw it, "Land!" I shouted. The fog started to clear up and I looked closer and it was, it was a boat. But it wasn't just any old boat, it was a huge boat, and there was gold and treasure in it.

I was startled as I saw the miniature people strolling across the boat. I didn't want them to see me. Dad had told me all about the pirates of the Bay of Bengal. I thought they were pirates until I heard one of them say "We're never going to get to land without pirates finding us!". As I listened to the concerned voice I calmed down. I wanted to ask for help to see if they could bring me to land, but I couldn't. I was way too scared. I tried to ignore the big boat as I rowed my way past them.

As I was minding my own business, one of the patrollers shouted "LOOK, IT'S A GIRL!" I jumped up to my feet in alarm. For a second I felt relaxed, but then all of a sudden a wave pushed my boat to one side. I jumped and waved my arms all around and landed headfirst straight down into the ocean. All the noise became muffled, as I sank deeper and deeper. I felt trapped and not able to move.

The very next thing I saw was the boat's nurse, who set me down on a bed. All I could hear was the shouting and screaming that was coming from the deck. I sprang up, in confusion. The Nurse calmly held my hand and soothingly whispered, "It's alright, everything will be fine." As soon as I heard that, I felt like someone finally loved me, someone finally cared. I felt a warm feeling in my heart. I sat back down. I asked, "what's happening?" "Just another fight, the pirates have returned", the nurse said. I gulped.

Then all of a sudden I heard something. It sounded like a familiar voice. It stuck out from the rest. It was a voice that had that a strong, brave sound to it. My heart took over, I knew this voice was important. And I knew this voice mattered. This voice gave me the same warm feeling that the nurse's words gave me.

I burst the door open. I felt like everything went slow, it was as if the world wanted me to pay attention. I glanced back and forth from all the pirates and sailors. Nobody noticed, and nobody cared. But then I heard the voice once again. I walked through the fight. All my fears flew away all because of the one familiar voice that seemed to be the reason I came here. As I finally shoved past the last soldier, I saw him. I looked up at his messy long hair, his bright brown eyes, and his beautiful smile. Papa! I fell to my knees in surprise as tears raced down my cheeks. I sprung straight up and gave him a big smile. It was like we had a whole conversation without saying a single word. "Li Li!" My father said "I love you so much". "I'm so sorry" he whispered. "I Love you too!" I replied.

It was like magic because I looked up and the pirates were in tears and so were the soldiers. My dad popped me down and said a few words in a language that made no sense to me. I was so happy that I found my dad! and I have a feeling that we're going to have wonderful, exciting adventures together.

My whole life I new there was something missing, I knew there was an empty space. Now I know that my dad is the missing piece.

Zheng He – The evil man

Peak School (ESF), Keller, Lia – 8

One day as I was walking home I passed Zheng He's fleet and one of his guards looked me in the eye. I felt a little scared. I couldn't chose if I should run or go closer and figure out what they are doing. So I thought for a minute and chose to know what they were up to. So at home I packed my bag and when 12 pm struck, I snuck up on the deck to find somewhere safe to stay. I found space in the chamber to sleep.

Today, I find myself tied up in the cell and I realize they found me. But luckily I brought an acid stick and my hands where safe, so I grabbed it and then I was free. There were guards outside so I put one of my sound switchers outside my cell so a alarm went off and every guard went to look what the problem was. So sneaking off I went but not knowing when they would come back. I got caught and was taken to the plank and was thrown into the water. I started to paddle to the closest island. When I was at the island I realised that my clothes were torn and wet, so I found some vine and took out some clips from my bag. Next I had to look for a good spot to dry my clothes. While they were drying I tried to make a raft and it was so hard. When I was done I found some banana leaves, so I climbed on top of a cave. But to my surprise there lay sushi and some mangos, I felt happy to had food. After I was done I found a place and went to sleep, wondering why had Zheng He had pushed me off the plank and did bad things. Just then I knew what had happened: they were great enemies with my parents.

Today I would set sail to find my family. As I got on the boat I realised my bag was lost so I ran to the cave and it was there. So I snatched it and ran back to the boat and started to go fast and I had a map. After four days I reached Asia. Then in two days I was home. I ran my top speed home and told everyone in my street what happened.

The Tale of a Soldier

Peak School (ESF), Yee, Ethan – 10

It was a weird day when I saw Zhang He become a eunuch and it was cruel type of punishment and they still did it in public! It was so brutal since you could hear him literally wail as he get his private part cut off. After the horrible sight I went back home and afterwards Yongle emperor, the leader of China at that time was saying that everyone who was between 21 and 30 had to join Zhang He for treasure voyages around the world and since I was 26 I joined and the first voyage was kind of weird. As I entered the huge boat on Thursday 31st of May I felt shivers coming around because I wondered what am I doing as my part for Zhang He? Then Zhang He came. He said. "Hello army soldier." What soldier now I'm really scared. "How could you say I'm an army soldier?" Zhang He replied. "Because of the badge your wearing." I looked at my badge I thought it was just a present from the Yongle emperor for joining but it was a badge to address why and who I am and what I am doing. Then Zhang He gave me a longbow and I had literally no fighting skills and I didn't even know how to use a longbow. As the ship left I was just relaxing in the underground bunker where soldiers were meant to be at. After a long few days of traveling Zhang He shouted one thing I didn't want to hear. "ATTACK! Everyone get into position!" I ran out not knowing what I was doing and rushed out and saw people that were shooting are group with crazy longbows and started hitting are ship with swords and axes. I hid behind a tree just because I didn't know what was really happening and the fact that I could hear hitting and shooting noises a mile away! Then I heard footsteps the sound of that was making me afraid of what was going to happen then I took a look behind the tree and there was someone probably trying to escape the war that was happening but he was coming straight at my location so I shot one hit straight to the head and left him there and that was then I saw for the first time a dead body and so I ran away in fear. As I ran away I saw a few warriors heading to me! I must run I thought but then I saw one of my soldier buddies and he slice them and then the battle ended we won and they gave us a pony? Well it has a long neck and it's yellow with black spots. I then thought maybe it wasn't but Zhang He said. "This thing we have a unicorn!" A unicorn? Your out of your mind that's a... uh what is it? I didn't really know what it is so I just said it was a unicorn. When we got back we also came back with \$1,000 that the warriors gave us and so we gave it to are people and rested until the next time we would voyage. The next morning I woke up from a loud horn and I knew what that meant it was a gathering! For what? I went into the courtyard and saw Zhang He standing beside the Yongle emperor who said. "I need the people that was in the last voyage!" I came rushing towards them and said. "Why do you need us?" The Yongle emperor replied. "Well because your going on another mission!" I asked. "Why though?" He said. "Because if you brought \$1,000 everytime I could get rich! RICH!" "Aren't you rich enough?" I asked. "No, I have the minimum that I can get but now I can get to the maximum!" I thought wow he's greedy alright and crazy too but I wasn't going to say it or I would get punished so I just kept it in my head. After the ship was ready we set off and I was ready but I was assigned with a SWORD! I don't know how to use that! I ran desperately to someone with a longbow and asked. "Say, can I swap with you?" He replied. "No, or Zhang He would be very mad." I gasped and realised it's hard to use a sword and it's more easier to die since you have to go near them! I hid in fear instead of going out and in 10 days we arrived at are destination. I looked out and Zhang He said. "Everyone are boat has ran out of fuel and we made it here and now we're stranded!" Then someone asked. "Where are we anyway? Check your map." Zhang He looked down at his map and he said. "We are in Europe." Everyone gasped and ran in circles in panic but I just hid in the same spot I was in until Zhang He said. "I see something!" Then a boat arrived. Then the leader of the boat said. "We have came to the rescue." Zhang He then said. "We can't have everyone on board with you." Then the rescuers said. "Fine, we'll take some maybe we'll leave the soldiers." When I heard that I realised I should pose as a worker or crew member. I took my sword and hit an unexpected crew member and so I took his suit and went on the boat and went back to China. When we got back I knew I didn't want to do it anymore so I said to Yongle emperor. "I quit."

Chinese Meets Thai Cuisine on a Ming Treasure Voyage

PLK Leung Chow Shun Kam PS, Ho, Abby – 11

In the year 1405

'Ready, Go!' shouted Zheng He. 'Hurray!' everyone shouted. We are setting off for Thailand in our huge ships. We have fruit and vegetables growing on board, livestock, many helpers and many ingredients. You see, I am one of the cooks on this voyage and I am the main cook on this ship.

Two Weeks Later

We have arrived in Thailand. Only a few minutes after arriving, we saw the king and queen. When they saw us, they excitedly waved their hands to say 'Hello'. They offered us these things called coconuts. They are very nice. They also prepared a meal for Zheng He and his commanders. I heard Zheng He say it was delicious.

12:00 (Afternoon)

I have been ordered to prepare a meal for the King and queen of Thailand.

'Zhen He. I have prepared the lunch. 'I said nervously. I hope they like our dishes.

'Here is the menu printed on our finest paper.' said my assistant as he passed it to the King and Queen.

MENU OF CHINA

– PORK DUMPLINGS

- TURNIP SPROUT SALAD
- ROAST SNACKLING PIG
- DEEP-FRIED WILDGOORE
- TURNIP SPROUT SALAD
- SWEET OSMANTHUS JELLY

30 Minutes Later

After the meal Zhen He asked the King and Queen, 'What do you think of our dishes?'

The Queen replied 'They are very nice – Excellent!'

Then the King said 'Thank you for sharing your food with us. We would like to give you some of our favourite green curry to take back to your Emperor.' We will be heading back to China soon. I want to see the Emperor's face when he tastes the Thai green curry!

The lost diary entries of Captain Zheng He—1405

PLK Leung Chow Shun Kam PS, Pun, Hugo – 11

5th February

I am the leader of the biggest voyage ever made. My Emperor has made me the commander. I will make him proud. We have treasure to give to the new people we meet. We are on our way!

18th February

We have entered our first storm. My men have run to their cabins for cover. I've ordered the gongs to be banged and lanterns to be flashed to communicate with the other ships. We can't see anything. One of our treasure ships has taken in too much water and sunk.

25th February

Our navigator has spotted land in the distance. I gave orders to load the cannons so if the people attack we could suppress them with our firepower but a messenger told me the Emperor has objected to any attack. He said we cannot show any sign of hostility. We have anchored the treasure ships away from the harbor for safety.

26th February

We will stop here for a week to buy and sell stuff. The people are friendly so I will give them some of our treasure too. I will also trade silk with a merchant for some sails to replace the damaged sail on my ship. This place they say is called India.

28th February

It's been a very interesting few days. I have stopped the ships at another place – called Sri Lanka. The king of Sri Lanka told me there is a problem and he cannot let us stay. I asked what the problem was and found out there are Kraken in the waters near the port. Krakens are the scariest monsters of the sea. This Kraken has been scaring all the people and sinking merchant ships. The king said if we can kill the kraken he will be an ally with us forever. So, I have set sail with my crew to find the Kraken!

31st February

This morning a Spanish galleon could be seen in the distance so I commanded we bang our gongs to signal it. Then all of a sudden tentacles as tall as my ship came out of the water and onto the galleon. The crew of the galleon was so shocked they jumped off the ship. My battle ships quickly fired cannons at it. But another tentacle hit the troop transport next to me. The gunpowder in the cabin exploded and burst into flames. We chased the Kraken and fired over a hundred cannonballs at it. By the afternoon we had only one cannonball left. I commanded it to be fired. The last cannonball hit the kraken. It hit it right in its eyeball and it sank to the bottom of the sea. The ships have gathered around and the crew is cheering 'Zheng He forever!'

1st January

I am now back in Sri Lanka and have reported back to the king. He is so pleased the kraken is dead and has again promised to be allied with China forever. He also gave me a man-o-war he captured from the Spanish. I have a feeling this is going to be a successful voyage.

But sometimes I still think that something bad might happen.... but maybe I am thinking too much!

4th February

It has only been a few days since destroying the Kraken and a pirate has appeared. But, luckily his ship is no match for our enormous bronze cannons. The pirate leader has surrendered. I spared the crew of the pirate ship and gave them an island to rule. But I wasn't so nice to the pirate leader. I used a cat-o-nine-tails to spank him and I am taking him back to the Emperor. Another crisis is over. This voyage is now over too, until next time.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages: The Treasure Voyage

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Li, Cheuk Lam Bryan – 10

It was late, and every single sailor was asleep. Except Ben. The large galleon was like a knife slicing through the calm sea. The silver moon was grand and round, it was so impossibly perfect. Stars shone in the sky. Ben and the other fifty crew members were carrying extremely important cargo. Gold, silk, jade, and china. Despite it being a wonderful night, Ben knew this would not be a problem-free voyage...

It was morning time. Ben had just woken up. 'Good morning, Ben,' piped a cheerful voice. It was the unmistakable voice of Joe. Even though he looked like a big, burly man, he was very nice and kind-hearted. 'Good morning,' replied Ben. 'Let's have breakfast,' said Joe.

Joe wore a striped cap, and he had a gold tooth. His beard was bristly, it stuck out like the bristles of a nailbrush. He wore a simple sailor's tunic and baggy pants. But Ben still liked him. He always gave Ben some sweets and biscuits when he said he was homesick.

They went to the Dining Hall. Some sailors were playing chess, while others were sipping up oolong tea.

Suddenly, a voice called out, 'Pirates! Pirates!' Everyone stopped. Then they panicked and ran, alarmed. 'To your stations, Bob!' the captain called out. Bob and Joe scrambled to the deck. Three dreaded pirate ships were moving to intercept.

Cannons fired. But the pirate ship's hull was way too strong, the cannons only did little damage. Then a pirate hauled a long ladder across their ship. Moving like gymnasts with incredible speed, the pirates attempted to board the vessel. The captain and several crew members rushed to the deck. 'Hold them off! Others, to the lifeboats!' Two lifeboats were lowered first. But they were like sitting ducks to the pirate ships. The pirates fired a cannon. And one by one the lifeboats were destroyed. There was no escape...

The rest of the crew battled valiantly. Sparks could be seen when two swords clashed. The captain was fighting the pirate's leader, Chestbeard. Tattoos covered his body. He opened his mouth and shouted, 'AARRGGHH!'

Ben saw that his teeth were completely black.

They were blacker than oil. They were blacker than a midnight sky. They were blacker than black... For short, they were black.

Then, a peculiar sight filled Ben's eyes. 'What up?' asked Joe. 'Look, Joe, look! Reinforcements!' Two magnificent ships appeared. Everyone stopped. Then the pirates ran. 'I want my mum!' shouted one.

The pirates retreated rapidly back to their boats. All was safe.

The ship slowly sailed back on course, while the reinforcements pulled away.

Then, another sailor cried, 'Look! Look!' Ben's mind raced in thought. *Was it a sea monster?* But this time it was good news. It was civilization!

A few people arrived to greet them. The remaining sailors gave them all their treasures. The gold, silk and china. 'Thank you. Unimaginable kindness,' said the native people thankfully. Then Ben and Joe watched the beautiful sunset.

The next morning, the repaired ship set off. Waves crashed along the side of the ship, as if the ship was a puny toy. 'Don't worry, Ben. These storms pass really quickly,' the captain reassured.

Unfortunately, the captain was wrong. The raging storm lasted for hours. Lightning bolts and thunder could be seen and heard from miles away. Ben took shelter in his cabin, soaking wet. The moment that Ben thought he was safe, disaster struck. A strong wave hit the bow of the ship, and water started to leak in. 'Oh no,' said Joe, looking distressed.

Just when everything seemed that it was the end, a stroke of genius hit Ben's mind. 'Joe, I know! Remember the crates at my cabin?' said Ben, hoping that Joe would agree with his idea. 'No, but how do we get near that opening? The water is coming in at tremendous speed. We'd get knocked over the second we approach it! And how do we stick it?'

'Just come with me,' replied Ben calmly. Joe had no other choice but to follow his faithful friend.

They carried two big chunks of wood and marched to the damaged spot. Water was flooding and splashing in violently, like a swarm of people trying to escape a fire exit. 'Nails?' Asked Joe, confused. 'Yes,' replied Ben. 'We need to work now.' Ben and Joe took some nails and a hammer, and they got to work.

They tried to go near the flooding point, with Ben in front and Joe behind. After many attempts, they fixed the nails in place. Then Joe grabbed the hammer, charged and banged vigorously. Mission accomplished!

They returned to China. The emperor requested to see Ben and Joe in private.

'As a reward for your bravery, you two will serve me and be known as my personal generals. You two have made history.' For a moment there was complete silence.

Then Ben and Joe bursted into tears of happiness.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages: Life on the Ming Treasure Fleet

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Muk, Tuen Callie – 10

I stared up at the great ship, which belonged to the Ming Treasure Fleet. How I longed to be up on its deck, breathing the fresh sea air and staring down at the rolling blue waves. But I was too young to be allowed in the fleet. I watched enviously as men piled into the ships, wishing I was one of them. I was watching so intently that I hadn't heard the sound of footsteps coming up behind me. "Hello, child," boomed a deep voice behind me. I whipped around to see the great General Zheng He standing behind me. Shock pulsed through me, for General Zheng was the one who commanded the fleet. I bowed in deepest respect, still startled by his appearance. "It's a pleasure to meet you, sir." I stammered nervously. Zheng turned to the ships. "You want to go too, don't you?" He said suddenly. "Y-yes." I replied. Narrowing his eyes, Zheng walked around me slowly, studying me and making himself seem even more imposing than before. "You have broad shoulders and strong hands." he commented after walking a full circle around me. "Perfect for a sailor." I gaped at him as he concluded, "You shall join me on the ship. Now come!" I quickly hurried after Zheng as he turned and walked onto the ship, not believing my luck. "Wow. I'm on the Ming Treasure Fleet!" I murmured to myself as I climbed onboard.

A few days later...

I hurried across the deck. It had been a few days after I'd joined the fleet. The ship was amazing. It had so much treasure and precious goods that it could last me two lifetimes! As soon as I came on-board, Zheng had me working hard to prove my worth. It's so great up here feeling the wind and looking up at the sky. I feel relaxed and happy on this ship. I'm glad Zheng let me join.

"LAND AHEAD!" yelled a voice. I looked over the rail and saw a large patch of green land. I looked on nervously as the ship slowed and stopped near the coast of the little island. Zheng appeared near the head of the ship and told us, "We're not sure if the people who live here are friendly or not, so we'll approach warily and be ready for anything." Then he stepped off the boat, right after telling some sailors to get the treasure ready. I followed him, along with some of my fellow sailors. Zheng came walking alongside me. "Be ready for anything, child. Be ready to fight if needed." he whispered in my ear before moving on.

As we went deeper into the island, two men came running out. They wore friendly, peaceful expressions on their faces as they greeted us warmly. "Hello," The first one said in a strange accent, "Welcome to Java! You are from China?" Zheng dipped his head politely. "Yes, and we come in peace. We come to give magnificent treasures to you!" He said respectfully. The second one beckoned us to follow them. "We show you Serang, our home. You come in peace, we shall give you peace!" They went off swiftly into the trees, leaving us to follow them hurriedly.

After a bit of walking, we finally arrived in Serang. "We are in Serang now!" The men exclaimed grandly. It was beautiful and amazing. Tall buildings and trees were everywhere, decorated beautifully with lights and sparkling rivers. "Wow," I heard Zheng whisper beside me as the men led us into Serang. Zheng stepped forward to talk to the men. "We like your home and your island, and you are peaceful and friendly men. To thank you for being so kind, we shall give you gifts!" he said. The first man looked surprised. "Of course. But it's nothing really. We didn't do anything special." Zheng smiled, and waved a hand. Two sailors came up, hands loaded with precious treasures. Another sailor followed, dragging a treasure chest behind him. The island men gaped at them in shock.

"W-we can't accept this!" one of them cried. "I-it's--" Zheng cut him off. "Please take it." he said quietly. The men looked at each other, then nodded. "Thank you, so much!" They cheered as the sailors dropped their load at their feet. Zheng stepped back and gestured for the sailors to go back to the ship, leaving the men to marvel over their treasure. They went back onto the ship, and to their surprise the men followed. As Zheng and his crew climbed onboard, the men below yelled after them, "Thank you for your visit! Thank you for your gifts! You will always be welcome here!" Then the ship started, and off they went. I watched the island get smaller and smaller in the distance, my heart warmed by the men's gratitude.

A few days later...

I woke from my slumber. Unsure of what had awoken me, I scrambled out of bed and went up to the deck. A storm was raging. Hard. Rain lashed at my face as thunder rumbled and lightning flashed. The ship rocked violently. Suddenly, I saw a dark shape emerging from the darkness ahead, heading straight for the ship. It took me a moment to realize it was another ship, and so I yelled, "SHIP AHEAD!" Soon many sailors arrived on deck, and Zheng stood beside me. "Good sighting." he murmured quietly. "Go get ready for battle. Those are pirates. Hostile pirates coming to steal our gold." Then he raised his voice and shouted to the other sailors, "PREPARE FOR BATTLE!"

And so we did. By the time the pirates came near our ship, we were ready. Our cannons blasted the pirate ship, blowing up bits of it. The pirates aimed their cannons back at us, rocking our ship. Then the pirates swung a rope across to our ship and climbed along it. We ran forward to meet them, and as the first of the pirates emerged, we swung our swords and shot our guns at them. I carried a long, silver sword, cutting and stabbing at the pirates in front of me, feeling more exhilarated than ever before. The pirates fell back as we fought, but more kept coming. The cries and yells of battle filled my ears. I slashed my sword swiftly at a pirate, watching in triumph as he collapsed at my feet. Slowly, more pirates fell back. We were winning! The crowd thinned until only a few pirates remained, who soon fled back to their ship. But we weren't letting them go that easily. We ran to the cannons and fired at them relentlessly. "Nobody dares to steal our treasure!" Zheng yelled. "We must show them that they cannot steal our treasure so easily!"

The pirates' ship was ruined. Fire burned on their decks, and huge holes covered their ship from the cannonballs we shot. A few more cannonballs and they would sink. But Zheng told us to stop. "We shall show them mercy today, but if they come back, we will destroy them." he said. We watched as the ship sailed away, until the ship came close to a small island. The ship rocked violently and sank, but we spotted many pirates appearing in the water and swimming onto the shore of the island. *They'll survive.* I thought. Zheng came up behind me. "You did a good job fighting, child. But it's about time you got off." I stared at him in surprise, but I understood. I was only a young person, and spending time with Ming Treasure Fleet, on the same ship as General Zheng, was already a great opportunity. I did not belong here now, but perhaps I could become a sailor when I grew older.

A few days later...

We arrived back in China. It was my time to leave this magnificent ship. Deep sadness lingered in me as I got off, Zheng at my side. As I stepped back on land, Zheng said, "You have been a great sailor. It has been an honour to sail with you, but now you must go. Perhaps one day we can sail together again." I nodded, filled with emotion as he turned and went back onto the ship. I watched as the ship sailed away into the distance, and I knew I would never forget the wonderful experience I had on the Ming Treasure Fleet.

The Adventures of the Ming Treasure Fleet

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Tsang, Bernice – 10

Sakura felt seasick – *again*. She had told her family many times that she couldn't be a proper pirate because she *knew* she would get seasick. She hugged her sides. Sakura was pretty sure the pirates on board were thoroughly annoyed with constant her seasickness, but the captain insisted she stay. She was also pretty sure that if her father hadn't told the captain and "convinced" him to let Sakura come on board, she wouldn't even be here. For her father was the great pirate Cobarato. She sighed, wondering how she had wound up with such a *stubborn* parent. Sakura went above the deck and leaned on one of the rails on the side. Salt water splashed onto her arms. The wind whipped a few stray strands of hair from her messy bun onto her face. The ship was in a frenzy, and new recruits were coming on board every minute or so. Sakura watched the other scared sailors who were going to leave with her, but then she spotted a familiar face – Alara, her childhood friend. "My god, it's so *noisy* in here!" Alara shouted, with her hands pressed over her ears. Sakura couldn't help but agree. Alara's pretty green eyes darted from man to man, glaring at them. She rolled her eyes, and turned to Sakura. "They should be readying the ship now." Sakura nodded. "Yeah, sadly. I don't even wanna be here..." Soon after, the ship pulled up its anchor and gently departed from the dock.

Alara was sleeping when the whole ship lurched forward. Her eyes snapped open and she tucked herself under the covers. At first, she didn't hear the knocking coming from the door, but it quickly got louder and faster, as if the knocker was getting annoyed. "Coming!" Alara jumped out of bed and thrust open the door. A boy greeted her with a nod. "Max..." "Hello Alara, may I come in?" Max quickly made himself comfortable in Alara's extra bed. "Max! You're making the bed dirty!" Alara chided her brother. Max shrugged. "So what? Nobody uses this anyway." Alara clenched her teeth. "Just get off!" "Fine!" Max stood up. Alara thought, "*Why is he even here? What does he want from me? Is he just here to be an annoyance?*" "Hello?" Max waved his hand over her face. "Alara? You okay?" Alara shook herself from her thoughts. "I'm...okay." Max frowned, like he knew something *wasn't* okay, but then the door opened. It was Sakura, with a smile on her face. "Hey, come up to the deck. We've arrived."

Glittering lakes glistened in the sunlight. Tall trees covered the country. There were crowds of waving people at the side of the ocean, taking a look at the giant ship. The ship stopped at the dock and the people gathered around it. Pirates taking all sorts of treasures from the ship grinned, showing the people their crooked and missing teeth. "Where are we?" Alara asked, waving to one of the dark natives. "India," Sakura whispered back, smiling at the people, "We're giving the treasure to the people here. The Emperor thinks they will make a good ally." Alara understood why the Emperor wanted this country as an ally. The people were nice, strong, and seemed easy to control. Sakura nudged her arm. "Come on, Alara. We gotta go."

It would have been nice to walk around the new place with Sakura and her brother – except for the fact that they had to carry hundreds of pounds of gold. Alara muttered, "Do we *have* to carry these?" She lifted her sack, which packed full of gold coins. "I dunno, but it's heavy." Max was sweating a lot too. The

three grunted in agreement. Alara glanced around. “How far is this place? We’ve been trudging through this *terribly hot* country for *hours*. Where’s the—” Suddenly a yellow dart buried itself into her neck. Alara’s eyes rolled up into her head and she collapsed on the floor. Another dart flew straight at Max. Max fainted and fell down next to Alara. “ALARA! MAX!” Sakura screamed, as a third dart stung her in the neck. She collapsed on the cobblestone floor.

“Wake up!” Sakura heard a voice next to her, whispering harshly. “Sakura!” Sakura slowly opened her eyes, her mind foggy. “Wha—what?” She saw Max on the floor next to her. Sakura took in her surroundings. They seemed like they were in a dark cave. A dark cave with no exit. Pain seared into her neck, where the dart had landed. “Wh—where’s Alara?” Sakura looked around. Max’s voice was shaky. “They t—took her. I don’t know where t—they went, b—but...” He looked at Sakura. “Wh—what are they going to do with her?” She didn’t know how to answer. Her friend had been taken away and she didn’t know where or why. All Sakura could think of was that she would die in this ugly cave in the middle of who—knew—where, far, far away from home.

Elsewhere, Alara also woke up. She didn’t know where she was, who her kidnappers were, and what she was doing here. She only knew that she still had the gold beside her, and Max and Sakura were not here. She wanted to cry, but she couldn’t make a sound. Her kidnappers had put a gag in her mouth. Suddenly a muffled sound came from somewhere in the cave. “I’m telling you, the girl is one of the pirates from the Ming Treasure Fleet! She can tell us where all the gold is and then we can get as much as we want!” Another voice grunted in the darkness. “How can we be sure, Jerry?”. The one called Jerry sighed in disappointment. “You *have* to believe me, Nick!” *Nick?... Which meant the other guy was Cousin Jerry?* Alara thought. “Hey, Nick? You better check this out.” Jerry and Nick stepped into view. Jerry opened the bag full of treasures, which they were *planning* to give to the Indians. He poured it out, and gold bars and jewellery clattered on to the floor. Alara tried to shout at them, managing a muffled noise through her gag, which got their attention. “The girl wakes. Tell us where the rest of the gold is and I’ll let you go.” Nick whipped out a knife and walked towards Alara, pressing his knife under her chin when he reached her. “Jerry, help me remove the gag!” Jerry stumbled over and took off the gag. Finally, Alara could speak. “I’m Alara, your cousin! What are you doing?!”

“Alara? So that other boy is Max? I suppose the girl is his girlfriend?” Alara shouted, “Let me go!” Nick pouted. “What’s wrong, Alara? Why won’t you tell us where the gold is? I suppose we’ll just have to kill you if you don’t tell us where the rest of the gold is.” He raised his knife to Alara’s face, and lightly dragged his knife on her face, leaving a line of blood on her face. She cringed in pain, but there was nothing she could do. “Why would you kill your *own family* in *cold blood*? What *happened*?”

Nick snarled. “Poverty happened! I need money to pay for food for me and Jerry, and I don’t have it! Because *your family didn’t give me money to live my life*.”

“Do you *want to know what happened to my mother? She died. Because she didn’t have enough money to buy enough food for herself. She gave us all the food. She died because she didn’t eat enough. And you! You could’ve helped! You were rich. Yet you wouldn’t even donate a dollar. Do you wish to die?*” He dug the knife deeper into her throat. “You can die now. You wanted to be free. Here I am, giving

you a chance to be free *forever*.” He could have killed her if he wished, if Sakura and Max hadn’t chosen that time to suddenly burst into the room. But in the moment of panic, Nick thrust his knife into Alara’s gut.

Sakura screamed. Nothing seemed important now because her friend, Alara, was already half-dead. She screamed at the bandits, “YOU IDIOTS!” She found a rock and threw it at the shorter bandit’s head. He passed out cold. “YOU TOO!” She charged at the remaining bandit. “NO!” he yelled, before ducking out the way. “I won’t let you take her until one of you tells me the location of the ship!” He pointed at them with his knife. “I can kill Alara, you know. I can kill you all!” He looked like a maniac. “NOW!” He snarled. “Never!” yelled Max. “Well, say goodbye then.” He threw his knife at Alara. Alara screamed. “GET OUT OF HERE! GO! LEAVE ME HERE! PROMISE!” Alara was sobbing; tears streaked down her face. The knife had impaled her gut, and blood was gushing out. Alara smiled one more time. “Goodbye.” Sakura sobbed, but then she yelled, “DO YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH?!” She charged at Nick with a sharp rock. She stabbed him in the stomach, and said in his ear, “You’ll be going to the place where criminals die and receive eternal punishment. It’s complimentary.” The bandit bit the dust. Max looked at her with wide eyes. “You...you killed two people!” Sakura glanced over her shoulder, looking at the knocked out bandit. “Nah. Not exactly. But for Alara.” Max’s eyes were red. “Yeah. For Alara.” And together they walked out of the cave.

Weeks later, the expedition of the Ming Treasure Voyages were over. Max and Sakura came home with many stories to tell. But they both never forgot the cave, where Alara died, and their promise. On the last day of the voyage, Max and Sakura took Alara’s things and tossed them into the ocean. They remembered their promise, told stories about Alara, and laughed during the sunset. They looked at the sinking possessions of Alara. “Promise.”

The Adventure with Pirates

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Tsui, Eunice – 10

A long, long time ago in the Ming dynasty, I was once a young voyager on a fleet of ships that belonged to the emperor. We sailed the seven seas, carrying cargo filled with gold, silk and other precious treasures to give away as gifts to the people of the new lands we discovered during our journey. It was all good until one day an unforeseeable thunderstorm sank all our ships in the middle of the ocean. I was the sole survivor, adrift on the wreckage of the ship for few days, until one hopeless and foggy day, through the thick fog came a humongous ship. It was not just any other ship. It was the ship of the almighty and most feared pirates of the seas, the Sharks. They were a band of pirates sailing the seven seas with the sole purpose of finding land and loot. Some said they had even been to the end of the world in the mission to find treasures. Everyone feared them for they had attacked every village or city they ever visited. The military forces tried everything to eradicate the pirates, but it was useless because the pirates were too strong. Each of them was highly armed with cutlasses and swords and all new types of gizmos that were highly dangerous.

The pirates were notorious for their cold-blooded killing wherever they went. That was why they were called the Sharks. I didn't expect they would save me at all. To my surprise, they threw me a lifeline and lowered a rope ladder on the side of their ship. But I was unsure whether I should get on board the pirate ship. I was not sure what would happen to me on that ship. If I were to be enslaved to the pirates, I would rather drown and die in the big ocean. I could not make up my mind and I was losing my strength, but just as I was about to sink into the depths of the ocean, a strong pair of arms pulled me up onto a boat. The man who saved me took me back to their ship. I was petrified, and my legs were shaking with fear. I tried to run but my legs were glued to the deck. Who wouldn't be scared if he was surrounded by a band of pirates? Not to mention they were the Sharks! Suddenly, I was pushed towards a pole. As my back hit the hard wood, I felt a knife pressed against my throat. I screamed, "What do you want? Leave me alone!" Just then the captain of the ship spoke up, "Oui madame vous allez voyager avec nous maintenant, s'il vous plait soyez tranquille." I was so confused. It seemed, they were from somewhere far away from China and did not speak our language.

From that day onwards, all my days were spent on the pirate ship with them. I didn't know why but the pirates did not treat me badly. Rather they were very kind to me. They taught me their language, which I later found out was French. As time went by, I adapted to their lifestyle and treated them like family. I soon became fluent in French so that we could communicate. I started training to be like them. I learnt to be brave and ruthless, strong and ferocious. Before I knew it, I was fighting alongside with them to claim loot and land. They taught me the tricks of the trade. I also learnt how to sail and keep the ship in mint condition. They always said, "You only live once, so cherish it and live your life to the fullest!" and so I did. Those were the best moments of my life. Gradually, I forgot about my family and warm cosy home.

Some years later, however, when we were attacking a village, I saw a family huddled close together whimpering. Suddenly, the sweet memories of my family and loved ones came flooding back to me. Oh, how I missed them so much. I desperately wanted to go home but I knew that they wouldn't let me. The pirates had grown quite fond of me. If I left, they would definitely think that I was a traitor! I was stuck. But one day I gathered up my courage and asked for my freedom. They were shocked at first, but in the end they agreed to let me go. I was ashamed because I owed them my life, yet I was relieved that I could finally get back home. I said a loving farewell to the pirates, and that was the end of my fabulous adventure with them. Though I never saw them again, they will always be in my heart and I will never forget the adventures that we had together. Adieu mes amis pirates!

Horns of Dilemma on The Majestic

Pui Ching Primary School, Au, Nga Wun Adelaide – 11

The weather was much better than I had expected. I whistled a joyful tune while carrying Chinese herbal medicines in my rucksack. Tangerine peels and pumpkin seeds rocked back and forth on my wooden cabinet as we sailed on our ship, The Majestic.

The Captain was Zheng He. I couldn't exaggerate how respectable he was. I grew up in Beijing with him. All I had ever seen him do was donate money to the poor while offering words of wisdom to those in need. He was also the one who encouraged me to become a medic. He was a captain, a mentor and a confidant. The emperor ordered master Zheng He to take the crew and me to Vietnam, in order to trade goods with them. The emperor wanted us to disguise ourselves as pirates, so no one would come steal our goods. I guess you could say we tried to do 'good' for the world, while pretending to be pirates.

My job on the ship was to heal the sick and injured. Be it beggars, common people, officials or kings, I treated them all just the same. It's not for the money or reputation, but to feed my dream since I was a child. It all started like this: A deadly plague, killed thousands in my village, including my whole family. I was lucky to survive but I was so depressed that I felt dead inside. As my broken heart healed, I realized that the problem was that there weren't enough doctors. That's when I made a vow – "I will work hard to become a doctor. No one in my presence should ever die the way my family did."

We arrived in Vietnam. The king welcomed us into his palace. We had a hot bath, some new clothes, a scrumptious meal and received luxurious goods in return from him. We hopped on our ship once again and started sailing back to Beijing.

Not long after, another pirate fleet named "Toxic Dragon" came out to attack us. An epic battle, unlike anything I had seen before, began. Men fought, pouncing onto one another, stabbing and killing. The smell of blood, sweat and gunpowder overwhelmed my senses. While the battle surged on, I stood there motionless, in the corner with fearful eyes. Slowly and slowly, I saw my friends fall to their death. We were going to lose. Zheng He was fighting the leader of "Toxic Dragon", a muscular smug-faced man. His name was Gilch.

I wanted to help him, but the thought of hurting anyone with my hands made my limbs freeze. I felt like I had no control over my limbs. I stood there like a brick. Emotionless. That's when I caught a glimpse of a seriously injured man, crouching on the ground in pain. At once, I rushed to him, carrying him on my arms back to my cabin. His nose was broken, and it seemed that his ribs had cracked. I thought, "No matter what, I have to heal him.."

I put him on the bed, and realized that he was still conscious. The minute I washed the blood on his face, I quivered. It was Gilch. Right then, one of our crew dragged Zheng He with a swollen eye and broken fingers into my cabin. Even though he wasn't seriously injured, my heart sank. Seeing your captain, who has been so helpful and caring to you, a person you see as your idol hurt, how would you feel?

There are ups and downs in life and this one was one of my hardest times. I had to choose: help my enemy who was seriously hurt and nearly dying or help my mentor who was less injured. I wanted to save both but I didn't have enough time.

I looked up at the clouds and made a wish, "Please, don't let the sun go down, I need time!" Time did not stop for me so I used my gut feeling to make the choice: to help Toxic Dragon's captain, Gilch. And for Zheng, he was suddenly losing a lot of blood but I knew deeply inside me, that Zheng He would have agreed with my choice.

Word got out that Gilch was badly hurt, and that the healer of The Majestic was healing him. The minute they heard this, the crew members of the Toxic Dragon put down their swords. When they came to my cabin, our crew were dumbstruck about Zheng's body but the Toxic Dragons confronted them in peace and thanked me for saving their captain.

The emperor understood why I chose our enemy over Zheng and was thrilled about the successful trading. However, the emperor also learnt that he shouldn't let us disguise as pirates next time in case the same thing happens! The Toxic Dragons were not punished at all since they were incredibly good sailors. The emperor gave them new names to honor them and they were the main sailors of our fleet in our second voyage. However, the happiest thing that happened in this journey was that I chose the right choice and I learnt that you cannot save everyone, no matter how hard you try.

The Sea Serpent and the Red and the Diary

Pui Ching Primary School, Chan, Man Hei Hayley – 12

Day One

Hi! This is the first time to write this journal so it might be a bit weird. I am the pirate in Zheng's crew, The Red. I am not sure I can tell you my real name now. And you must remember that my favourite tea is pu'er tea! Today was fantastic! Our captain, Zheng usually gives away gold but today we finally received something worth going out to the sea for! I was sitting on the chair and daydreaming about my imaginary boyfriend, Kan.

Then I suddenly heard Zheng yell, "All aboard! We have arrived at another island. This one looks fabulous! Red, follow me!"

I packed up my things fast and followed him to the island.

We passed through trees and bushes then we saw a small village filled with people and joy. The villagers were really kind. They even have a party for us! And the greatest part, we received a silver egg from them!

Day Two

Today was the worst day ever! You remember that I received a silver egg yesterday? It was all fine and the sun was shining on our flag. I was having a dream about my Kan last night when I suddenly heard someone yell, "Oh no! The egg has disappeared! Call Captain Zheng immediately!"

I was really shocked when I heard this. I went out of my cabin and a few minutes later, Captain Zheng arrived. The crew yelled at him, including me.

"Stop!" yelled Captain Zheng. We all stopped yelling and looked at him.

"Well," He continued, "Don't forget what the king said. The king told us to go to different islands and make friends! That's why we are here. Don't think about the egg. Get back to work!"

We walked back to our positions and started to work. I walked back to my cabin and thought, "Oh yeah, I will follow what our 'great' captain's idea." Then I sat down and thought about what happened to the egg and what the villagers said on the island.

Day Three

It's a bit weird. I just found out that some sailors disappeared! I looked for them everywhere over the ship but still couldn't find them. I didn't tell Captain Zheng about this but I told my friend Gon. He was the type of the boy that always has a book on his hand. He didn't want to join the crew but the captain thought he was really clever and he had persuaded him for three days until he joined the crew. I had told him we will discuss the sailors disappearing thing in my cabin tonight.

"Hmm.....Red, do you think this happened because of that egg disappearance?" Gon asked me.

"I don't know. Why?" I asked him.

"I had read a book before about magical creatures and the sea serpent is one of them. You remember? It was really sunny that day. Almost every magical creature is born on sunny days."

I closed my eyes and started to think about what Gon said. Suddenly, the ship shook. I got out of the cabin and looked what happened outside. Gon followed me.

I couldn't believe my eyes! I saw a gigantic blue sea serpent attacking pirates everywhere! Lightning was everywhere. The sky was crying. Raindrops fell on our cheeks. It was really messy. Captain Zheng waved his sword to attack the sea serpent. I asked Captain Zheng What happened.

"We don't know. I think it is a sea serpent." Captain Zheng replied.

Then he started to attack the sea serpent with his mighty sword again. It seems like that the sea serpent knew that Captain Zheng was attacking him. He lifted his tail and tried to sweep Zheng away. Luckily, Zheng jumped over his tail then he lifted his sword and stabbed the sea serpent. But the sea serpent wasn't hurt. Sailors started to throw rocks. Pirates started to stabbed the sea serpent. And some of them threw their favourite grape wine. Everyone was really sad that he ate our sailors. But everything was hopeless

When I threw my favourite pu'er tea at it, I spotted a red spot on its blue, shiny head... Without a thought, I threw the box of tea to the red scale. The next second I saw that the sea serpent uttered a dismal howl. The sea serpent's weakness was that red spot. Then I jumped as high as I could. I took Zheng's sword and run all over his long body. I went closer to that scale and at last I reached it. But it was really hard to kill. I stopped running and jumping. Then I realized a huge tail was in front of my face. And whoopee! I landed on my head. I felt really bad. Then I saw Zheng's hand.

He said, "We are going to kill that monster together!" His words gave me a lot of courage. Then I grabbed my own sword from the cabin. First we walked in zigzag to distract the sea serpents. We held our sword tightly and climbed on to his neck in two different sides. Other sailors on the ground took their own weapons and attacked the sea serpent immediately. Captain and I held the sea serpent's ear and jumped on his huge head. We signalled each other and lifted our swords and bam! The sea serpent died. Captain Zheng gave me its red scale as a gift. You can know my name now. My name is Cetus. It means a sea serpent.

Adventure on Dead Island

Pui Ching Primary School, Cheng, Hiu Ming Veron – 11

“Alright, fellas! Let’s pack the booty and set sail!” Ying, captain of the Ming Voyagers, exclaimed. Ying wore creepy and dirty pirate clothes, he had red hair and devilish eyes. Boy, was he terrifying! His scars on his face frightens the most of people, rumor has it that his scars were made by his deepest enemies. They carried gold, silk anything what nice millionaires would give! Moreover, they’re giving it to sailors as gifts! They made new relationships with a variety of countries. But for this journey was definitely the most terrifying, heartbreaking journey of them all.

They had to set sail to a two villages they have never been before. It was Kalami Island and Dead Island. The sky was as grey as an elephant.

“I think a storm is coming...” Ying said.

“But Cap,” Jin said, “we’ve checked the weather today, the sun shone very brightly just now. Then that means—”

Before he finished his sentence. A giant octopus-headed sea monster glared at them with rage. It had human-looking arms and legs and a pair of devilish wings on its back and tentacles surrounding its supposed mouth. It was called a Cthulhu.

“Duck!” Ying commanded everyone to take out their golden pistols, “Fire!”

Some of the crew loaded up the cannons and some shot the Cthulhu.

“It’s not working!” Ying then climbed up to the Crow’s Nest. Bang! The Cthulhu eyes went red to white. It slowly sank down the ocean and never returned. The crew cheered joyfully as they have defeated the creature. Then they quickly gave the treasures to Kalami Islanders and set sail to their next stop.

“Our Yardarm is quite crooked and some parts in the ship are damaged...hold on... Dead Island is in front of us!” They showed the crew around the village and showed them a place to stay. Since the ship needed time to be repaired. Ying got to meet the emperor there.

The ship was repaired and new. When they were about to set sail, they heard a loud horn blowing. Ying couldn’t believe his eyes, it was the Dead Island’s emperor! His face wasn’t full of joy anymore; it was just full of anger and hatred. Ying was shockingly speechless to see the princess standing next to the emperor. If you don’t know who the princess is, let me tell you a tale about this bitter-sweet love story.

It all started when Ying was just 16, training for voyages and mastering naval combat. While he was training with his father, he accidently hurt himself. Father rushed him to the hospital as soon as possible. When he was still healing from his wounds, he met this kind nurse called Delliah. She would usually talk to him in her free time. Ying started to enjoy her presence. One starry night, Ying finally had enough courage to confess to Delliah. Then, they became the sweetest couple in town. Unfortunately, after a few months, Ying had to continue following his father’s footsteps.

“Don’t worry,” he said, “I’ll come back”

Then he left, leaving Delliah alone.

“Delliah?” Ying said, seeing the love of his life.

“I loved you!” Delliah shouted, “You said you would come back for me!”

“When you left my father got terribly ill. I stole medicine from the hospital and ended up in jail I arrived to Dead Island three nights before you. Last night, I told the emperor you are a traitor.”

“Now... you’ll know what’s like to be heartbroken.”

Everything snapped back to reality when Delliah fired an arrow straight at Ying’s face. Luckily, Ying’s heart wasn’t shattered enough, just in time to dodge the arrow. The scene was terrific! Sounds of gun shots, innocent screams, shattering buildings spread across the island. The Dead Island soldier’s faces were so full of hate; they didn’t hesitate to fight for their emperor. The Ming Voyagers didn’t give up as they used all their might to leave the island as soon as possible. They didn’t stop until the sound of horns faded away. They reached in the middle of the ocean, not knowing where they were; around them were just fog and silence. Ying couldn’t concentrate. He was still analyzing her words. Then, he stayed in his bed.

The next morning, Ying got up early. The weather was still like a dust bunny. He slowly crept to the front deck, thinking again. Suddenly, he heard a sound. It sounded like the Dead Islander’s horn! Ying swiftly called everyone to prepare for battle. The loud raging thunder began the battle. The battle between good and evil commenced! Cannons were fired, sounds of swords clanging and slashing. Nobody stopped nor surrendered. The sea was raging; it rocked both boats with ease. Delliah shot almost a quarter of the Ming Voyagers. She took every chance to kill Ying. Delliah aimed at him but shot Jin instead. Ying’s blood

started to boil as he pointed his rifle straight at Delliah's face Bang! It all happened so fast. Regret and guiltiness stabbed Ying in the heart. Seeing Delliah's whited eyes made his body numb. The Ming Voyagers called the captain to find shelter, but all he did was lying on the floor. Full of tears. He opened his eyes, the sounds of doom disappeared and the rushing waves returned. Only he and half of the crew were injured. "We beat them, Cap..." crew member Chee said.

Ying teared once again as he realized that the Ming Voyagers had done so much for him and he was just sobbing about shooting the love of his life. They returned back to the Ming Dynasty. Everyone was thrilled to see them. The crew hugged their parents tight, but Ying was all alone. This tale definitely deserves to be recorded in history, as Ying promises to him that he could never love another again.

Our Journey to a Secret

Pui Ching Primary School, Ching, Hin Shing Bernard – 10

Hi, I am Leung Hao, Captain of The United. I have dedicated my life to give food, water and money to the poor people. Come with me to join one of our most exciting journey. We were heading to our ship. We stepped on the ship with our right feet because we thought it would be lucky.

We needed to go to Jolia Island to find our enemy Lao Kiu to reveal his secret.

“Ahoy, Matey,” yelled the quarter master, Leung.

After all of us stepped in, the crew started to chat.

“Avast ye,” I shouted, “Lots of people need us. We must do it.”

The helmsman, Lee, steered the wheel and off we went. The sea was calm and quiet that day.

Suddenly, a man dressed in old clothes jumped on our ship and attacked us. All of us took out our cutlasses and attacked back. It was a tough battle. At last, we tied him up and I yelled, “Get rid of him!” So, Leung pushed him into the rough sea.

But as soon as Leung killed the man, the sea brewed up a storm. Huge waves splashed on us. Lee tried to control the ship but he could not. Suddenly, a sea serpent appeared. We used our cannons to shoot it but it just swallowed the cannon balls and grew bigger. So, Lee steered our ship away and we escaped with great difficulty.

We disembarked on Inohect Island. We knew that there were a lot of robbers wanting to steal gold, so it was time for some work. We hid in the ship to observe the surroundings. We saw thieves that stole food, water and money from the poor people. We charged out and used our pistols to shoot the thieves but all of them missed. We used the last pack of our bullets and we hit the target at last. The thieves died. We gave the things that had been stolen back to the poor people.

An old lady thanked us and gave us some spears in return. “These special spears have unpredictable powers,” she whispered in my ear.

We started our journey again. Suddenly, we saw Lao Kiu and his gang. As we were about to start a fight, there came a storm. Lao’s gang was scared, so they turned and ran away. We chased after them and used our cannons to shoot them. But they used magic to take the cannon balls away. Now we knew that there was a sorcerer in their gang, we had to be more careful. I asked Leung, Biao and Yeung observe the surroundings. They each came back with information. Leung said he heard that Lao was actually my father. Biao said it was true and the only reason Lao wanted to attack me was because he wanted me to join him. Yeung said it was all true and he even heard that the sorcerer was actually my uncle.

I was so shocked. Three years ago, I thought my dad and my uncle had died. I had to find out what happened. We followed them until we arrived at Jolia Island. This time I asked Lee, Wong and Yao to sneak in and spy on them. They came back and told me that my Dad’s base was The Lava, but we needed to use a password to get in.

I remembered when I was young, Dad always said, “Haga Yajia!”

So, when Lee and I reached the gate at The Lava, I said, “Haga Yajia!” The gate opened. We needed to sneak in in disguise. Just as we were thinking of what to do, the spears glowed and changed us into servant costumes. We joined the gang and served them food.

Lao said, “Thank you, my dear dear son.” I was shocked at that moment. I thought my uncle had used magic to see through our brains, but I did not say a word. When we went back to our room, Lee told me that Lao says this to every servant.

Just then, Lao’s guards knocked on our door and asked for our names. We quickly thought of a name to tell them and they went away. A moment later, they came back and asked us to follow them. They took us to Lao. He asked, “Is your name Lei Ming?” That was the name I told the guards. “Yes,” I answered. “Do you know who I am?” Lao asked. “Lao Kiu.” I answered. “Send them to the dungeon immediately!” Lao roared and the guards dragged us to the dungeon. On the way to the dungeon, Lee whispered, “no one here knows his name.”

When we arrived at the dungeon, there was nothing except darkness.

“I am Leung Hao!” I shouted.

I was not sure if they heard me, but a moment later, Lao came in.

“Leung,” a heard a voice, “I’m your father. My name is Leung Hang.” At that time, I smiled.

“Can you come with us?” I said and remembered the old lady who said, “These special spears have unpredictable powers.” So I took out the spears. The weapons glowed so bright and Dad answered “Yes, yes...” as he changed into an angel.

“Hao,” he said, “I love you. Please take care.”

“What is going on?” I asked and saw Uncle above Dad.

But there was no answer. Suddenly, Lee and I flew up and fell back onto The United.

“Are you guys okay?” Leung asked.

“Fine.” I said.

So the secret had been revealed. Lao (Leung) was my father. He died and transformed into a ghost to find me. But during the search, he stole things from people and became our enemy. And at the moment we united, his wish had come true so he could go to heaven with my uncle.

Dad, I miss you!

The Magic Sword

Pui Ching Primary School, Chiu, King Chi Josh – 11

On a bright sunny day long ago in China, a band of muscular men marched towards the palace, but they weren't ordinary type of people you would see on the street, they were pirates! The pirates respectfully bowed and spoke in unison, "Greetings, your majesty." The king was shocked at the pirates' arrival.

"Who are you and what do you want?" He shouted.

"We are a band of pirates named Ming Voyage. We have brought some gifts for you." they said.

The king looked at them in disbelief and so the leader of the pirates, Captain Chan began to tell the King the story of his past.

Captain Chan used to be a cruel pirate who took pleasure in looting people. Until one day, everything changed. While he was strolling down the street looking for people to plunder, he heard a baby crying loudly in the distance. Driven by curiosity, he followed the noise and found an old rickety hut. He peered through the window and saw a poor family with nearly nothing to eat except some stale bread. He was shocked by the sight and realised that while he was living a luxurious life by stealing people's belongings, a lot of people were living in despair! He felt ashamed and swore never to rob a single person ever again. Instead, he gathered his crew to give away their treasure to the neediest so that they can bring happiness to others. He called his team Ming Voyage.

As soon as the Captain finished telling his heart touching story, the pirates started taking dozens of gold blocks out of a beautiful silk pouch. They asked the king to help them distribute the treasure to the people in need living across the kingdom. The king was touched by Captain Chan's story and felt happy to help. After leaving the palace, the pirates went to board their ship. They looked at their ship and said, "What a magnificent beauty Theora is! She shall take us to Joseon."

And so, they began their journey. On their way to Joseon, they faced enormous waves as high as mountains, large fishes that could swallow a person in one gulp and evil pirates who wanted to sink their ship, but each time the pirates fended them off bravely. When they were about to reach Joseon, they saw a gigantic snake like monster with tentacles flaying terrorizing a coastal village.

"I'm going to stuff that freaking monster into Davy Jones' Locker!" Captain Chan shouted.

He grabbed his finest cutlass and prepared to fight the monster, which was a Leviathan. The pirates blasted cannonballs at the monster, but the monster's skin was so thick that nothing they used could penetrate through it. Instead, the cannonballs annoyed the monster. The leviathan finally turned its attention away from the village and at the pirate ship. It swung its long and powerful tentacles at the pirate ship and tried to tear it apart. The pirates did their best to fend it off, but it was no use. The monster was simply too strong for them. Just when all hope seemed lost, Captain Chan remembered that the splendid samurai sword he looted from a Japanese ship when he was a malicious teenager. He dashed into his room to grab the sword and drew it from its scabbard. As soon as Captain Chan took out the sword, it began to

glow. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning hit the sword. Sparks started dancing around the sword. Captain Chan was stunned. Realizing that it was no ordinary sword, he pointed the sword at the monster and shot out a lightning flash towards the leviathan. The leviathan, blasted by the force of lightening directed towards it, fell back and disappeared back into the sea.

Captain Chan knew that hurting a sea monster brought back luck. Just then, a gigantic whirlpool appeared on the calm water surface. It was conjured up by the leviathan the pirates had fought with and it was seeking revenge. The whirlpool spun faster and faster trying to suck the pirate ship into it. The pirates tried to steer their ship away from the whirlpool, but it was no use. The whirlpool was so strong that it ripped the ship apart. The ship, together with the pirates, were sucked to the bottom of the ocean and gobbled up by the leviathan. Just before Captain Chan also became the last bit of meal of the monster, the quartermaster pushed the captain away from the whirlpool with all his strength and sacrificed himself to save the captain's life. Before he disappeared under the water, he gave one last silent glare at the captain and the meaning was clear: Make it count.

Captain Chan had no time to grieve. He quickly raised the samurai sword and charged it with lightning. He then wound up his hand and swung the sword at the whirlpool at a terrifying speed. The sword went right through the water and embedded itself in the leviathan's head. The monster gave one last bone-chilling cry and was never seen again. Once again, the water was as smooth as glass. Captain Chan propped himself onto a piece of wreckage and slowly floated back to shore.

The villagers living in the coastal village all cried in joy. They gratefully thanked Captain Chan and told the Joseon emperor how the pirates defeated the monster. The Joseon emperor was pleased and

thankful. To show his gratitude, he gave Captain Chan a new ship loaded with treasure and a lot of spicy yet scrumptious kimchi.

Despite having all these wonderful gifts, Captain Chan felt heartbroken for the loss of his crew. The thought of the wonderful time they spent together giving gifts to the people in need sent tears rolling down his cheeks, but he was more determined than ever to continue his quest of helping people in need.

Father and Son

Pui Ching Primary School, Chung, Chi Yuen Chase – 11

“Waaa–Waaa...” A small crying sound broke the silence in the little hut. Cheung Hoi Ting was born in Hong Kong, China. They were a happy family until 3rd March, 1389. Their father buried something in the forest near their hut. Then their father was never to be seen again. His mum told him that his father died. Two months after Cheung’s father’s disappearance, the Heffelies moved to a new hut which was close to the harbor and the China royal fleet. James often went to the harbor to hear the stories of pirates, told by the British sailors from the China Royal Fleet. Once, he heard stories about one of the most famous pirate captain of China, Captain Bullseye. Captain Bullseye lead a fleet of pirates called The Monsters, but the Monsters weren’t ordinary sailors killing and stealing ships, they were pirates who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. This made them quite popular because of all the “kind” things they had done. However, the rich people hate them, they used their money and power to convince the China Royal Fleet General, General Man, to capture The Monsters.

When James was 18 years old, he decided to join the China Royal Fleet and he was now part of one of the most powerful ship of the China Royal Fleet, The Victoria, as a powder monkey, who is the gunner’s assistance. They often went to patrol the seas near Hong Kong. Their job was to keep the coast of Hong Kong safe and to protect the people in the coast from pirates which were popular in the 13th century. Because the seas were usually peaceful, he was always busy cleaning the deck and the toilets which were often very dirty and stinky. One day, when Cheung was cleaning the bathroom, his captain, Captain Rex, yelled from the deck.

“Cheung! We are under attack! Come to the cannons and help the gunner!”

James quickly raced to the deck and he saw the most horrifying sight unfolded in his eyes. Blood was everywhere. Dead bodies lied on the wooden deck. The next thing he saw was a few pirates slicing Captain Rex’s head off his body and blood flying everywhere. Cheung screamed.

“Nooo!”

But he regretted it as soon as the words came out of his mouth. The pirates noticed him and closed in on him slowly, raising their weapons and pointing them to Cheung. Suddenly, Cheung saw a big ship with a big “M” on one of the sails on the giant ship. It was the flag ship of the Monsters, The Trista! The ship stopped, like it was going to cough loudly, and it did. The ship coughed out two cannon balls out of her mouths beside the ship’s body, and hit right into the pirates that were threatening Cheung! The Victoria started to sink. Luckily, the ship sent out a small raft and the sailors helped James on the little boat. The crew took him back to the main ship and introduced Captain Bullseye to him.

They said that they came to Britain because they stole some gold in China and they want to give it to the poor in Britain. So the pirates came here. James asked the pirates why they helped him and they said that the pirates who were threatening James were the top enemies of The Monsters and they hated pirates who liked torturing people. They said that the evil pirates had a fleet called Kraken and the leader was called Captain Chung. They went to shore and gave the poor and they said that James was now a member of The Monsters and that they were going to Sheng Hai to mend their ship, The Trista.

“Set sail to Sheng Hai!” The pirate yelled.

The sea was rough but The Monsters sailed happily until they saw the most unexpected sight. It was the Krakens! They saw The Trista, and they attacked The Monsters, shooting cannon balls at The Trista. Pirates also shot their pistols, muskets and swung to the ship armed with sabers and daggers. Suddenly, Cheung saw a shocking sight. He thought he saw his father, but it couldn’t be true. His father should be long dead! He tried to forget it but he couldn’t shake it off and concentrated on the battle. The feeling was too strong! He saw enemies swinging into The Trista and he caught sight of a familiar face. It was different, but not much. The man was fighting his friend, but when he took a glimpse on Cheung, he dropped his sword and his jaw dropped too.

The man was no ordinary pirate, he was Cheung’s father! However, his friend did not know this and charged at him with his sword. Cheung’s instincts kicked in and fired his pistol and hit his friend right in his head! The body collapsed on the deck, and it was the end of him. Cheung was sad but relieved because he saved his father’s life. He joined forces with his father, and they quickly beat them. After the epic battle, Cheung’s father told him the truth. The dreaded truth.

Cheung’s father told him that he always wanted to have a more exciting life, since he had a miserable and boring childhood. Once he heard about The Krakens, and he always wanted to join. One night, he and Cheung’s mother had a big argument about him joining The Krakens. He decided to join them secretly, so it was the reason he disappeared. Cheung finally solved the huge question in deep inside him.

Little did Cheung knew the adventures have just begun.

The Five Golden Coins' s Horrible History

Pui Ching Primary School, Fung, Po Lam Esmond – 11

Ken was a kind, polite and sweet boy. He had long, black hair, two big, bright eyes and a tall nose. Every Tuesday, he went on the Angel mountain to find treasures because he thinks that finding them is secret and fun. One day in the morning, while he was walking along the grassland, he saw a big team of guys, who were hitting his best friend, Jill, he quickly ran to them to stop the arguing.

Ken said loudly, "Hey! What are you doing? Get away from here, quickly, or you will be sorry!"

But one man shouted back to Ken, "What are you doing here? I am Peter. Your friend knows where the last golden rock is and I must find it!"

Later, Ken and Jill and the good pirates thought of a good idea: find the treasure together and share it. They thought this idea was great so they promised that they will not betray each other. They walked into a dark forest in the mountain to find the golden rock together. When they found it, they started a little argument again! The golden rock couldn't be shared, and if they cut it into two big pieces, it will break! Oh no! How did they solve the problem? The pirates betrayed Ken and Jill. After that, the five pirates got it and brought it to their pirate ship, called The Ming Treasure.

Jill knew that his friend, Ken was really disappointed, so Jill told him, "If you really want to find the pirates and the treasures, I can go with you next Saturday." After Ken hearing Jill's words, Ken suddenly felt moved and burst into tears.

He cried out loudly and screamed, "Jill! I have been waited long for this moment. Let's start sailing as soon as possible!"

The following day, Jill bought a small wooden boat in the wood shop behind his family house. They met each other at 5 o'clock at the pier. Ken and Jill started to ride on their tiny boat in the evening. When it was dark, the boat shook a lot but the brave children still weren't afraid.

In midnight, they all slept deeply. Their boat rocked them as if it was singing a lullaby to Ken and Jill. When they woke up in the sunny morning, they founded that they were in an enormous pirate ship. All of a sudden, a loud voice made them feel dizzy.

"Ahoy! Good morning! Tiny children! " A young, tall pirate exclaimed loudly. Jill and Ken felt scared at that time.

They thought, "Oh my goodness! Where are we?"

The pirate captain replied, "Welcome to our ship, Ming Treasure! The good Captain Jackson saw another bad pirate ship called The Death Pearl with his long telescope and he knew that a war was starting very soon. Bang! The ship fired.

"Fire! The treasure is mine!" Captain Jackson said loudly.

The sky turned dark. The big waves hit the boat. Another pirate, Captain Garbish has searched for the last treasure, the last golden coin, for a long time already and live forever to kill pirates who stand on his way. Whoever had all five golden coins will live forever. If the bad Captain Garbish found the last golden coin, he will have everlasting life and kill anybody who blocks his way! Ken and Jill were on pins and needles in that frightening moment. Luckily, Ken and Jill had an idea to separate Captain Garbish and his four golden coins! Ken called the pirates to throw the ship's rope to climb to the Garbish's ship. After that, they tried to throw away one of Garbish's coins. If the bad captain lost a coin, he will never have everlasting life!

Although the weather was horrible, the pirates succeeded.

Luckily, the last golden coin was found by the good pirate, Peter.

He shouted, "Hey! If you all don't want to die, surrender to us and give the four golden coins to me now!" And the Death Pearl pirates gave the four coins to Peter. When the war stopped, there was a big swirl in the sea again! The ocean looked very furious and wanted to swallow the two pirate ships in the middle of the sea!

"We're in really big trouble!" screamed the crew. "What should we do? Our ship is going to sink!" said Ken.

"Hold on, everyone! We are going to have an exciting ride on our ship. Ha! Ha! Ha!" Captain Jackson shouted.

Then, The Death Pearl hit the Ming Treasure, "Bang!"

The swirl spun stronger and stronger and the waves also grew higher and higher. The Death Pearl took this opportunity to attack the Ming Treasure,

“Attack them! We must win this war! Although we don’t have enough cannonballs, we will kill all of you! Watch this!” The bad pirates used strange materials like wood, spoons, forks, glass and so on. Unluckily, The Death Pearl won the war and tied all the good crew members around the boat!

“Let us go! Please!” Peter said. Garbish’s crew, Methen screamed, “If you really don’t want to die, give me back the coins!” However, Peter still refused.

Methen drew his long, black and hard gun and ...bang bang! Peter fired and Methen dropped to the floor. This moment was horrible, people bleeding on the ship’s board, blood spreading everywhere. The Death Pearl sank in the hungry ocean. Peter used his sharp sword to cut off the rope and free the crew, then he fixed the broken parts of the ship. Finally, they said goodbye. “Thank you so much for helping us!” Ken and Jill replied together.

At last, the good pirates sent Ken and Jill back to their home. “I hope that your Ming Treasure can take you to places you want to explore and find treasures! Goodbye!” The good girl, Ming Treasure brought the pirates back to the beautiful ocean and sailed to the sea joyfully again.

The Legendary Treasure

Pui Ching Primary School, Khong, Cassandra – 11

“Ahoy!” I said, “let’s pack our stuff and set sail.”

The pirates waved goodbye to their family and friends, as their ships began to sail away. You would think that we would steal from villagers and kill innocent people. But no, in fact we did the opposite. We searched for treasure and gave some to the sailors to bring back home. We were pirates, but of the good kind.

As we got on the Imagistic, the sea was calm and peaceful like a sleeping infant. The sky was blue and the sun was smiling up in the sky when all of a sudden the sky turned grey and lightning flashed across. Suddenly, our ship was pulled towards a mysterious green mist. The mist awoke thunder and lightning. The sailors were dizzy and everything went black. When we woke up, they were on an island that looked interesting. On the island, a few children were playing in the pouring rain. We found a hotel in the small but welcoming town.

We stayed in the hotel for a night and afterwards, the royal guards took us to see the king and princess at the palace. The palace was stunning; it took our breath away. It was made of pure jade, gold and silver. We went in and bowed to the king. Suddenly, the princess next to him caught my eye. She had long hair which trailed down to her feet and she had big brown eyes just like my old childhood friend. I wasn’t sure that the princess was my old friend so I waited until someone called her and said her name. Then, the king called her Jade! She was my friend. She recognized me as well!

Jade joined our crew of pirates and we went in search for the lost treasure that no pirate had been able to find. But I was different: I had the legendary map! The map was passed down from generation to generation in my family, but no member of my family thought that the treasure existed. So I had to show them that I was right.

We sailed for days and days according to the map. I was started to feel like a failure, but when I wanted to turn back, the island came in view! We found the entrance leading to the treasure! Some mean looking goblins were guarding the door. We offered lots of things to them but they refused. One of the goblins spoke to me.

“What has no eyes no feet and no hands but it can clean?” the goblin said. It was a riddle, and he would only let me pass if I answered it correctly.

“Water,” I said.

The pesky goblins let us in but also reminded us of the dangers of what is lurking inside. We went inside, going deeper in the cave, not aware of the dangers ahead. All of a sudden, a bunch of trolls found us. They had slimy hair and tough claws. I wasn’t the least scared because I had learned about them in my lessons at school. They were tough looking, but they were really scared at heart. The mean looks were just to scare us away. I screamed at them and they ran away at once!

Jade was shocked by how I scared them away, I told her these were no ordinary trolls, they were the scared cat’s trolls, and they are almost scared of everything. We went deeper in the cave and a glimpse of shimmer caught my eye. A pile of golden coins was lying above a rusty chest. I thought to myself, this must be the legendary treasure!

“Hooray!” I shouted. “We found it!”

Exhilarated, we rushed towards the chest but suddenly a giant turtle stopped in the middle of our path.

“It said that only a member of the Cheng family can take the treasure away,” spoke the giant turtle.

“I am Caroline Cheng,” I said “A member of the Cheng family.”

The old turtle let us take the treasure and we went back to our boat. As we sailed along the peaceful sea. All seemed calm, until The Creamy, another pirate ship attacked us. It ordered that we put down the treasure and hand it over, but that was an impossible thing for me. The treasure was from my great grandfather. I wouldn’t give it up for anything in the world.

I steered the ship away as they shot bullets and bombs at us. We were scared as we weren’t sure if we could make it. Finally, we defeated them! We steered the ship back to our home on cheerful island. Our family and friends held a great party for us. It had a lot of food and we all had a lot of fun. We promised each other that we would have our next adventure soon. We told our parents that we would not hurt ourselves during the adventure. I hope our next adventure will be just as exciting!

We were all starting to prepare for our next amazing adventure. I can’t wait!

The Telepathic Sisters

Pui Ching Primary School, Kong, Pui Ga Alyson – 12

Hundreds of years ago, in Shanghai, lived two good-hearted and wealthy leader pirates of a pirate crew that was called The Snow Foxes. Although they stole, they stole from the rich to give to the poor. Their names were Law Tin and Yuk Tung. They gave birth to beautiful twin girls, and named the older one, Yia and younger one, Ying. Although they were twins, they grew up to become two completely different girls; Ying being very wild and Yia being quiet.

They have only one thing in common; they always knew what each other wanted...they can read each other's mind. Once, Yia's favourite toy broke, Yia was upset... and no one else except Ying understood why. Ying kept hearing, 'Yia is sad because her toy was broken.' in her head.

Five years later when Yia and Ying were seven years old, since Yia was older, their mother gave her the responsibility to look after her younger sister when they were out at sea. When their parents were out for a mission, Ying insisted on going to sea.

The next thing they knew; they were out of the door to the barque the girls owned. They walked to get the cannons, daggers, blunderbusses, cutlasses.... They boarded the barque with high spirits, humming songs as they rode on. Yia started sailing the barque to their destination, a little island a few miles away.

Yia noticed a big storm coming and tried to steer back to the island, but it was too late. The storm whipped Ying out of the barque like a ragdoll. Yia started flailing her arms around like she was on fire. She tried to contact her sister with her telepathic connection.

"Ying!" she called out. She saw her sister unconscious and flopping around in the sea like a jellyfish. She strapped a rope onto her waist to the barque and jumped into the water to save Ying. Yia put Ying's unconscious body onto the sand. Yia carried Ying on her back to the nearest hospital. Ying fell into a coma. Yia started feeling a pain at her arm which slowly spread to the rest of her body. It dawned on her – Ying was in a coma because of her.

Every day, Yia visited her sister. Months passed. Ying still hadn't awoken. Yia grew impatient and gave up visiting her, thinking she was dead. The grief faded in as the connection faded away.

Twelve years later, when Yia was nineteen, she helped her mother rule the ship. What she didn't know was that Ying was actually alive. When Ying woke up, she completely forgot everything except fake information that the psychopath told her, one including that she was a psychopathic killer, she got this information by her mother's enemy, the psychopath, Long. She always killed then got away with everything while looking like an innocent little girl with large doe eyes.

She was now the leader of Yia's enemy pirate group, The Howlers. since Long died trying to "save" her. Ying hated Yia with burning passion. They always were slashing each other's throat... literally. What Yia didn't know was Ying was the leader of the group, because she always wore a mask that almost covered her entire face, but that was not until one day. That day was the first day in the week of a little battle between the two pirate groups. Yia was finishing practice on the ship when the other pirate team suddenly barged in. Ying's group thankfully had their swords and daggers ready.

They started to fight with bows and arrows, daggers and swords. Blunderbuss noises were loud and sharp; flintlock bullets were flying everywhere. Blood was covering the floor in puddles. Screams of pain were sounding. Ying saw that Ying wasn't looking at her way so she took the chance and socked her in the stomach with her fist.

Yia shouted, "Oh, it's on!", in pain. Yia whipped her hand across Ying's face, bringing her mask down while trying to stand up. The piece of fabric floated softly towards the floor. Yia saw Ying's face and was shocked. Yia immediately stopped what she was about to do: punch Ying. Yia thought she was hallucinating, but then Ying tried to do some extreme karate moves.

Yia snapped out of her thoughts and tried blocked them but it didn't work since she was distracted. Ying kept punching Yia until Yia started to cough and spit blood. Ying then took this weak moment of Yia's and took out her dagger and stuck the blade into Yia's gut. Yia's last words were,

"Sis...I...I...mi...ss...th...e...o...ol...ld...yo...u...p...lea...se...co...me...b...ac...k" before she slipped into an eternal slumber. Ying had this extremely psychopathic look on her face but not for long. When Yia departed, Ying felt some searing pain in her arm and it burn up. She suddenly had flashbacks of when they were younger and that what Long had told her were all fake. She wanted to make up with her sister, but it was too late. Ying admitted to her mistakes and The Howlers merged with The Snow Foxes and they turned their name into The Snow Howlers. The crew surprisingly let Ying be their leader. Ying did a really good job leading the crew as a memory of Yia, like giving food to the poor, helping some homeless animals get a lifetime home, helping some kids get adopted... Ying made it down to history as one of the best pirates. Yia was proud of her as she looked down from heaven. Everything was peaceful.

The Pearl of Great Fishy Beard

Pui Ching Primary School, Lam, Yuet Ching Gladys – 12

One quiet night in the Ming dynasty, in the king's sleeping chamber, a gloved hand reached into the king's pants and slowly picked out a shining blue pearl.

It was a small girl in a pitch-black burglar suit, a scarlet eye-patch on her right eye and hair shot up to heaven.

“Finally, The Pearl of Great Fishy Beard, the greatest pirate, is mine. Now I really am the best!” she thought. The Pearl of Great Fishy Beard is a magical pearl that strengthened everything in the human body for its owner from muscles to the brain.

“Oh, Nga, we should leave. I mean, we've already taken loads of jewelry and china!” said a skinny boy with noodle-like arms and knock-knees.

“You're right,” said Nga. She put away the pearl and strolled towards the exit. But what Nga didn't know was that Nam was grinning wickedly behind her. Then, a blood-curdling sound rocked the whole palace! It came from the bag. The king had booby-trapped his pearl with a bug that burned when exposed to light. When they went into moonlight, it shrieked.

Almost immediately, guards flooded towards them. They ran to the gate and then, a dead end – a high wall.

“Nam, hold on tight!”

She threw some wooden boards on the ground up into the air and then stepped on the boards like stairs over the wall and jumped on the ground.

“Oh god, I can't believe that worked!” said Nam.

They ran to the beach and reached a humungous ship.

“Ahoy, young buccaneers!” A muscular man greeted them. “What have you got there?”

“Two sacks, Mordo,” said Nam proudly.

“Aye then, altogether we have thirty-seven sacks, not bad!” said Mordo.

“So 'Mission Robin Hood' is ready?” asked Nga excitedly.

“Set sail!” bellowed Mordo. The crew cheered and set sail into the never-ending ocean, searching for new lands and people to help. Meanwhile, Nga put the pearl in her hollow eye socket. Strength rushed in, ideas flooded her brain. However, a shivering feeling grew inside her heart and a minute later, she had no joy, excitement nor emotions anymore, the jewel sucked her love out.

Nam watched her.

“The pearl will be mine,” he said, smiling evilly.

“When will we get there?” said Nam to himself.

“Land ahoy!” shouted Squid-face in the crew's nest.

Ahead stood a beautiful island. They sailed to the island and Nam snuck off to the bushes. The island was uncomfortably silent yet there were houses. They searched among the deserted houses. At last, they found when they opened a door, the islanders shrieked and closed the door! The crew knocked until a humongous shadow covered them.

A gigantic sea dragon with outstretched talons welcomed them.

"Zing! Zing! Zing! Zing!" Four razor-sharp spikes hit four crew members and killed them. Then the sea dragon let out a monstrous roar, and looked at Mordo. Mordo started attacking Squid-face. One by one the pirates looked into the dragon's eyes and fought each other! They were under the dragon's spell!

Then, the dragon looked at Nga! A dreadful smile spread across its face. A flash of white light and Nga was no longer in the battlefield but a white room with two chairs.

"Nga!" he said with a charming voice, "Do you like my home? There's really no need to bring a gift."

"Gift? Home?" said Nga, confused.

"The pearl! Every dragon wants that pearl!" said Nam.

"Dragon?" asked Nga. "Oh, let me introduce myself properly, I am Nam, the dragon of Island Titikia."

Of course! If a dragon is powerful enough to cast spells, it must have the power to change its appearance. Surely, that's pirate lesson number one! Nam wasn't Nga's friend all along, he went undercover to get the pearl! Slowly, Nga drew her sword.

"You will never have my pearl!" barked Nga.

"Your parents left you as a baby and you were left alone. Am I wrong?" said Nam as though reading Nga's mind, attacking her soul. "Then you begged for food on the street, you were a street rat weren't you?" said Nam...

"No one loves you and they never will," spat Nam. "That is the heart of human beings. They're cruel and stone-hearted. Trust me, I know! Now give me the pearl!"

He was so furious his eyes shined with hellfire. Nga's eyes glowed with tears. She thought of happy moments she had with Nam and her crew.

"What's the point of life without love? Join me and we shall take over the world," said Nam. The room slowly disappeared and the battlefield returned!

That second, she thought of the song Nam used to sing, "Sweet dreams, good night. Oh terrible storms. But who cares when I have a friend to live for..."

"You are right." said Nga, wiping her tears, "The point of life is to be loved and to love!" said Nga.

Nam was shocked and maybe, afraid!

"Thank you for the memories but I'll move on! I do have something to live for! But you, you don't care and you certainly don't love!" and with that, Nga stuck her sword in Nam's chest...it was over, with a great flash of light and they were back in the village. Nam the dragon was dead. The cursed crew woke up and they had absolutely no idea what happened.

After this incident, the crew gave a sack of money to the islanders to build ships to explore the great wide world, reloaded their ship with food and set sail into the edge of the sea. When they were sailing Nga threw the pearl into the sea and thought, "Maybe the world is too weak to possess such a power but one day it will, in a different world and a better one."

Looking back, Nga thought of Nam. Isn't the world ridiculous? A friend can be an enemy; an enemy can give support in the direst moments! Nothing is what it seems... in the end.

Extracts From A Pirate's Diary

Pui Ching Primary School, Leung, Chi Long Jonathan – 11

18th November, 1500

Sunny

We set sail this morning at the docks in Beijing, bearing gifts from our emperor. When we boarded our ship, our lookout, Un-Luck Lee did a lot of offences, including inviting his girlfriend onboard and tossing the ship's cat, Mrs. Tabby, overboard. Captain Chan told Lee that if he continues to behave in this way, we'll have to maroon him.

19th November, 1500

Rainy

Well, dear diary, Lee's actions angered the sea monsters. Early this morning, Lee spotted some winged female creatures sitting on some rocks through his telescope. "Sirens!" he exclaimed, before falling out of the crow's nest and luckily got entangled in the lowest part of the rigging.

The captain commanded the cabin boy Lam to get the earplugs (They're little thingies that the first officer Chung invented which are for dimming noises). However, when he returned, Lee was trying to untangle himself. He stuck his left leg out, making Lam trip and spilling all but one pair of earplugs. After giving Lee a short lecture about being careful, Captain Chan decided that he would put on the remaining pair of earplugs and steer, whereas the rest of the crew would stay in their cabins and wait until the coast was clear. After a short period of time, the singing got really loud, and for a second, I thought that Captain Chan fell asleep.

But then, the sirens stopped singing, and we heard Chan yell,

"They're leaving! The sirens are leaving!"

We all went on deck and cheered, until first officer Chung said "Is it just me, or are those rocks moving towards us?"

And indeed they were. That's when I noticed that the "rocks" were green and scaly.

"They're not rocks," I said, "they're part of a sea serpent!"

Just as I said that, the "rocks" sank into the water. Then, two gigantic horns poked out of the surface of the water. The monstrous owner of the two horn reared up. It had piggy eyes (though they were large for us) and was covered in emerald-green scales. We were all terrified, except for Lee, who was rooted to his spot and seemed to be deep in thought. Suddenly, he snapped out of it.

"I have a plan" he said. "Listen."

Listening to Lee's ideas was the last thing we would do at any time, but then none of us had other plans, so that was what we did. Lee's plan was to steer the ship towards a nearby rock and turn left or right when we were near it. Hopefully, the beast would follow our ship, and (hopefully) being large and clumsy, it would crash into the rock. And surprise, surprise, it worked! Everything went according to plan and we escaped. And for the first time in many million years, we cheered for Lee.

25th November, 1500

Sunny

Sorry about the long gap. The crew and I were busy giving away gifts to natives on uncharted lands and navigating these days, and some stupid, lame-brained twit had left a magnet under the compass, leading us the wrong way. Anyway, in the afternoon, Lee spotted an island (or at least he thought that it was one). He asked us to steer the ship towards the island.

Anyway, we went ashore the island, except for Lee and his girlfriend, who decided to keep an eye on the ship. There was a mountain smacked right in the middle of the island which towered over us. Captain Chan, who was very energetic, decided to scale it. After an exhausting trek (a little stroll if you ask Chan) up the mountain, we stuck the ship's flag on its summit. But when we were ready to leave, we realize that most of the island had sunk into the water. That's when we uncovered the truth. We weren't on an island. We were on a man-eating *Aspidochelone*! The next thing we knew; we were paddling in salty seawater. And a few metres from us was the opened mouth of the *Aspidochelone*. It glared at us with a gleam in its eyes as a ravenous child might a table of food at New Year's Day.

I closed my eyes and thought – 'Goodbye, world... and hello, underworld.'

But when we thought all hope was lost, we heard a loud bang, and the *Aspidochelone* was bashed by a large cannonball. It was Lee!

He yelled at the beast, "If you want to scoff my mates, you'll have to get me first!" So the beast made a ninety degree turn (that took it a little time) and chased after our ship. Meanwhile, Lee steered the ship towards us, and his girlfriend fired a couple more of cannonballs at the beast. The rest of us (except me, because I was a bad swimmer) swam towards the ship and scrambled aboard.

“All hands on deck!” yelled the captain. But then Lee saw me paddling helplessly in the water, sinking slowly, and plunged into the water to save me. Lee towed me back to the ship. But when we were climbing up the rope ladder, Lee’s hand slipped, and he fell into the water. And as quick as lightning, the Aspidochelone swallowed him whole.

3rd December, 1500

Cloudy

We sailed all the way back to Beijing and told everyone the news.

A few hours later, we stood before the empty tomb of Un-Luck Lee with Lee’s friends and family, and the Emperor. He had saved the entire crew and sacrificed his own life.

Suddenly, we heard a voice yelling “Hey, guys! I haven’t hopped the twig yet!”

It was Lee! He was still alive!

It turned out that Lee found a boat and some oars inside the Aspidochelone, and he used them to escape it when it opened his mouth to eat, hence everyone was happy and the entire crew was safe. And that was the end of my wacky sea journey.

Brilliant Jimmy

Pui Ching Primary School, Lum, Wai Ching Charissa – 11

It was a beautiful sunny day. The sky was blue and had a lot of differently shaped clouds, like lion shapes, sheep shapes and others too! There were many birds! Some were flying in the sky and some were singing on the tree. There were also some pretty butterflies too! This island was named Lucky Island. Everyone loved to go there because the air was fresh there! It had many plants, like beautiful flowers, tall trees and green grass! The boundless and blue sea around the island had many colorful fishes, cute seahorses and shiny sea stars. It was very amazing when the sun's rays shine on the sea. How wonderful it was! There were also some big and small houses on the mountain. Some sharp hills, which were covered with green grass and small flowers were beautiful! Sometimes, you could also see some animals' likes rabbits, sheep and goats too!

Jimmy, who was the good pirate, always sailed The Jimmy everywhere. He always went to Lucky Island to find treasures because he loved the attractive scenery. However, this island is so far that he needed to take a long time to get there. He was a brave, smart and nice boy. He had brown hair, big eyes with brown and round pupils. He had a long nose and red lips He was very tall and has strong muscles like a giant. He always smiled to everyone!

Last month, Jimmy met Captain Devils who stood with his group of bad people like Michael and Albert; the others were on the Lucky Island. Captain Devils spent his life at sea. They liked using their ships to rob other people's gold and used ropes to tie up people on the ship. Therefore, everyone knew they were pirates and were frightened by them. That day, Captain Devils felt very bored and they went to Lucky Island to steal other people's gold and discover new treasures.

Peter was Jimmy's best friend who was very poor because his father was not around when he was young. So, he sold all his property to make a small boat. He wanted to go to the Lucky Island to find a big box of gold that he can have some money! Peter was ready to take the treasures he found and leave the island. Unluckily, Peter met the Captain Devils' pirates and they wanted to take away Peter's gold. Peter was being bullied! Suddenly, Jimmy appeared and asked, "What are you doing to this small boy and why do you make him cry?"

"We didn't make him cry!" They said, "We didn't yell at him either! We're only playing or chatting with him."

"Is he right?" asked Jimmy.

"No," Peter said, "they stole my gold! They said if I don't give them all the gold, they will kill me and my family!"

"Is that true?" Jimmy said.

"No, that is wrong!" said one of the bad guys.

"It is true!" said the little boy.

Jimmy knew the bad guys were lying because they were pirates! Therefore, he asked them to give all the gold back to Peter. The bad guys did because they were scared of the gigantic Jimmy. After a few minutes, the bad guys ran away. Peter thanked Jimmy.

"You are a brave, smart and friendly person!" said Jimmy.

Two days later, Jimmy became a local hero. He visited Lucky Island again. It was a perfect sunny day! He thought there were not any bad guys again so he walked very slowly and happily. After he walked to the middle of the island, he saw a boat with a flag, which had Evil Devils written on its side, and he saw Ken who was his best friend on it. "Help me! Help me! Can anyone help me?" He screamed loudly. He was very scared of the bad guys because they looked very angry and they were trying to kill him. He wanted to escape from the bad guys but they used a big rope to tie him on the wooden pole. Jimmy was very angry and thought, "Why do I always meet Captain Devils? And why do they always steal my friend's gold?"

Then, Jimmy called some people to help; Dick and Joseph and they found a big ship to rescue Ken. They pretended to be friends with the bad guys. Fifteen minutes later, they took The Jimmy near the bad guy's boat. They separated into two teams, one to rescue Ken and the other team went up to give the treasure to the bad guys. They put a lot of heavy rocks which were painted in gold in the treasure box. The other team walked slowly to Ken while Jimmy gave the treasure box to them. When they went away to the Evil Devils Boat, the bad guys did not know there was nothing inside the treasure box except rocks! Then, Ken thanked Jimmy, Simonson, Dick and Joseph for the help and also gave them some fish, meat and fruit.

“Thanks for your gift!” Jimmy said to Ken.

And he also said to the people who help to rescue Ken, “Thank you for your help.”

After that, Jimmy became a local hero! When Jimmy went out to the road, everyone also gave him some of their food and flowers and Jimmy had a big flag saying “Local Hero” on his ship.

Finally, Jimmy died when he was 55 years old. At his funeral, everyone was sad and cried. “Why are they sad?” asked a small child. “He was a great hero!” answered the child’s parents. At Jimmy’s funeral, there were a lot of flowers and some red paper which told tales of his heroic acts. Now, a lot of people know him and he became a very famous person in the world.

The True Pirate

Pui Ching Primary School, Siu, Yu Nga Eudora – 12

“Pirates are sailors who attack other ships and steal property from them.” People said as they describe the word “pirates. We already know that common fact, but not all the pirates act that way. Therefore, I’ll tell you a story of one of those pirates.

It was the early 1400s. There was a man called Zheng He, the captain of The Royal Travelers. One day, he decided to steal cargo of precious materials and give it away to captains and sailors around the world to make relationships with them.

They went on their first voyage sailing to South Vietnam. Along the way, they noticed a big unfamiliar island. Although the sailors on the ship didn’t wish to get on the island, “Onto the island we go!” said Zheng He as he jumped off the ship.

When they moored their boat near the shore, they searched everywhere until they found something big lying on the other side of the shore!

“Mr. Zheng He, I saw a ship with a flag on it and I believe the flag logo represents a crew named The Bucci!” said one of the sailors named Wong Ming.

One of the pirates from The Bucci named Billy caught The Royal Travelers and shouted, “Captain! Some scallywags are trying to steal our treasure!”

The captain of The Bucci, Sebastian scowled at The Royal Travelers and ordered his sailors to prepare themselves.

Zheng He tried to stop them and said, “Slow down there, my friends. We aren’t here to steal treasure from you, we are here to make relationships and give out treasure to you!”

The Bucci crew couldn’t hear anything Zheng He said and started to fire cannons. Cannonballs shot out like lava coming out of a volcano, so The Royal Travelers couldn’t do anything but escape. Suddenly, the ground shook! The Bucci stopped firing and hid in their ship as Zheng He ran to the shore and noticed an eye on the sand!

“Oh no! I believed this is what the rumors call the sea creature which we will mistake as an island. It draws sailors to it, and then drowns them and eats them!” said Zheng He.

The sea creature started to sink into the water because of the bullets fired on it. Everyone started to panic when Zheng He had an idea.

“Excuse me, my dear pirate friends...” shouted Zheng He. “Would you all mind helping us?”

“What is yer problem, landlubber? Yer don’t know how to swim? Sebastian yelled back in a scared manner.

“We aren’t trying to cause trouble. We were just trying to help you.”

“Mateys, give em’ Jacob’s ladder, quickly!” ordered Sebastian.

The Royal Travelers immediately climbed the ladder and helped Sebastian guide them back to The Royal Traveler’s ships. The sea creature shook the bullets off its back and decided to take its revenge! Everyone immediately ran to their ship’s quarterdecks and started to steer the ships in full speed. However, they couldn’t escape from it. It was even faster a blue shark!

That’s when the captain shouted, “Avast ye everyone, get all of our spare fishes and ready to feed!”

Everyone on their ships searched for fish they’ve fished up and threw it in front of the sea creature. It started to slow down as it noticed the fish floating on the water. Both crews were shocked that the plan eventually worked!

“You are a quick thinker, Sebastian!” Zheng He shouted to Sebastian as he steered his ship near Sebastian’s ship. Sebastian started to blush as he said, “Gah, it was nothing, that’s just what our good ol’ old salts would have done.”

“As a thank you, we would like to award you some silk and gold.” Zheng He said as he gave the captain a handful of precious goodies. The shimmery goodies shined in front of Sebastian. He didn’t say anything but proudly smiled at Zheng He.

“We have a small favor for you, Sebastian.” said Zheng He. “Would you like to help us on our voyage to give out our goodies to other sailors and captains around the world?”

“Of course, matey! I would do anything, thanks to your kindness and care!” said Sebastian as he patted Zheng He’s shoulder.

After that, The Royal Travelers and The Bucci went from the middle of Pacific Ocean to Africa! They won themselves a place in history as some of the first great explorers and travelers on Earth, reaching and making relationships with a variety of countries. Some historians even mention both crews are people that truly “ruled the sea” back in those years. When Zheng He and Sebastian were about to guide everyone back to their home countries, they met the same sea creature again! They remembered what happened throughout the first voyage they met and decided to steer towards the sea creature.

“It looks like it’s feelin’ a bit blue.” said Sebastian as he looked at the sea creature. Some sailors from The Bucci named Bucky and Ben suggested to feed it some fish. They threw fish into the sea, but the sea creature didn’t do anything with it!

“Maybe it wants to be friends?” suggested Zheng He as he jumped off the ship and patted the sea creature. That’s when the sea creature’s frown started to fade away. The Royal Travelers and The Bucci moved their ship, bit by bit, as the sea creature followed. And that’s how both crews lived a great lifetime. And that story explained it all. Not all pirates are selfish and brutal. We should all learn from Zheng He, as he spread kindness to people. Even if he sometimes needed to deal with nasty people of the more usual sort, they can still make relationships once and for all. Zheng He, a kind person who will stay in our hearts and will never ever be forgotten.

The Dangerous Giveaway

Pui Ching Primary School, Tsang, Lok Ching Leia – 12

My ship, The Rosemary, was set free. It raced and plowd up and down the playful waves like a harmless seesaw. Someone was being sent to India from the emperor to give presents such as silks and tea leaves. That's me! I am Yu, the captain. Some may know me from different voyages sent by different people. This time, I have agreed to regain my services again. I wear a thin beard along my face and I'm fairly neat, for a pirate. Before the crew got to work, I gave them a little pep talk to prepare them along the journey. What the crew didn't know was that this journey wasn't just a nice giveaway, it was a risk on our lives. Suddenly, something rose up from the sea. One by one, jelly-like tentacles splashed and stirred, crawling up the main mast, scaring everyone on the ship. In a second, the sky turned dark like a big, black cloth covered the sky. Then, an octopus-like shadow loomed over the ship. But can you believe that that wasn't the scariest part? It was a kraken! It was razor-bladed, had white copper teeth and two eyeballs filled with fire and had tentacles with sockets that will suck your blood. It was as fast as a cannonball, moving as fast as it can.

"Well, well, look what we have here. A ship full of refreshments for your dearest kraken king!"

I took a glance towards my old enemy, and said as if it was nothing important, "Hey! Remember me? I'm the one who didn't make myself dessert, you old kraken!"

As it roared in delight, I signaled the sailors to steer the boat to its stomach because everyone knows that stomachs are the animal's weakest point.

The ship sailed forward at full speed. Of course I knew that it was a risk. I'm not dumb but I've done it a thousand times on multiple voyages, it should be safe, right? The kraken saw us rushing towards it and so it dodged right. Seawater splashed on us. We were traumatized but at least we didn't end up as chow for the big old kraken!

And again we sailed to our destination to India, where we will finished our mission and return home to China. But alas, we all know that this isn't the end of it. We sailed through islands, big and small, seen everything that nature has given us. And mostly, as a sailor, I enjoyed the clear cobalt water, shining under the golden sun. But good things always come to an end.

We entered a deadly zone. "They" were known to have roamed about in these waters. "They" sing beautifully, but are the assassins of song. They lure you with their soprano voices and slaughter for fun. And worst of all, somehow they crossed our paths. Can you guess what that imbecilic creature is? Of course you can, it's the famous sirens!

Well, let me tell you something I wouldn't dare tell anyone else. I was actually scared of sirens when my mom told me the Greek stories about these creatures that roamed the sea. From that moment on, I dreamed of being a pirate in anyway possible, whether it was being a cook onboard, a deck scrubber or anything just for a glance of a sea monster. Luckily, I was lucky enough to get into an elite school for pirates. And I left myself the position as captain for many voyages to come. I was waiting for this moment for my whole life, I'm really going to face my childhood fears right now. Fortunately for me, I have read the whole manuscript of "How to Defend Yourself in Front of Sea Creatures" and knew it by heart.

The waves began to rock, and it was getting bumpy on the ship. We were entering a stage where sirens were going to appear soon enough. Speaking of the devil then, it appeared right in front of our eyes. I told my crew to stuff some cotton balls into their ears, to act as earbuds, creating a layer of material to shield us from the siren's shrill voice. But they weren't going to give up soon enough, they created a whirlpool full of deadly sharks. I always hated sharks; their sharp teeth, the grey skin and eyes as black as charcoal. I had to think of a plan, quick! I thought, what is a pirate's best friend? Cannons, of course! Despite the consequences, I told my crew to fire the cannons. Blood flew everywhere on my white shirt, the sails, even on the jolly roger! Now, I'm not even sure that this was a good idea after all. After the bloody scene we'd just seen, we finally sailed through the ear-shredding voice of the deadly sirens and the booming voice of the cannons and left the zone of the dangers.

As the days passed, we sailed peacefully on the sea, just as if it was a cruise. At last, we arrived in India, our last destination. We met the emperor and gave him the gifts we carried from afar. I even prayed in the local temple for good luck. We stayed for a few days and attended a few banquets. Alas, all good things must come to an end. The crew set sail for the last time for this voyage and I must say, this voyage was quite a challenge, unlike the others. Most importantly, I got over my childhood fear! I personally loved this voyage, because it has been a long time since I had been a captain, or even aboard a ship. Well, I guess this is the end, and may everything you desire come true!

The Advneture of the River

Pui Ching Primary School, Wu, Tsz Yeung – 11

“We’re under attack!”

I froze for a second and ran onto the deck to see a pirate ship sailing closer and closer.

“Get your weapons and defend the ship!” Said Captain Marcus.

The ship exploded, sending shattered glass and wood everywhere. As if on cue, another shell hit the deck. I felt myself fly up in the air and land with a thump before falling unconscious.

My name is Charlie Jackson. I was eighteen years old when I first heard that a fleet of ships will sail around Asia and bring treasures and goods to other countries. Enthused by the idea of sailing the seven seas, I immediately joined. In a week’s time, I was on board a vessel named Princess Andromeda. I was given the job to clean the toilets. Every day, I woke up at five and started cleaning the toilets.

One day, I felt a spout of water spew out of my mouth and I woke up, I found myself on The River. After a few more days of sailing in the Pacific Ocean, The River’s crew finally saw land and prepared the gifts and hid some weapons in case the enemy attacked us. All of us walked on land for a while before seeing a lot of wooden huts packed together. We walked towards the biggest hut and knocked.

“Who’s there? Why are you trying to knock my door down?” A voice asked.

“Sorry, we thought it would be rude to enter without permission,” I said.

“That’s weird. Well, you have my permission to enter,” the voice said.

“What are you doing here, strangers?” The voice said.

“We have brought gold and silk as a gift for you and your people,” I said.

The king in the hut looked shocked.

“How can I ever thank you?” Marcus said, “These are gifts, you don’t need to pay.”

The man wearing a big crown asked, “Do you have more with you?”

“Why do you want to know?” I said.

“Be...because I want more. Guards, seize them!”

We drew our hidden weapons and pointed them at the king’s guards. Then, a guard threw a stone and Marcus immediately shot him dead.

The king said, “W...what was that?”

“It is death if you and your guards don’t behave.” I said.

“I’ll behave, I’ll behave.” The king cowardly stood behind his guards and I glared at the king and said, “As punishment, we will give you nothing; you must learn how not to be greedy.”

As The River’s crew sailed back into the humongous ocean, the weather got foggy. A fleet of metal ships appeared out of the mysterious mist and charged straight at The River and surrounded our crew. They moved in closer like greedy sharks hunting their prey. Each of the ships threw out a long metal rope and tied them to our ship. We tried to cut the rope but it was no use, the knife didn’t even make a dent! Then, the ships pulled on the rope and dragged us into the mysterious Pacific Ocean.

I arrived with the River’s crew on an island called Bahrain and the pirates from the other ships ran onto the River carrying wicked golden swords, electric spears, exploding arrows... The kidnappers tied us up and carried us to a palace. Inside the palace, sat the fattest man in the history of the world. He was so fat that if he stood on a scale, he would immediately break it.

He said, “Hello, sea wanderers. I am the great king of Bahrain, keeper of the biggest sheep herds in Asia.”

Then he looked at his guards and said, “Guards, feed them to the sheep!”

Marcus laughed and said, “How can sheep eat us? Everybody knows sheep are vegetarians!”

The fat man chuckled and said, “You’ll find out very soon!”

The guards held Marcus and threw him into a pen of sheep, which was in front of the palace. I could hear Marcus’s screaming as the sheep tore his body apart and blood splat everywhere. Everybody shuddered as Marcus had his death sentence. In shock, I froze and the next thing I knew, I was struck by a sharp metal object on my head. I was knocked unconscious before I even had a chance to react.

In the days of being in prison, I thought about what was my purpose here. Why do I live? Is it for my friends at home or my mother? At first, I thought of just giving up trying to escape from this prison and just get eaten by the sheep. After a few days, I made my decision. I finally saw the chance to help my friends, which was when the guard fell asleep with the keys in my reach. I carefully pulled the key out of its holder and unlocked my handcuffs, unlocked the locks on the door and freed my friends.

In the middle of the night, I opened his friend's gate and we snuck out into the night and went into the weapons storage and took some super high technology weapons and fought our way to the ship. As we were fighting, I bumped into an alarm and an ear-piercing noise broke the night. The army of Bahrain charged at us and we ran for our lives. We ran onto The River and set sail. The army got onto their ships and started to give chase. The River shook violently and a man accidentally dropped his lightning spear into the sea and electricity spread everywhere, even onto the other's boat but not on The River because it was wooden. The soldiers on other ships were immediately electrified and didn't have the energy to row their boats. As we rowed away, we celebrated our victory over the evil king of Bahrain.