

FICTION

Group



The Final Truth

Quarry Bay School, Barton, Luke – 9

"Sir! Ship sighted!" called a sailor on board Admiral Zheng He's flagship, *The Liberty*. "Do you think they're traders from across the seas?" Zheng He shouted across his ship filled with cargo as he took in a big whiff of the smell of beautiful flowers and spices. He was back in the Straits of Malacca for another treasure voyage two years after they had killed the infamous Cantonese pirate Chen Zuyi. "We have no idea, sir," another sailor answered. "Look! They're raising a flag!" It was the dreaded flag that all traders hated and feared. The Chinese flag with yellow skulls instead of stars. It only meant one thing: Cantonese pirates.

Another flag was then raised. It was the terrible red one that signified death for all. No one on the fleet was to be spared, especially the Admiral. The mysterious pirate across was thinking of the most excruciating death imaginable for Zheng He, while looking at the massive treasure fleet. It may look glorious and beautiful now, he grimaced, but it would be more befitting when reduced to ashes. Already he could smell the burning embers of the treasure ships after he has had his way. He ordered his fleet into an almost invincible flanking position.

Meanwhile, Zheng He was studying this pirate as he ordered his crew to prepare the cannons and man the decks. "Prepare for battle! Get to your stations!" Admiral Zheng He hollered. Whoever this pirate was, he thought to himself, he knew he was facing an opponent as skillful and intelligent as he was.

The pirate mastermind also ordered his men to load the cannons in anticipation of the major victory that he had envisioned. He gave command for all of his men to charge forward. The famous Admiral countered this attack by ordering all his combat ships to turn to their portside and open up on the cannons, with smoke billowing in full force. At first the battle was not going well for Zheng He. He had started with a moderate fleet of combat ships but in no time he was down to around half the number. But Zheng He had wisely ordered his crew to keep the treasure ships away from the battle in case the pirates sank them.

However, the pirate had taken more casualties despite seeming like he had the winning edge, due to his recklessness. He had started the battle with a superior force three times larger, but unbelievably in a few hours it was almost a draw between the two sides. To counter this, the pirate had ordered every single ship to hit portside hard and fire their cannons with maximum power so smoke rained down on everyone. This resulted in the destruction of a few more of Zheng He's ships and even more suffering severe damage, leaving him with only a handful of battle-ready combat ships.

The pirate was feeling extremely smug about the outcome of the battle. He was gloating too much to realise that half of Zheng He's remaining ships had managed to outflank his own forces. The Admiral felt his hopes rising as he witnessed his enemy's errors.

Zheng He's plan was beginning to come together. The famous Admiral's fleet had now surrounded the larger, more powerful enemy fleet. It continued bombarding the opponent, obliterating some of the pirate ships. But the pirate retaliated by blowing up even more of Zheng He's ships. It dawned on the Admiral that the tide could be turning against him and called out: "Men! Whoever this pirate is, his fleet is far too strong for us! We will retreat now but we will return!". The pirate mastermind began laughing his loudest at Zheng He's retreat and his crew celebrated their supposed victory with heavy drinking and merrymaking.

Several hours later, Zheng He and his crew had recouped for a final all-out battle. His fleet sailed back in heavy mist and his men began firing the cannons while the mystery pirate and his crew were still asleep. They took out even more of the pirate's ships. The enemy crew awoke with a start and jumped up to duty, bumping and pushing each other overboard to man the cannons. They steered the flagship in a drunken stupor, crashing some ships and leaving them with an even smaller fleet..

The *Liberty's* heavy firepower took out some more of the pirate's fleet. Now the heat was really on. It came down to just the two flagships fighting for survival. The pirate ship fired fiercely, which saw *The Liberty's* sails being damaged but the ship remained standing. Zheng He remained calm and ordered his men to fire the only ammunition they had left to blow a tiny hole in the hull of the opposing flagship. There was no

way they could win now. Zheng He went to face the devilish pirate. "We surrender, but I have a proposal for you. I will give you my ship, my cargo and myself on the condition that you spare the lives of my crew. Do you accept this generous offer?" The corrupt, nefarious pirate laughed hysterically in victory. "I accept! Do you realise this is my revenge for you killing my father Chen Zuyi? For I am the shrewd and cunning pirate Chen Hanyi!" Unbeknownst to Zheng He, the anger and hate for him lingered in the Chen family. The mastermind pirate had turned out to be Chen Hanyi, who had spent months hunting down his father's killer to seek vengeance.

A few hours later, Zheng He was tied to a mast for maximum security. He had just witnessed his enemy blowing up his ship and stealing his cargo. With all the pirates getting drunk and falling asleep, Zheng He stealthily whipped out a small knife to cut through the rope and finally broke free.

He crept to the cargo hold and found it, filled with barrels of gunpowder. He also found some tough wire and a lit candle. He stuck one end of the wire in one of the gigantic gunpowder barrels and he brought the other end to the top of the stairs. He grabbed the candle and lit the wire, and dropped it on the ground for the fire to spread. He could smell the fuse burning as he ran. He sprinted across the massive ship and quickly got in a tiny rowing boat which he unclipped and as fast as he could, rowed half a mile away across the freezing, icy seas with his heart pounding. He waited for what seemed like an eternity. Suddenly, his concentration was interrupted by a massive explosion. His plan had worked and he breathed a humongous sigh of relief. He stared intently as the entire blazing ship sank.

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Quarry Bay School, Maxwell, Yu Miller – 10

1407, April, Tuesday

I looked out to the horizon and saw the first rays of sunlight. Slowly the fireball rose out of the ocean and a breeze flowed through the air. What I've learned as a sailor is that it's an advantage to get up early. That way you get some time to yourself without other sailors picking on you. And I did get picked on. A lot. Especially because I was the only female on board. Women weren't allowed to sail, but I had to make money for my family, so I managed to sneak on-board as a man. And by the time they figured it out, we were well away from the port. Soon we'd start our daily mission of searching for foreign lands to give gifts to, to show how strong and wealthy China is, and earn allies. I felt a tap on my shoulder and someone calling my name, Lin Ling. It was my best friend Wang Wei. We became friends when I saved him from drowning. He'd been thrown overboard by the furious waves, and I grabbed a rope and hauled him out while everyone else cowered in their bunks. He was the only boy who didn't bully me for being a woman.

"Hey!" He said grinning at me. "Ready to swab the deck?"

"Oh yeah!" I said grinning with equal enthusiasm, despite the boring task at hand. There's no such thing as a boring task with a friend. We started swabbing. It was tedious work, since our ship was huge. Wang and I chatted as the rest of the sailors got up. Soon, the air was filled with cries of, 'Tighten the mizzen mast!' or, 'Get me a bowl of fish!' Quite normal.

Suddenly, I heard shouts of, 'INCOMING FLEET!!!' Wang and I ran to the bow of the ship. All I could see was our accompanying fleet of boats. Then I saw it. Among the haze, I spotted a group of wooden ships, filled to the brim with soldiers. And, on the main mast of the biggest ship, a black flag. As I was the first to see the flag, I quickly showed Wang, who ran off to inform the Captain. Within minutes we were all in armour and bristling with weapons. Except me. I wasn't allowed a weapon, because I was a woman. I watched as the commanders shouted at each other.

"WHO ARE YOU?" bellowed our commander.

"WE ARE CHEN ZUYI'S FLEET!" a gruff voice boomed on the other side, presumably the commander of the approaching ship. "GIVE US ALL THY GOODS IF YA VALUE YE NECKS!"

That's when an arrow flew from our ship. It sailed through the air, and embedded itself in the wood next to the Captain. There was a moment of silence. Then, chaos broke loose.

"NOBODY ATTACKS ME AND GETS AWAY WITH IT! SOLDIERS, ATTACK!" The opposing captain threw a spear with some string attached to it, and it stuck deep into the wood of our boat. I watched in terror as the pirates started scooting up the rope and boarded our ship! Cannons fired, and arrows tore through the sky. Weapons clashed, and sparks flew. I started running.

As I leapt across the deck, I was quickly met by a pirate with a chipped broad blade in his hands. He charged me and I narrowly dodged his sword. This continued until I was at an open hatch at the end of the ship. Then, quick as lightning, I got an idea. As the pirate smiled a smile with far too few teeth, he charged me sword first. I stood my ground for as long as I could, then ducked to the side. The plan worked. He tumbled straight into the hatch, dropping his sword on the way. I locked the hatch, and snatched up the sword.

Turning around, I clambered onto the poop deck, the tallest point on the ship apart from the masts, figuring it would make a good vantage point.

“Well, look who decided to join de fight, eh?” I recognised the accent as the commander of the opponent’s ship, and I turned to face him. He held a dagger in each hand, and wore an eye patch. Classic. I was doomed. I had only a broad blade that I had no idea how to use. Sure enough, he ran towards me, knives trailing behind him. I scrambled onto the mast and started climbing away from him. Following suit, the commander pursued.

Soon enough, there was nowhere else to climb. We had reached a small platform at the highest point of the ship, hundreds of feet above the deck. The commander looked at me menacingly, grasping his knives tightly.

“All right!” I barked at him. “You clearly want me for something, so what is it?”

“Ye want me ta tell ye? Well, it just so happens that you are a women,” he said simply. “And women, are obviously not worthy of a place in dis world. Dey are weak, pests that should be slaves. Come to my ship, and serve me. Or ye die.”

“NEVER!” I said instantly. Now I was angry. Very angry. And then I did one of the stupidest things I’ve ever done. I fell into what I believed to be a fighting stance. The Commander did the same. Simultaneously, we flew at each other.

We locked blades. I was surprisingly fluent with a sword, but the commander was strong. Rage powered me, but soon my sword flew to the sea below. I faced him and waited for the end. The knife rushed forward and I steeled myself. Right before it hit, his knife slanted to the right, just missing me. Then, he tipped and fell to the sea.

Behind him, was Wang, fist at the spot where the commander just stood.

“Wha? He fell... How?... Why? You saved me!”

“Because you’re my friend. And that’s what friends do.”

Friendship Knows No Bounds

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Chan, Ka Ying Cherry – 11

Zheng He's voyage to the west in a historical event in Ming Dynasty. This is also a very famous story.

One day, when Zheng He arrived at the East Indian Ocean, there was a very powerful storm at sea. This was a storm that Zheng He and his friends had never seen before. Whirlpools on the surface of the sea like gates. The sea breeze howled, the wind howled. Suddenly, the ship was turned onto its side without control.

Zheng He was knocked unconscious for seven days and nights. When he awoke, he found the new place was quite different from the place he used to live in. He found that all his companions were missing. He decided to cheer himself up and found his friends. He went out and walked around. He learnt that this was the fishermen village. He saw his companions on the beach and brought them back. Zheng He learned that originally, it was the year one thousand three hundreds and nine, and he had travelled for one hundred years ago!

Zheng He found it very hard to sleep. The next day, he went to the fishermen and thanked them for taking him in. Then Zheng He left the village. He was determined to find his way back.

Zheng He came to the seaside with his compass. He saw a ship at the seaside. They seemed to be prepared to go to the sea. Zheng He talked to the captain and asked for his permission to work on his ship. The captain approved and soon he showed him around the ship. 'Hello! I was the captain of this ship. My name is Tommy. There are four people on board, including me. They are Joe, Tim and Tom. Tim and Tom are twins.' 'Look, this will be your room. Next to Joe's, Tom's and Tim's rooms.'

'Wow! That's good!'

'This is the deck, stern and this is where we eat.'

'Ok, I think your ship is really cool.'

'Next step, let's go!'

'Ok!' Everyone said.

Zheng He fell asleep in his room. Tok tok tok... Tim tapped on the door of Zheng He's room, in a hurry.

Zheng He was awakened by a knock at the door. 'What has happened?' he asked when he was opening the door. 'The captain is looking for you, it's urgent, you'd better hurry.' Zheng He found Tommy. His face was filled with confusion and fear. He called Zheng He into a small room. He said, 'Zheng He, when I looked into the sea, I saw something terrible. It's so terrifying and scary but I am unsure of what it is exactly.' Tommy explained that he asked Zheng He to his room because he had experienced sailing and maybe, hopefully, he had come across these creatures before. Tommy took him to the deck and instructed him to look carefully into the deep blue sea. 'That is a sea monster!' Zheng He said in shock.

'Sea monster?' Tommy asked.

'Yes, they're sea monster. They're very ferocious. Keep your voice down or they would feel annoying. They hate it when the people interrupted them during their sleep.' Zheng He whispered.

'Wow, you know so much,' Tommy said.

'What are you doing?' Joe came out and asked.

'Hush!' Zheng He and Tommy said.

But it was too late. The sea monster woke up. It roared in anger. The noise made Tim and Tom come out of their room. They were startled.

'What's happened?' Tim and Tom asked.

'There seems to be a sea monster in this part of the ocean,' Joe said.

'That's terrible, how are we going to escape from being hurt?' asked Tom in a trembling voice.

'There's no way,' Zheng He replied.

The sea monster rushed to the ship in a crazed frenzy. Zheng He took out his knife and stabbed the sea monster's abdomen.

'Whined!' The sea monster gave a terrible cry and fell down...

Zheng He saved everyone.

Tommy said, 'Zheng He, thank you, otherwise our voyage would have been ended in devastation.'

'It was at least I could have done in return for your kind hospitality.' Zheng He replied.

Over the following weeks, Zheng He became more familiar with Tommy, Joe, Tim and Tom. Their friendship was growing from deeper and deeper. Their journey was drawing to an end. All the places they planned to visit had been ticked off their list. Zheng He also slowly found that the gate-like whirlpool had been on the sea. He understood that he had come to this world because of the disorder of time and space. He told his partner, 'In fact I have come from another world, and now I have to go back. I hope you can continue to take risks. Tommy, you can be a better Captain.'

'Goodbye everyone!'

'Goodbye, Zheng He!'

Then Zheng He jumped down into the whirlpool...The next day, Zheng He returned to the reality and lay on the ship of his friends. They continued their voyage.

Zheng He's Voyage to the West

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Cheng, Hei Tung Yuko – 10

I was the last and the youngest sailor that the great explorer Zheng He recruited for his voyage to the west. I am lucky simply because I was picked up right by the pier. Our voyage departed from Nanjing, travelling across the Chinese territory and finally assembling in Jiangsu Province.

Our plan was to make a long journey to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, and to visit about 30 countries and regions. By the end of this journey we would visit various places like Java, Malacca, Sri Lanka and Pengheng! We would also visit the East Africa, the Red Sea and the State.

'Hey, kid! What's your name?' Zheng He said to me.

'I... I don't know,' I hesitated for a little and said. Zheng He patted my head with a broad smile and said, 'Let's pick a new name for you. How about we call you Hope?'

I nodded my head and Zheng He laughed.

'What a meaningful name! We use the word 'hope' when we are desperate but still hope that something good may happen!' Came a low thick voice from old Zhang. He had been following Zheng He for many years. He was known as the most ill-tempered officer on the voyage.

Zheng He touched my head and said, 'Yes! Hope is the best gift I can give you, right? And you are our new member. Will you accept the commands of the captain?' Without hesitation, I said, 'I will!' Zheng He laughed and said, 'Let's stop wasting time and get started quickly.'

I soon picked up the skills of handling ropes on the deck. I got to know most of the crew members very well as time went by. My favourite part was playing Chinese chess with the Marine boilers in the engine room. There was a time old Zhang caught me when I was goofing around in the engine room. 'What are you doing here?' yelled old Zhang. He grabbed my clothes and lifted me in the air. I was soon pulled out from the room and locked in a stinky fish tank stored in bottom of the voyage. To my surprise, he started to tell me his story, 'I was a naughty young boy like you when I first joined the crew. There was a time I dropped the end of an anchor line because I was not focused on my job when we were parking on the pier, so Zheng He brought me here to this ill-smelling fish tank. Instead of punishing me, he taught me the skills of anchoring patiently. It was a new start for me...' said the wise old man. We spent many days on the sea and we finally arrived at the island of Java. There are a lot of beautiful natural resources and plenty of cultural sites, but after a few days we went to the next destination.

Along the way we passed Sumatra, Su Lu and Peng Hang. However, before the next destination, we encountered a huge storm.

That morning, the sea was still calm but by noon it became rough. Zheng He said, 'This means that the storm is coming, everyone hurry up and prepare the ship for the upcoming storm and to take all precautionary measures.'

I had never experienced a storm while on the sea before, and I was so frightened that the ship would roll over from the huge waves. The members on the ship told me to keep clam and drink a bowl of ginger soup. 'This will help relieve your worries and keep you calm!' I nodded and took it all in, but I still couldn't conquer my fear. I was shivering and believed this was the scariest moment in my life.

Two hours later, a strong wind started blowing towards us, and we all went to the cabin. We hugged the railings and pillars tightly. The strong wind blew my hat away and the wooden stools on the boat fell down. The ship swayed violently, and I was totally unstable. Soon, it started raining, and the pillars next to me suddenly broke. We just held it up for about an hour, and after that we felt the wind was weakening. At this time, Zheng He said, 'The storm will be over soon, hold on a little longer'. Soon enough, after ten minutes, the storm stopped and I felt a total relief.

Because of the storm, many members of the ship got seasick, and everyone vomited. Only several other members and I who drank ginger soup didn't have any problems with seasickness. We helped Zheng He's to clean up the boat. At this time, the sea was calm and we could finally see the blue sky hanging above our heads as the sun was shining again. I felt much more comfortable and everybody finally could get some rest.

The beautiful sunset plunged through the sea, and the fish were jumping out of the water. The flying fish were so mesmerizing that all sailors on the deck thought it was a miracle. They were so amazed by the scene that played out before them.

Soon we arrived at our next destination Zhen La, where we stayed for a few days. Throughout that time we were able to taste the delicious food and met the friendliest local people as we tried to understand the simplicity of their ordinary lives. But not long after, it was time to set sail again. That day we were ready to sail off, but in a few moments it became a downpour. As I looked out the window I could only see the awful weather and nothing more. I was so excited because my thoughts were already somewhere else, in some other parts of this beautiful world.

Diary of a Young Girl

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Huang, Zhou Jun Chloe – 9

At 10, I thought how old 60 would be. Now at 60, I think how young 10 was and how much I have learned. I am turning to 60, opening my diary. I quietly read the familiar messy script detailing my experience. Ignoring my grand-children's shouting screams, throwing toys and jumping on and off furniture, I started to read...

Now I use my time machine to travel back to the Ming Dynasty. I am so excited that I couldn't fall asleep. I am going to meet Zheng He who is the leader of the Ming Treasure Voyages. As we all know, from 1405 until 1433, the Chinese imperial eunuch Zheng He led seven ocean expeditions for the Ming emperor that were unmatched in world history.

At 8 a.m. on Monday morning in May in 1405, we were going to start our voyage to the first station, India. The weather was fine enough to set sail. A lot of citizens standing on the shore were waiting to send us off warmly. Later they disappeared in our eyes. I was sure this would be a great voyage in the history of the world. I was the assistant of Zheng He. As the leader of this voyage he was very busy from early morning till late night. His goal was to help someone who was in need and give them food and silk as gifts. Also our mission was to know more about the world and get some useful information that could make the Ming Dynasty more powerful.

At 6 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon in August, we finally arrived India. Zheng He told us that we should be polite to give others a good first impression. At that time the sunset was so fantastic that it made the people's faces look like red apples. We were warmly welcomed by the local people in India. Look! Some of them were dancing and some of them were singing, some of them even gave us a lot of nice fruits which I had never seen before. They were very friendly and helpful. The only problem was we couldn't communicate very well with each other. We could just only use hand signs to try to tell them what we thought. Sometimes it was embarrassing and funny.

The next morning Zheng He told us that we were going to set off to the next station, Africa. We reluctantly left India at 6:30 in the morning and set sail to Africa. On the way to Africa, we met some nasty pirates and they wanted the treasures we had on our ship. Fortunately, we were carrying military forces and weapons. We scared them away. The ocean current was complicated during the trip to Africa. One of our boats sank into the sea. But Zheng He was brave all the time. He always believed that we could make it out.

At 11 p.m. on Tuesday in December, we arrived at Africa. The people there we saw were black. The weather was very hot. We only needed to wear shirts. We were very curious about the weather there. We also met a lot of peaceful people there and gave away the wonderful presents. We brought back the African zebras and giraffes as gifts for our Imperial Zoo.

We arrived in China safely in March the following year. The King of Ming Dynasty was very satisfied with what we had done. He rewarded me a house and I lived there for more than 40 years...

Twist in the Tale of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Liu, Guang Hao Steven – 11

In Chinese history, there lived a very famous eunuch named Zheng He. He was famed for his skills in navigation. He was a Chinese mariner, an explorer, a diplomat and a fleet admiral. Aside from these accolades and achievements, Zheng He was also smart and possessed a kind heart. He was always faithful to his friends, but he tended to have friends that end up betraying him.

The Emperor Zhu Li liked him very much, because he had an attention for details and was meticulous about everything. The Emperor was at ease in delegating him the responsibilities. This time, the Emperor asked him to travel the seas so as to strengthen relations with the foreign countries. Zheng accepted the arduous task. He carried 27,000 people, 200 ships and started travelling from Nanjing.

Zheng He was excited and nervous for his trip. He had no idea what was going to happen but he was ready to accept this arduous task. Early the next morning, the sound of beautiful waves woke him up. He rubbed his eyes and looked up to the sky. The sun shone on his face. The clear sea wind blew and he inhaled fresh air into his lungs. Zheng's ship was in charge of leading the fleet and he had an eagle's eye on the horizon. 'Hand me the telescope and the map,' he instructed the crew. 'We're about to reach our first destination! Aha! Full speed ahead!' Some time later, they arrived to their first destination, Champa Kingdom.

When Zheng directed them to exchange goods, a man walked to him. 'Hello! Mr Zheng He, can I work on your fleet?' he asked with his squeaking voice. Zheng thought him as strange, and paid no attention to him. The next day, they prepared to go to Java. The man woke up before the sun rose. He put a bird on the ground and took out a roll of paper to let the bird catch it. He patted the bird gently and it flew away. The strange man later appeared once again, this time he was walking on a corridor. The man saw Zheng in his periphery and immediately scuttled away. 'That was close, he almost caught me!' The man whispered to himself. Due to the long distance from JangCheng (Champa Kingdom) to Java, it took them at least six days to arrive by the ship.

On the fourth day, the weather turned worse. The fierce waves beat against the boat. It was raining and the sounds of thunder rumbled. The waves made the ship rock vehemently and Zheng fell violently ill! Suddenly, one of the young sailors pointed forward and shouted, 'Look at the huge ship! That is the biggest ship I've ever seen! Wait, a skeleton? Hey! A pirate ship is coming towards us! Everybody, run!' Everyone froze in their place. They didn't know what to do. Only an old man ran to the helm. He turned the helm 180 degrees and the ship immediately took a sharp turn. Because of the heavy rain, the fleet was dispersed in different locations. One of the pirate's cannons hit on Zhen's ship. 'Boom!' With the sheer force of the cannon, the hull started to break. Unfortunately, this was compounded with the waves that hit the ship again with deadly and continuous blows. The ship started to sink. Even worse still, two more pirate ships appeared over the horizon. The situation continues to get worse! 'Boom! Boom!' Two shells flew over Zheng's head. Two more shells hit the ship. Suddenly, a pirate captain shouted, 'I want them alive...'

At this point, the pirate ships accelerated. The pirate ships drew closer to them. 'Launch the rope! Pull back!' The pirate ship was attached and boarded the ship successfully. They pointed their swords at them and told them not to move. At that moment, the man whom Zheng thought was very strange stood out.

'Good evening, my honorable Mr. Pirate Eric. It's my honor to help you with your work.'

The pirate captain touched his head and said, 'Nice work! I am going to take down this fleet and I am going to be the greatest pirate in the history.'

'You will never make it! Look at your dirty beard, it's covered with fleas and all kinds of worms. Sick pirates!' Zheng retorted bravely. But with a clink the pirate knocked him unconscious with a bat and everything in his vision faded away.

The sound of the water droplets woke Zheng. He found himself and three other crew members locked up in a dark room. There were many cobwebs and the room was so dirty. Zheng looked out through a crack from the iron door. He looked over his surrounding and saw a pirate standing in the doorway. There was a set of keys hanging on his trousers. Thinking of the dire situation he was in, Zheng pondered for a long time and thought of an escape plan. He waited patiently and thought of executing his plan during nightfall.

At night, it was very dark. A cry came from the room. 'AHHHHHH! My stomach hurts so badly! I am going to die! Who can help me!'

The pirate nearby looked curiously and opened the door to examine the ruckus. Suddenly, Zheng lunged at him, tied him up and gagged him as they slipped out quietly. Zheng instructed the other three crew members to leave. He stayed because he still had plans to exact revenge. He meandered through the rooms and found the captain's room. Inside, the pirate captain slept like a pig. Zheng slowly tied him up, slapped him awake and said triumphantly, 'I just said that you could never make it! Goodbye, sick pirate!' and with those last words, Zheng left the room but made sure to throw a match, watching as it burned into flames. He looked at the fire and thought, 'These are the consequences of your betrayal.' Exhausted but undefeated, Zheng set sail back home, next to the Emperor.

A Trip to the Sea

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Long, Ho Sen Mathew – 11

The brave explorer, Zheng He, had just experienced his first voyage, decided to embark on another journey to the seas. This time, he was requested by the Emperor to escort ambassadors of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam back to their countries. In order to avoid any unexpected situations happening, Zheng He took a myriad of treasures including precious silk, which was an extremely valuable commodity at the time. He believed that the value of this product could help him solve any problems that they may encounter during their voyage.

The sky was clear and the breeze was mild on the day when Zheng, his sailors and three ambassadors set off. 'It's a good start! This trip will go smoothly as expected,' thought Zheng. One of his sailors controlled the rudder, others stayed on the deck to safeguard the voyage. Zheng and the three ambassadors sat inside the cabin, drank beer and exchanged their opinions on worldwide issues of politics, economy and culture.

The weather was beautiful. The motor of the ferry was powerful. All the sailors were taking rest in turns. The one who controlled the rudder was tired and he closed his eyes. Suddenly, a thunder boomed. Everyone in the ferry stood frozen and stared in shock because of the sudden loud noise. The sky loomed as it got darker and darker. The ferry started swirling, wagging from side to side. Suddenly, there was a shot of white light that blinded everyone's eyes. In the twinkling of an eye, lightning came one after another. Unfortunately, the sailor who stood in the watchtower was struck by the lightning and died afterwards. All other people were frightened. Some of them huddled together and cried. Some of them knelt down to pray. Some of them held the treasure tightly. What a mess it was in the cabin!

Zheng looked around and noticed that everyone was scared. Being the caring leader, he wanted to go around and comfort them. He gathered everyone for a meeting. 'Listen everyone! I know things look bleak right now, but things are going to get better. This too shall pass. God bless us! Stop crying! Cheer up! You are not alone – I'm here!' All the sailors and ambassadors were touched and this speech enabled them to restore their morale.

Zheng went outside of the cabin, pacing back and forth, trying to figure out a solution. Then he found a small gold shiny point in the distance. He was afraid that it was a dream. He kept rubbing his eyes to check if he was dreaming and alas, the small gold shiny point remained in the distance. 'Oh My God! This is not a fantasy! It's true! Island ahead! We made it!' thought Zheng, his eyes were widening. He rushed back to the cabin and told the good news to everybody. They all looked out of the windows. A statue was standing right there. The statue's body emanated a halo of light extending around him for two meters. The lines on the statue's palms were long and deep. Its face was long and beautiful! Its eyelids were well proportioned. Its hair had long curls. The ambassador of Thailand shouted excitedly, 'That's my Buddha that I believe in! My home!' Zheng asked the experienced sailor to control the rudder and keep moving forward.

Four hours later, they arrived at the pier. Everyone was relieved. 'Finally, we have made it! We are safe!' The ambassador of Thailand led Zheng and his sailors to the Emperor's Palace. In order to thank Zheng for all he had done, the Emperor held a grand party at night to celebrate their success. Zheng and his sailors enjoyed this big feast and wanted to give away the gifts to Thailand. 'Dear Emperor of Thailand, here are our most valuable treasure from our country: silverware and gold jewels, ceramics, silk, seeds and a golden cookbook. I want to give them to your temples and share them with the Thai people because the Buddha gave us hope when we fell through hard times during the voyage. Moreover, our Ming Dynasty Emperor wants to build a good relationship with your country. So we are friends now!' said Zheng. 'Thank you, Zheng! We wish you good luck! Cheers, my friend!' replied the Emperor of Thailand.

The next day, Zheng and his sailors set off early. 'Go, friends! Let's head to another destination!' He looked through the horizon with a proud and knowing smile on his face.

A Fairy–Tale Adventure

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Wei, Yu Fan Amy – 9

Zheng He’s voyages in the South Seas were adventurous, exciting and he went as far as to Africa...

I was one of the few privileged members of the crew of this fleet. As far as I remembered, it was one of the most exhilarating and challenging experiences I had ever had.

The first place we visited was a remote but beautiful area called Jewel City. Jewel City certainly lived up to its name, the place was filled with jewelries, and it made the city dazzle from the various gemstones littered around it. They were so shiny that if you looked at them for more than a few seconds, you’d become mesmerized from the way it glimmered under the light. It was such a unique sight that I did not think you would experience anything like it anywhere else. Aside from the glitz and glamour of Jewel City, it was also the people who made the city such a magical place. They were so friendly that you wouldn’t feel homesick from travelling at all. At the end of the day, they were happy to share their riches and urged the crew to bring gemstones back to our homeland as presents to our royal emperor.

The second place we journeyed to was a place called the Green Mountains. It was an enchanting yet an enigmatic place. It was a magical place inhabited by fairies and other enchanting creatures. The fairies were so tiny that they could fit into the palm of your hands. Upon entering the mountains, we congregated with the Queen of the fairies and she bewitched us by helping us turn into the same size as the fairies and having our own wings to fly with. In this way, we saw so many different kinds of birds with all kinds of colours around the mountains. They always flew around this land. It was one of the most magical and out of this world experiences I had ever had.

The third place we travelled to however, was the most frightening one. It was an area filled with pirates. We were sailing on the quiet sea, enjoying the gentle music played by our lovely violinist, and dancing with each other happily on board when we suddenly noticed five pirate boats surrounding us, menacingly circling our ship. They appeared out of nowhere that we were all shocked and surprised. We were so scared that we stood frozen in our place. They climbed up onto our boat and grabbed the jewelries from Jewel City. The servants shouted loudly, ‘Your Majesty, be careful!’ ‘Protect our ship!’ I yelled to the crew members and instructed them to take their stands to defend the ship. Somehow the memories of Neverland came flooding to my mind. I remembered how brave Peter Pan was, and how he taught us to fight with pirates. I quickly led our crew to battle and we all fought bravely against them. However, the pirates were successful in looting the treasures from Jewel City. After this frightening and exciting moment, it was time to go back to our motherland.

We sailed back to China. When we arrived, Ming Cheng Zu was there. He proudly welcomed us back home. It was a big celebration. We had parties all night and drank a lot of special drinks that the fairies taught us how to brew. However I did not drink them because my Mum said I was too young to drink. The second morning, every one woke up feeling strange, they forgot everything that had happened on our voyage. This is the reason why our adventures were not in any history books or records.

But the most curious thing is that why am I the only one that could remember the adventures?

A Hero's Story

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Wu, Nicholas – 11

Once upon a time in China, there was a great and powerful Emperor. He was revered across the country and ruled most of the land. His life was perfect, he had unlimited amounts of gold, controlled many kingdoms and had everything he ever wished for. It was a natural consequence that he would be proud and happy of what he had attained. However, not even all the riches of the world or the material goods he possessed were enough to make him be contented.

There were times when the emperor felt empty. What was the problem? He couldn't figure it out. So, one day, he gathered all the officers and wise men to congregate in his palace. He told them how he felt discontented and was yearning for something to fill the void that he felt. One of the Emperor's officers in the meeting was called Zhang He. He wanted to prove that he was trust-worthy, so he said, 'Your majesty, I would like to be of service and help you.' 'How?' inquired the Emperor. 'How could you help me not to be so empty? 'I will make you the richest Emperor in all of the history! I will travel half the world to find you all the treasure!' This claim was certainly no easy feat, so the Emperor was naturally skeptical, but since he felt he had nothing to lose, he trusted Zhang He and said, 'I have made up my mind! I trust you will bring me the treasure you mention and I declare that all the officers have to answer to Zhang He!' The next day, Zhang called for a meeting. He was going to travel by ship. He ordered the officers to prepare two hundred ships. He needed to be sure that he had enough spaces to put in all the new treasure he was going to discover. But the problem was, would his plan work?

Zhang couldn't sleep. He kept on ruminating about his plans. It was a great responsibility that he embarked on. There were two outcomes: if he succeeded, he would bring glory and fame to his country and his Emperor. But what if he failed? The consequences of his failure would lead to a fate worse than death: shame. 'I will succeed!' with this thought, he fell asleep. When came the day of the journey began, Zhang felt proud.

They travelled for days. At times the sun was so scorching hot that walking by the deck felt like walking on a bed of charcoals. He scoured and looked for signs of land, but to no avail. Zhang started to wonder if the map was correct. But when all hope seemed lost, an officer shouted, 'Island! Island! Island dead ahead!' Zhang immediately got up to look at the island. It was Egypt! They went to see the king, who lived in a big palace made of stones. The two leaders had a long conversation about their countries. Finally, Zhang said, 'With all due respect, your majesty, I have bought some gifts from China. I wonder if you had any gifts from Egypt?' Later on, the king's servants brought a big statue of an Egyptian God. In exchange, the king received silk, gold and valuable vases that Egyptians had never seen before.

As night fell, Zhang and his army returned to their ships. They were unaware that pirates had been watching them. The ships were undefended, it was a perfect time to strike. They silently tried to board onto the ship, but Zhang heard their voices. So, thinking on his feet, he gathered his army quickly and quietly, and right when the pirates were about to attack, they rushed into battle. The pirates were surprised. They didn't expect Zhang's army to be pre-emptive. Under the leadership of Zhang, the pirates fell one by one. The pirates retreated, but Zhang kept attacking. The pirates who escaped thought they were lucky but their luck was about to change for the worse. Zhang fought them back to their boats. After a long battle, the pirates that survived became captives of Zhang. He noticed the pirate's ship was shining, so he and his men went on board. Nothing seemed special on the ship but suddenly, he stepped on a secret switch that opened a secret room. The room was filled with gold, crystals and jewelry!

After Zhang's crew packed away the treasures, they sailed home in victory. They travelled for days but it was too hot. They heard a gunshot, it was the pirates again! The pirates' captain shouted, 'Revenge! Boys, kill'em all!' Zhang's army was attacked, and the pirates were too strong. Then Zhang shouted, 'Retreat!' The crew members all jumped onto the other ships. The pirate's captain was happy, but he quickly realized that all the other ship canons were aimed at his ship. 'Fire!' Zhang ordered. 'BOOM!' A huge explosion caused a huge wave, causing the entire ship to sink to the bottom of the ocean. Later that day, the Emperor received the treasures and heard of their heroic story. But he was curious: 'If the entire ship sank, how could they have the gold?' Zhang laughed and replied, 'I actually never put the treasure in the main ship, because if there were any enemies, they would always target at the main ship.' The Emperor understood and realized at the same time why Zhang succeeded. He was a man of great intellect and instinct.

The celebrations were festive, the stories of Zhang's heroic journey spread through the city like wild fire. They chanted and shouted in unison, 'Zhang He! Long live Zhang He!' echoed through the streets. Zhang He was proud. He had received one of the greatest honors: gaining the Emperor's trust, recognition and applaud from his fellow countrymen. The whole city, the whole of China knew his name! But with a hint of a smile on his face, he looked up and thought, this is not it, 'My journey has just begun...'

New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Zheng, Man Ching Wendy – 9

‘Zheng, can you find out what the west is and tell me the stories and happenings during your voyage?’ Zhu Di grinned.

‘Yes, my emperor,’ said Zheng He.

In a grand palace, a man knelt on the ground, talking to his emperor, respectfully. The new emperor, Zhu Di, had just beaten his nephew, Zhu Yunwen, a few years ago and tried to consolidate his domination. Emperor Zhu walked down slowly; bent down a little bit and whispered, ‘there is one more secret mission I want you to complete...’

The man went out of the palace, with great excitement. He was just a nameless eunuch in the Ming army, but Zhu Di discovered his potential to lead an army. His name is Zheng He. He won many battles in JINGKANG and was awarded by treasure and power. And now, when Zhu needed his help, Zheng accepted his command without hesitation.

‘I must complete the mission in order to show my gratitude to Zhu.’ Zheng murmured.

Zheng had planned for the voyage for a long time, and now, his dreams finally came true. Zheng stood on the huge flagship, looking at the crew below. What he did from then on would be written into the history books and would be eulogized by the descendants! He overlooked the ocean, commanding in a loud and exciting voice.

‘Here we go!’ said Zheng He.

Everything seemed to go well with sufficient food, nice weather and powerful crew in the first two days. However, an unexpected record-breaking hurricane hit the ocean. Zheng and his crew were really shocked. They tried really hard and utilized all the solutions which they could come up with to fight against the disaster. They packed all their goods and food up and buried them under the dock. Zheng led his excellent crew to drive the ship to another direction in order to escape from the storm. This ‘fight’ lasted for approximately 56 hours. Finally, they landed on an island and survived. Although they had lost some packages and the ship was damaged, in a few days they could continue their journey. They celebrated the success of the first fight that night, begging for peace for the journey and then encamped at the coast to have a rest.

On the second day, they were awakened by bursts of gunfire. The sentry reported that they landed on Java, the local people divided into East Java and West Java who had a civil war. It also described the miserable condition. Zheng gathered the crew without hesitation in order to stop the people from killing one another. Zheng got onto a hill and asked a soldier to shout at the people, ‘We are from the great Ming and travel on the sea in order to bring peace to the countries nearby. Now, in the name of Ming, I command you to stop shooting at us.’

But the battle was so dreadful that the Java people ignored Zheng. The Java army slaughtered 170 people of Zheng’s crew. The battle lasted for 4 hours and the king of the West Java was going to win the battle. However, Zheng showed his army force at the coast, making the king so scared. He decided to invite Zheng to sit down for a meeting. Zheng accepted without hesitation.

‘Force can never be the solution,’ Zheng accused the king of killings, ‘only when you implement wholesome policies can the people in your country worship and respect you.’ Zheng was so angry at the war because he experienced an extremely fierce civil war a few years ago, making the previous emperor disappeared. Zheng had a long speech and found many solutions instead of fighting against in the war. The king of the west listened to him carefully. The army was in such silence. When Zheng finished his speech he stared at the king angrily.

‘Easier said than done, Zheng,’ said the king calmly. ‘Just take you as an example. You are showing your great force in order to bring peace for us and ask us not to force anyone any more. It’s not convincing at all.’ Zheng was speechless and contemplated for a long time. He left Java a few days later.

'I also went to India and exchanged goods with them. They greeted us with such friendship. Also, we built monuments with some local countries and brought technologies for them...' Zheng knelt in the palace, representing his great adventure.

'OK,' said the emperor. 'It was a great adventure I believe. How about the secret mission?'

'I had found him, my emperor,' said Zheng. The emperor was shocked at his words. Then the emperor asked in such a great worry, 'What did you do to him?'

'We also went to Java and they were having a fierce civil war. I asked them to stop but they told me that I brought force to them by force, which was not convincing. Actually, I thought of the event for such a long time and couldn't answer them. Could you please answer it, my emperor?'

The secret mission was to find Zhu Yunwen, the previous emperor of Ming, who had disappeared after the civil war. Zhu Di was afraid that he would have a bad influence on his domination and wanted Zheng to find him and kill him.

Zhu was lost in thought.

Zheng went down in history, for his seven voyages, bringing peace and technologies selflessly to the countries he passed by.

Zhu didn't concern him with the previous emperor any more.

An Exciting Adventure

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Chan, Adam – 11

Pirate John usually travelled the seas for gold to steal. He was a rude man, he always made up stories and said bad words. He had a big nose, a small mouth and a pair of big ears. He was also very greedy. Even though if something was old, if it could be sold, he would steal it anyway.

Pirate John had a lot of pirate ships and he also had a lot of minions. He had a lot of treasure chests too. He always carried a lot of gold, escaping from enemy ships and then selling gold on the black market.

One day, Pirate John's enemies found out he was stealing gold from their treasure chests. They sent some soldiers to fight him. Even though they had many people, Pirate John had been a general before he was a pirate. He was very strong and powerful. He could knock out anyone. His enemies felt very angry about that, so they decided to fight him by himself with their strongest team member. At the same time, Pirate John also called his team for the battle. Pirate John had more than one million sailors and soldiers. Even though the battle hadn't started, his enemies were scared by his army and ran away.

Pirate John went to an island with some of his sailors. They found cannibals on the island. The cannibals were very hungry, so they decided to kill Pirate John and his sailors. "There is not enough time to leave here," said Pirate John worriedly. "There are more than one million cannibals on the island!" Pirate John took out his 'final weapon' – it was a gun. He shot at them. But there were too many cannibals there. Even though Pirate John kept shooting at them, they kept staying alive.

At that moment, Pirate John had a brilliant idea. He took out his phone and made a call. "Hey!" Pirate John said. "How can I help you?" replied the nearest Kingdom-U-Kingdom.

"Can you help me? I am stuck on an island which has many cannibals. Can you save us, please? If it works, I will give you \$1 million" said Pirate John.

"No problem!" replied Kingdom-U-Kingdom. "Please wait for five minutes," they said.

Pirate John felt very excited about this great news. But suddenly a big snake came out from a cave. "Oh no, start running!" said Pirate John to the sailors. The huge snake was chasing them!

Suddenly, Pirate John turned around to face the snake and fired his gun. The huge snake died and the cannibals also went away. "This is a great adventure!" said Pirate John. "A good pirate should be brave like me, ha ha ha!" laughed Pirate John.

The Selfish King

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Chan, Zachary – 11

On a long summer's day, King Billy was very bored in his castle which he called Brave Castle. He looked around the outside of the castle and he saw a bigger castle in the distance. He thought to himself, 'There will be a lot of gold there'.

King Billy went to the bigger castle and asked their king, 'I'm the king next door to your castle, it's called Brave Castle, can you give me some gold?' The other king answered, 'No! Go back to your castle!' So, King Billy went back to his castle.

King Billy sat on his throne and looked around again. He saw that next to the bigger castle there was a town. A princess had been stolen from the town by a dragon. Billy thought, 'If I can save the princess from the dragon, the other king will maybe give me a lot of gold.' So, Billy called Prince Peter to save the princess.

Prince Peter then came to see Billy. Prince Peter asked, 'King Billy, how can I help you?' King Billy answered, 'Can you help me save the princess from our next-door castle's town?' Prince Peter thought for a minute, then he said, 'Okay, but how do I save the princess?' Billy answered, 'I'll prepare a lot of soldiers for you.' Prince Peter said, 'Okay'.

Prince Peter went back to his room and thought 'Why did King Billy call me to save the princess? What do I need to do? How can I save her?' Prince Peter thought of a lot of questions.

The following week, Prince Peter brought a lot of things for the rescue. King Billy said, 'Peter, you are a prince, so saving the princess is your job. If you can't save the princess, you can't come back to Brave Castle!' Prince Peter was so scared he couldn't come back to Brave Castle, but he said, 'Okay'. Prince Peter left.

At first Prince Peter needed to go into the castle so that he could go inside the town. He ran into the castle without the soldiers seeing him. He then went into the town. The town had a lot of steps, so he needed to climb up them, which took a lot of time.

Then Prince Peter saw the princess, but the dragon was very fast. He tried to attack Prince Peter. Prince Peter took out his sword and attacked the dragon. The dragon fell down and Prince Peter saved the princess. The dragon asked Prince Peter, 'Why do you need to save her?'. Prince Peter answered sadly, 'I don't know. King Billy called me to save the princess,' The dragon was angry and said, 'Oh! that is a selfish king, he only thinks about himself!'. Prince Peter said, 'I think it too'.

They went to Brave Castle to kill the king. King Billy saw Prince Peter had brought the dragon and asked him, 'Prince Peter, why have you brought me a dragon? Where is the princess?' Prince Peter didn't answer. Then he said, 'Dragon, fire!' then the dragon killed the king.

The villagers were very happy that the selfish king was dead, so they chose Prince Peter to be the new king of Brave Castle.

The Prince and Pirate's War

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Keung, Daniel – 11

In the corner of a dark castle, a sailor tried to find a place to cry. The sailor was Paul and he always cried. He was a tall, thin boy with small eyes and small ears. Although he was handsome and hard-working, he always felt sad, like his brain made him cry for no reason.

He had found somewhere to sit and hide, but then he saw something in the sky outside the window. He decided to follow it and chased it all the way to the forest. The thing landed on the grass. It has a box. Paul opened it and he saw a ring, he put on the ring.

“Boom!” an explosion happened, Paul found out that personality had changed, he didn't know what had changed though. He had stopped crying. He felt brave and strong. He did a few air punches and he saw that he was now punching fireballs! He thought, “The king needs someone that is strong to help him. I should go to the Strong Man Competition so I can help the king.”

The next day, Paul went to the Strong Man Competition. Paul needed to do a test to see if he was strong enough to join the competition. Most of the sailors tried to join the competition, but they were too weak to join, only the strongest sailor could join.

Paul went to the test and someone said, “You're too weak to join the competition, now get lost!” Paul said, “I look weak, but I am really strong.” He showed the person how strong he was, and he passed the test to join the competition.

Through the competition, Paul took down the strong sailors one by one, all the sailors taken down by just one hit of Paul's punches. But there was the strongest sailor in the castle left and his name was John. John was pretty strong; nobody could take him down at all. He had helped the king for fifteen years.

Paul and John were both really strong. They fought hard and it took about ten minutes until John was tired. Because of the power of the ring, Paul did not get tired at all. Paul won the competition and he helped the king to do all kinds of stuff like build a bigger castle, take down the beast in the caves and more.

Every day they were doing something new. Paul got rewarded every week and lived in a better room than any other sailor. He now thought life was very good.

Cicilia's Adventures at Sea

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Kwong, Elvina – 11

In a very quiet palace, there was a girl who suddenly ran out of it and went towards the harbour. Her name was Cicilia and she was the daughter of a rich treasure ship owner. Her exciting adventure was going to start.

Cicilia put on boys' clothes to go onto the treasure ship and she hid in a box. After a few hours someone opened the box and shouted, "Oh! Why is there a boy in here?!" As Cicilia jumped out of the box, her hat flew off and her long hair came down. So, the sailors found out that Cicilia was the daughter of the treasure ship owner and they told him that his daughter had gone onto the ship.

When Cicilia's father arrived, he wanted to take her home, but Cicilia told her dad that she wanted to go to have an adventure, to steal treasure with other sailors and to become a captain. Her father agreed she could go, but she needed to bring the most important treasure back, a diamond, before she could become a captain.

Cicilia started her adventure. At first, she and the sailors went to a country that always had wars. Cicilia got very hurt in the wars, but she still helped to steal many things. After that, she went to more countries. Then she went somewhere where there was another huge treasure ship. The sailors in the huge treasure ship wanted to steal their treasure!

When the captain and the sailors climbed onto the ship, Cicilia threw some wooden buckets at the sailors and many of them were killed by Cicilia. At last Cicilia fought with the captain who wanted to steal the treasure and she killed the captain. They then threw all the sailors from the other ship into the sea. Cicilia helped to win the war and everyone was happy. Cicilia learnt that being a sailor of a treasure ship was very hard and challenging, but it was very exciting.

Two months later Cicilia went back home, but she forgot to bring the important treasure back for her father. But her father said, "The most important treasure is here already, that is your experience". In the end Cicilia had become a strong captain and everyone knew her name.

Killing The Monster

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Leung, Jordan – 12

Killing The Monster

Steven was the greatest king in the world. He liked playing sports as he was very strong and fit. Things went horribly wrong when a monster snatched a princess and took her away to the forest. The monster then returned to damage King Steven's castle. King Steven was very scared. Then a boy called Jordan came and talked to the king. Jordan said, 'I can help you to fight the monster, but you need to give your castle to me.' The king thought and then said, 'Yes, if you kill the monster and bring the princess back, I will give my castle to you and the princess will marry you.' Jordan and King Steven shook hands and Jordan went on his way.

Jordan wanted to have a good sword to defeat the monster, so he went to the weapon shop and talked to the owner. Jordan said, 'I want to have a good sword.' The owner replied, 'I can help you to make the sword, but you need to give me a lot of gold. I love gold.' Jordan gave a lot of gold to the owner. The owner felt very happy and excited. Then the owner gave Jordan a good sword. Jordan could use this sword very well and he loved it.

After that, Jordan rode on a horse and went to the forest. He wanted to bring the princess back and kill the monster. In the forest, he saw some bad people and they were fighting with some villagers.

Jordan helped the villagers to kill the bad people. Some people said thank you to Jordan. Then someone said, 'I can help you find the monster, but you need to kill the monster because the monster always kills our villagers. We hate it a lot.' Jordan said, 'Okay, I'll go there because I want to kill the monster.' Jordan helped the villagers to do many things. Although Jordan was very busy, he loved it.

After that, the villagers took Jordan to the monster's home. It was very dirty. Nobody liked it there. Jordan saw the monster and used his sword to fight the monster. The monster fought Jordan too, but Jordan was better than it. The monster was furious. It wanted to kill him. Then Jordan used his sword to kill the monster.

In the end, Jordan took the monster back to the castle and talked to King Steven. Jordan said, 'I killed the monster and brought the princess back. So you need to give your castle to me.' The king said, 'Oh! You've done it, but I don't want to give you my castle because I like this castle and thought you wouldn't bring the princess back.' So Jordan killed King Steven as he would not keep his word.

The Magical Ring

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, So, Daniel – 11

In the corner of a dark castle, a sailor tried to find a place to cry. The sailor was Paul and he always cried. He was a tall, thin boy with small eyes and small ears. Although he was handsome and hard-working, he always felt sad, like his brain made him cry for no reason.

He had found somewhere to sit and hide, but then he saw something in the sky outside the window. He decided to follow it and chased it all the way to the forest. The thing landed on the grass. It has a box. Paul opened it and he saw a ring, he put on the ring.

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Paul and John were both really strong. They fought hard and it took about ten minutes until John was tired. Because of the power of the ring, Paul did not get tired at all. Paul won the competition and he helped the king to do all kinds of stuff like build a bigger castle, take down the beast in the caves and more.

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Saving The Princess

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Ye, Steven – 12

Ken was a poor 19– year– old man who lived in a big city. He was thin and tall with blue eyes. He was brave and outgoing. Although he was good–looking, he did not have any money. He never had enough food to eat.

One day, Ken met a wizard under a tree. The wizard sold a magic book to him for \$10. After that, the wizard disappeared. Ken opened the magic book and got sucked into the book, passing through to a forest.

Ken wanted to get away from the forest, but the forest was so big, he couldn't get out; he was lost. After four days, he was very hungry and thirsty. Then he saw a village. He saw an ugly man running towards him. Ken pleaded, 'Please give me some food, if you don't give me any, I will die.' The ugly man said, 'I can give you food, but you have to help me to do some things.' Ken agreed. Then Ken stayed at the ugly man's home.

After one day, Ken felt great, the ugly man said, 'I want you to help me save the princess and bring her to me. She's locked in a big castle and there is a wicked wizard. I have some food and water, I think you can eat for 6–7 days.'

Ken dressed in his clothes and went out to the village. Ken could see the castle, but it was too far away. After five days, Ken went to a river. He saw some crocodiles there. He was lucky, he was able to swim across the river and no crocodiles ate him.

Ken arrived at the big castle. He got inside the castle and saw the princess in a cage. The princess said, 'Help me! Quick! The wizard is coming here now!' When Ken was opening the cage door, the wizard used magic to turn Ken into a bird.

The princess kissed the bird and he became Ken again. They passed through to the forest. The magic book disappeared, and Ken and the princess enjoyed a new life together.

The Greedy King

Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School, Yeung, Jason – 12

In a golden palace high up in the mountains, there lived a greedy and proud king. He thought he was the smartest man ever in the world. One morning, while he was lying on a bench, he suddenly had a bad idea – to steal gold from another country! Then he started planning...

Two months later, the king had prepared 20 ships and an army to carry out his stealing plan. At the last moment the queen noticed something strange, that there were many ships on the harbour. She asked the king what he was doing. The king was dishonest, he lied, “Erm... I... I am going to mine some... gold”.

The queen thought that the king was making up a story, so she said, “Please don’t tell me lies, I need the truth!”.

The king was surprised that the queen knew he was telling lies, so he said, “Okay, I am going to steal gold from another country. Will you join me?” The queen answered, “Absolutely not! If I join you, maybe we will meet some pirates and then they will kill us!”

The king said, “Oh honey, please come and join us”, but the queen said, “No!”.

The king was upset, he said “If you stay here, you will get bored”. But the queen warned the king, “You may die if you go!”.

“Okay, that’s fine. I will go and you will have to stay here!” the king yelled. “I will stay here and you need to be careful”, the queen said.

Two months later, the king set off for the gold. As he arrived in a nearby country, he went to the countryside and set off some cannons. Then he killed the guards in a bank and robbed it for money. Finally, he tried to rob the government but without success. He was defeated!

The government of the country said it would kill the king if the queen didn’t give \$10 million to the it. So the queen gave \$10 million to the government and saved the king.

“Oh no, I was defeated, and I lost a bunch of money in this war! This is not enough for spending!” the king complained. The queen shouted, “I hate you! I spent \$10 million to save you... and I don’t have enough money to live”.

“I am sorry about that... but how can I save the country?” the king replied.

“You don’t need to save the country because you are not the ruler anymore!” the queen laughed.

“What?” the king yelled. “You can’t kick me out because I am the king now!”

“You will not succeed...” replied the queen, “...because the whole city hates you!”

“No... this can’t be happening... no...” the king said. He became crazy and suicidal.

This story teaches us a lesson – do not be a greedy person.

The Seventh Voyage

Sha Tin Junior School, Chiu, Jennifer – 9

No more medicine.

No more money.

Sick mother. I had all these things worrying me now.

“Little Lotus, my sweet tangyuan, we have no more to... spend or buy. I am too weak to work... but you cannot take a chance in the workforce. I don’t want you to suffer!”

Wheeze, wheeze, wheeze. That was all Mother did these days. We had spent all our money on our food and the farm to keep it going. The medicine my mother needed had been too expensive for us to afford. So we had to sell the farm. Father had died, well no, disappeared ever since Zheng He came back from his sixth voyage.

So someone had to do something or else something bad might happen.

And that somebody was ME. “I refuse to let us sit home and get poorer and poorer!” I fumed. “Someone has to do something and no one else will do it for us! I know you love me Mother, but I also care about you from the bottom of my heart. I need to go to work. Please. I don’t want you to die! You are my only hope left! I am going to get a job as a sailor on the Seventh Voyage Ship! Then we will have enough to buy medicine!”

“But my little lotus, you know that you are too young and a girl. *wheeze* You need to be over fifteen.” protested mother pleadingly.

“I will disguise myself as a boy and will fool them easily. I am quite tall if I say so myself.” I bragged.

“Fine.” Mother shot out. “But, remember” She softly whispered, “I love you from the bottom of my heart and beyond. Stay safe.” She placed one kiss on my cheek and began a long, peaceful much-needed sleep.

A few days later, it was time...

I waved goodbye to Mrs. Chau, our kind neighbour and shouted “Take care of mother! Tell her I love her and I will come back safely!”

Mrs Chau saluted, “I will, my little soldier!”

I saw a sign on the docks that answered my questions about where to go: *Sailors needed for cooking and cleaning. May take two years of training for swordsmanship and engineering. Please follow the arrow and ask for the name Yang when you reach the 6th Pier.*

Yang was a tiny, awkward man with an even tinier brain. He accepted me as a boy over 16 years of age without question. *Yes. I thought to myself. Not bad. Now that I’ve deceived the registrar, what could possibly go wrong?*

Two Years Later...

Training was tough and every day I faced strict discipline and rules. I also learned swordsmanship, engineering, knot tying, how to preserve food and how to defend ship cargo. We were on the edge of the Arabian port to trade silk and spices for bows and arrows when something seriously unbelievable happened. I was checking the rudder for barnacles that had latched there. As I turned around I hit someone smack in the face.

IT WAS MY FATHER! All at once I felt a wave of happiness, frustration and hope wash upon me.

“Father!” I quietly shouted. Except this man didn’t look like my father anymore.

His great height had turned into a shrunk back and his once neat blackish grey hair had aged into a huge, untidy white mass.

“Lotus? Oh, my darling girl! Listen here. Not long after that blasted man Zheng He arrived back from his sixth voyage, six armed guards showed up at our farm in the middle of the night. You and your mother were asleep at the time so you didn’t witness anything. Anyway, those terrible guards told me to follow them to the docks or to witness you and your mother die a slow and terrible death. I didn’t want anything bad to happen to you, so I slipped away from the house with those guards. Once when I was at the docks, They gagged me... and.” he sighed, “I can’t tell you the rest or else we will be...”

“Sshhhh!” I silenced him. “There’s an officer coming. Let’s check the rudder.”

All of a sudden, there was a cry of "Pirates!" and all was silent for a moment. Then there was a harsh cackling and a clunking sound of wood on wood.

"Well, well well!" a deep, evil voice pinned everyone to the spot. "Look at this lads! If my eyes don't deceive me, it's the emperor's pet, Zheng He!"

"If my eyes don't deceive me, Then it's the dirty-cheek rascal Makasarra Al-Abdul!" another voice rang out, a deep and heroic voice.

"Well, lads, what are you waiting for? Go get..." Makasarra started

"Them!" Zheng He cried.

All I remember next was the sounds of clashing swords and cannonballs waltzing dangerously.

My crazy old father had already drawn out his sword and plunged into a raging battle cry.

I managed to see what was going on. I plunged my sword into the hearts of a quarter of the pirate fleet and I found some of the sailors thanking me. When I finally got to father, he was prepared for the pirate king to give his last sword strike when I plunged my dagger into Makasarra's wretched back at the same moment father pushed his sword into his heart. The deed was done.

Zheng He's voice cried, "Please, spirits from heaven, tell us your names!"

"Ling Han-Qun" replied father.

I said with steadiness, "I am a girl!"

Gasps of astonishment rose from the crowd.

"Sir. You and your daughter deserve something you most desire." Zheng He shakily said. " what is it you want?"

"Well that is easy," Father replied. "We want to go home."

Forty-three days later

With money from our adventure, we could finally settle down with a happy life. Mother was no longer sick, and there was a lifelong guarantee from the emperor that we could enjoy undisturbed happiness.

The Tale of How China Became Famous.

Sha Tin Junior School, Chu, Cyrus – 9

There once ruled an emperor named Yong Lee. He was always dressed in an irreplaceable, flaming red cloak, passed down from many generations of emperors and a spotless, shiny, sparkling golden crown. He was a fine man and a loyal leader to his citizens.

One day, when he was scoffing down a delicious feast, without warning a war raged over his palace and the villages. BOOM! A enormous cannon ball exploded in front of the palace. It shook the entire village! As the Mongols continued attacking, fighting for pride and power, Yong Lee and his guards escaped just in time before the palace collapsed behind him. He ran through the burning villages until finding an underground bunker to hide in with some other villagers. They all waited patiently with a heavy heart, as they listened to the war raging loudly outside.

The next morning, the war had already finished plowing through the innocent village. Yong Lee strolled cautiously outside, searching for survivors throughout the barren villages. Sadly, he only found some workers and homeless citizens hidden inside a small makeshift bunker. He tried to see if there were any other survivors inwards of the area, none unfortunately. However, he found a secret vault room full of loads of treasure and gold in a connecting tunnel to a sewage system. That suddenly sparked an idea for the emperor. He realized China needed to form powerful alliances with other countries, extending its influence beyond its borders, nations all protecting each other.

The next day, the emperor raised the plan of sharing his wealth and commodities with other nations, forming a trusting relationship to the army and his men. The surviving men and soldiers all obeyed in agreement. Getting to work swiftly, a factory was being built next to the coast and a dock was constructed for the fleet to be. All seemed to be going well, little did everyone know, while the emperor explained the rest of the plan to the workers and soldiers, an unnoticed crew of pirates were spying on them. The leader, Peng Chen and his filthy men overheard about priceless goods that were to board the ships. They wanted to steal it for themselves. Soon, Peng and his crew were devising their own plan to conquer the emperor's fleet.

Months later, the ships were finally complete, the emperor sent Admiral Zheng He, a brave and mighty man, to lead the crew out at sea. While other ships of the fleet were touring the closer, neighboring countries, the leading ship with Zheng He was set to venture out to further nations. Suddenly out of nowhere, two pirate ships collided with the admiral's declaring a battle. "Arrrrrgh! Get 'em boys!" bellowed Peng Chen. "Aye cap!" followed Ho Chan, the first mate. An enormous battle broke out between the ships and although the emperor's ship was heavily armed, they were no match for the cunning pirates. "We won't make it through this!" yelled Zheng He as his men began to fall one by one. But it seemed as if fate was on their side; a terrifying storm began to rage ahead of both pirate ships. Peng Chen and his crew started to drift into the enormous storm, their efforts to change direction were futile, the winds were too powerful. "Call for backup!" commanded Peng Chen, but it was no use. The crew tried to blow their horn, summoning the rest of the fleet, but the desperate call was drowned out by the booming thunder. "We will be back!" yelled Peng Chen, their boats disappearing in the blazing storm. They were never to be heard or seen again.

Not long after, Zheng He's ship arrived at the villages of India, the admiral was relieved that they had all survived, "We are our country's pride and finest, the emperor would be proud of us too." They pressed on and headed for the capital of the country, offering their gifts to India's royal family. "We thank your emperor for his generous gifts, please accept some of our very own rare native spices and fine materials. I hope this is the start of a wonderful alliance." Spoke the Indian Emperor. "You're welcome your majesty. It has been a pleasure. And it's all a good deed." the admiral and his crew returned back to their ships and stayed there for the night. In the morning, the crew began their journey to return to China.

Once Zheng He saw the coast of china in the horizon, he knew he was home. He felt upbeat and lucky and felt as if a huge weight has lifted of his shoulders. The emperor was delighted to see Zheng He and his men "Amazing work! You never ever disappoint me!" That night, they left the factory and celebrated in the streets of Shanghai with all the villagers for Zheng He and his crew's bravery and success. They had cake, dumplings and many other scrumptious delicacies. Dancing all night, everyone watched the performance of the legendary tale of the Ming Treasure Voyages. Decades have passed from that day and the story has since been passed down, far and wide to many different people and countries, not just in China. Everyone knows the legendary tale of the Ming Treasure Voyages.

Tang Li Jing 唐理静

Sha Tin Junior School, Fung, Abby – 10

My brother Li Yong and I were the only ones left in our house, excluding our dog Li Li. Our father was a merchant and he was trading goods in India as far as I knew, our mother had recently disappeared. Her disappearance made me stressed because I was responsible for EVERYTHING. Something else also added to my stress. A secret dream. Since the first time I'd seen the ocean, I wanted to be a sailor. Except I can't. I'm a girl and girls aren't allowed to be sailors. Still, I kept thinking about it. Could I make this come true? Ideas crammed into my brain. Could I be a boy in disguise? Could I style my hair like a boy's, borrow Li Yong's clothes and register to be a sailor in the treasure fleet? But could I leave Li Yong for so long? Could I run away without telling him? Probably not. I was terrified to tell him I was leaving but not telling him would make me feel guilty. Then he would tell everyone I was missing and I didn't want that to happen, so I knew I should tell him before registering.

Soon, it was the last day to register and I knew I had to tell Li Yong that I was joining the fleet.

"Tang Li Yong?" I shouted several times around the empty house. He was outside playing with friends. I called him in and closed the window blinds. We were having an awkward conversation.

"I'm going to leave for a few months and I want you to stay here. Don't worry about me. You have Li Li."

"Where are you going?" He asked.

"I'm going to explore undiscovered lands."

"So you are going to be a soldier on the treasure voyages?"

"Sailor, not soldier."

"But how can you? You're a girl. Are you going to break the rules?"

"Sort of."

"No! Don't go. You can't leave me alone! Please?"

"You are already 15! I'll only join this voyage and come straight back. It's just for a few months. I have to go. This is my dream. Please let me go. Please don't tell anyone about anything."

"You promise you will be back in a few months?"

"Yes," I promised.

Li Yong left to fly his kite and I went to register. Thinking about it made me less sure about leaving him alone but I knew it was something I had to do. On the way to the market, I decided to use Li Yong's name as my new name.

When I got there, I went up to the least menacing looking servant and started talking.

"When are the ships leaving?" I asked.

"Three weeks." He said. "Are you thinking of joining as a sailor?"

"Huh? Oh, yes." I replied, distracted by all the commotion.

"How old are you? Not big or strong by the looks of you."

"I'm seventeen," I replied confidently.

"You look small for your age. Are you sure?" I was offended by this but replied.

"I know I look small but I am seventeen." This was the truth. "My name is Tang Li Ji – I mean Yong."

"Oh well. We do need more people on board." He replied exasperatedly and scribbled down my name. "Li Yong, you are on a Bao Chuan. Count yourself lucky. Not many sailors as scrawny as you get on one. Be here at 8 am on the day."

He shoed me away. I turned and skittered home.

The next few weeks flew by quickly. During that time I continued with my chores. On the day we set sail, Li Yong walked me to the market early in the morning. We walked in silence. When we got there I could feel the excitement prickling my skin. Hundreds, no thousands of people were there. I said goodbye to Li Yong and told him he would be fine. For a moment I nearly went home with him but I knew I had to go. "Sailors! We're leaving now!" A loud voice boomed overhead, "we are walking by foot to Liu Jia Gang and there we will set sail." He listed out names to check we were there. We marched off.

We arrived at the port at noon. There, a staggering fleet of 317 boats greeted us. The boats were big and sturdy and looked like nothing could penetrate through their massive hulls. People from thousands of villages were chattering at once.

“Sailors! Onto your boats now!” Someone bellowed. I squished through the crowd to the nearest Bao Chuan. I stumbled on to the boat and admired the breath taking view. The people below us were tiny and up here you could see everything. The sea stretched out forever. Someone squeezed in next to me. He looked way older than me. Yet he looked quite familiar. Before I could ask who he was he had already turned and walked away. Bong! That meant we were leaving. The last of sailors scrambled on board and we set off. The rest of the day was spent scrubbing the decks and doing chores under the glare of the sun. For the first hour, I was on the crow’s nest looking for pirates. It turns out that I was on a boat with Zheng He. Wow! I was on the same boat as Zheng He, the greatest captain in Chinese history. Night came and soon we were enveloped in a layer of darkness.

“Everybody into a cabin!” I went into the nearest cabin along with five boys. We exchanged names. I slept in the lower bunk and Yang Bi Ming slept above. It was impossible to sleep because of the rocky movement so I went up to the deck. Suddenly I saw a figure appear. It was the boy from before. As he came nearer I realized he looked like my mother. It *was* her. Why is she here? Why did she run away? A loud shout interrupted my thoughts.

“Pirates!” The boat rocked violently.

Life Under the Ship

Sha Tin Junior School, Kuong, Bryan – 10

I was not the only one who had been thrown overboard into the gaping depths of the South China Sea, by the sailors aboard the Admiral Zheng He's ships. But, I *was* the first one ever to survive. Using the anchor when it was still hoisted, I pulled myself back up onto the hold of the ship and secretly hid in the spacious unused area under the floorboards.

It was a cold, rainy day out on the fleet. I, being a slave was forever kept to the damp, worn floorboards of Admiral Zheng He's massive ship. All of us shared the same target: stealing gold from Zheng He's treasure ships. Never had anyone ever succeeded in doing so. Many have tried but all ended up dying in the hands of Zheng He's crew. While I worked, the commotion up on the decks was muffled, but I could still make out a few words. Zheng He called out to one of his crew "Sound the horns! Tell them that we are changing course to Java!"

"Aye aye, captain!" shouted the crew member, and started climbing the ladders. Soon, the sound of the horn rose up of above the noise of the sea and wind; 3 long and 2 short blows, meaning a change of course.

Just as I was about to wash down the windows a voice called down to us, "All hands on deck! Get up there now, no questions!" By the time we all got up on deck, a strong wind had started blowing, throwing debris around the decks like a fish in a current. "Take them to the treasure ships with the living quarters and keep them on the lower decks. Be sure to keep them secure if not, you know what's going to happen." Admiral Zheng He commands, shouting over the howling wind.

"Yes, captain." the crewman said, and turned to our direction. "Line up one by one and follow me!" We shuffled nervously into line, with me leading at the front. Then the massive array of the treasure ships came into view. I could make out the massive billowing masts, and the sleek shape of the hull. A ship capable of holding a couple million tonnes of treasure yet still cutting through the water with no problem. Spacious wooden decks stretched out as far as the eye could see. It appeared like it was a piece of land, I estimated it would be about 130 meters long and 60 meters wide. The crewmember lead us hastily onto our assigned ship. Glancing at the others I could tell that the only thing on their minds was the treasure. Right beneath our feet could be a lifetime supply of, gold, and other precious gems. The crewman led us down into the hull of the ship, pointing to a cluster of beds in the corner of the room.

By dawn, the distant shout of soldiers rang out in the whispers of the vast sea. I could vaguely hear the shuffle of the soldier's boots above me on the deck of the ship. My senses were sharp and aware after the intricate planning of theft the night before. The screws on the crates were loosened (with splinters of wood found on the walls), just enough so that even a slight pull on the crate would open it, which would hopefully spill loot on the ground. Everything was prepared. Footsteps thudded closer towards our quarters, and the sickly smell of mouldy bread filled my nostrils. The sound of a lock scratching against the hatch was followed by a squeak. The same tough crewmember entered the room, holding a loaf of mouldy bread and a bucket of water. He placed them roughly onto the floor, a bit too roughly. The crates fell open. Gold and silk spilled onto the floor, carpeting the floor with eye-blinding gold. I ran forward, grabbing the bucket and scooping up as much gold as I could. As if immobilized, the others just stared, wide-eyed, their mouths dropping open. The guard rushed at me, trying to stop me. Reflexively, I grabbed a piece of silk and threw it over the guard's head. He shouted, blinded, tripping to the floor. As I looked up, three guards charged at me, knocking me onto the ground with a thud. My forehead throbbed, my vision went blurry and I blacked out.

When I finally woke up, my hands were tied together, a gag in my mouth. I looked around, I was in a barred room. Tied up on the right side of the room. In my periphery, I could make out someone coming towards me. "Ah, there you are, thief. Zheng He's waiting for your demise." I could sense a hint of smugness in his voice. I tried to retort, but all that came out were muffled sounds. Pulling me to my feet, the unfamiliar soldier pushed me onto the deck of the ship, where Zheng He was waiting. His confident smile was curved into a sneer, and I could see that a gangplank was already prepared. A polished piece of unused wood balanced treacherously on the side of the boat. With a rough shove, he pushed me off the side

of the boat. The freezing water engulfed me. Panic burst into my mind. there was no way to survive. The only thing that saved me was the anchor. I used the rope and that tied my hands together hooking it onto the anchor, and using whatever strength I had left, and hoisted myself up. The rope snapped from the strain. Taking a flying leap, I grabbed onto the side of the ship, kicking into a porthole, and tumbling into the bottom most floor of the ship.

This is where I have been living since. Surviving only on the food and water some slaves sneakily give me at night. Zheng He and his crew are definitely going to regret throwing me overboard once I take my revenge.

Zheng He's Secret.

Sha Tin Junior School, Liu, Helen – 11

“Somewhere—somewhere, in the coasts of Africa. Find him. **KILL HIM!**” He whispered menacingly... Gasping for breath, I woke up with a start! Blindly grabbing my silky Qipao, I slowly stepped out of bed as I listened to my crew bickering loudly in the distance.

“Gosh, you don’t need to be so salty! Captain Zheng probably just woke up!”

I smiled, with pride. I’m just 27, and already a captain of a royal fleet. Quickly shaking my dream out of my mind, I walked confidently out of the cabin. Enjoying the wind that was whipping my face, while the wrath of the crashing waves surrounded the vessel with a murderous tone. I sighed, *Well, I’m just following the “king’s orders” since I want this voyage to be a success. I mean, people are depending on this job to get money.*

“Don’t forget your true mission...MISSION!” A thundering voice suddenly ringing in my brain.

“*Kill him...KILL HIM!!!!!!*”

Then it came to me again... Those red, *red* eyes, filled with blood. And that smile... Why is the king like this?

“Captain!” It was Ma, our lead astronomer and my old friend. I quickly snapped out of my scary flashbacks from the dream.

“There’s gonna be a storm tonight, so we might have to hurry up and stop on a nearby the African coastline city to find shelter and food. Your choice!” he said cheerfully, holding the pearly ivory telescope he had got from Vietnam. *How can he be so happy when a storm is coming?* I thought questionably to myself. I dreamily gazed to the dark—clouded horizon entangled with the ferocious waves that hit each other. We didn't make it to shore...

The ferocious waves slammed onto the rocks nearby, creating snow—like water, flying to the deck.

“Prepare the sails!” Sadly, these desperate attempts to communicate were uselessly swallowed away by the slow tearing sound of the wooden boards, and the screams of the howling wind. I desperately grabbed the wet railing of the boat as I squinted at the sight of my men. That was when I heard a shattering scream, followed by other high screeches.

When I turned around, It was Ma. He was slowly pulled down by the waves that were once my friends. Now they were a mere hooded stranger sucking the lives out of countless men. I tried to cling on to this tiny speck of hope that was left. But at last, my thin cord of perseverance finally broke. Why Ma? A drop of water came down my sleeve as water filled my eyes. *Why... Isn't this all your set up, Yongle Emperor?*

Uggggg, my head hurts, I can't move! I struggled to get to my feet, while people next to me murmured quietly “Who is this?”

“Why is he here?” Slowly gaining consciousness, my mind started swirling, flashes of Ma getting grabbed by the ferocious waves dotted my visions, I started panicking, *was he really gone?* I sat up in the speed of light, beads of sweat tickled my cheeks. *We really sank?*

“Well, who have we got here?” a soft voice whispered next to my ear. It was weirdly familiar, like Yongle’s. I slowly opened my salty eyes, squinting to the blurry sight of that mysterious voice. It was him! Whatever his name was, he had a long—bearded nose, with a moustache pointing in both directions and a large scar at the side of his pointy cheek.

“Where am I?” I quickly sat up, the realization of the earlier disaster clearer than ever,

“Well, just to tell you, I found you lying wet on the ground, then I brought you to my home.” that familiar voice again. “My pleasure, General Zheng.”

“Y—you know me?” I stammered

“Well, I became a low ranked general in China in my early years. You can call me Zhu”

I stared in disbelief, *A general in China?*

“It would be a pleasure for you to stay in my house for a while before the rest of your fleet arrives. I’ll send a pigeon.” Zhu finally announced, “You know, you are pretty safe even amongst us Africans.” The general announced

The Heir, it was him.

Midnight it was when I snuck out of bed as quiet as a mouse. I walked the dark corridors, winding around the shade of the shadows. I wanted to give my life saver a surprize gift as he was not home tonight. But when I stepped into the minor general's bedroom, I saw something extraordinary glittering under the beautiful moonlight. It was an expensive moonstone charm that only royals could afford to have. My eyes widened as I saw the Ancient letters carved in the delicate moonstone. *THE HEIR Why does he look like this now? I thought he was supposed to be the last king's successor? So is this who the supposed to be successor the king wanted to kill because he doesn't want this Heir to take his throne?? But... He was so nice, if he knew that I was sent by the king, he could've killed me anytime! Now that I thought of it... Why listen to Yongle? Didn't this poor heir perish because of Yongle's selfish soul? Slowly, great bravery flooded into my veins maybe I should help him, instead of the selfishness of Yongle! As the sunshine shone on me vibrantly. I thought about the glory days. The king's orders are nothing! I spat, let's take back this throne!*

10 years later...

"Captain Zheng! A letter!"

"Bring it to me!" I commanded loudly. My hands trembled quickly as I slowly ripped open the imperial seal of the letter, the parchment was bright red, meaning it was good news. I sighed...

To general Zheng, I have contained my spot on the iron throne and therefore welcome you to my grand ceremony. I thank you for helping me take back the throne. Happy journeys!

The past heir

Tears splattered, blood spread, and friends lost. But victory had never tasted so sweet!

The Last Battle

Sha Tin Junior School, Lo, Kaiden – 10

Somewhere in the early 1400s, a day of danger appeared out of the dark grey looming clouds...

Zheng He was China's bravest captain of the Ming treasure voyage fleet. He had travelled far distances and been on world-famous journeys. He had never failed any of his adventures. It was his duty to create peace. On that very day when the biggest storm in China's history appeared out of the sky, he had been warned by the emperor not to travel, but he did anyway. In the middle of the seas, Zheng He the royal captain and his crew were far from safety. The sky turned to a frightening black colour, the ocean water was wild, waves splashed onto the deck. It was everyone's worst nightmare. Without warning a sharp bolt of lightning shot through the clouds and punched onto the pirate ship. An army of lightning began attacking at the boats. Things became intense and at the end, many lifeless bodies floated across the seas. However, the surviving sailors with Zheng He chose not to stop, as there was nothing that could stand in their way.

A few years went by as the Ming Treasure Voyage fleet went and returned. On an unexpected evening Guang Yong, the brave little boy and his friends were at the shoreline pretending to be imaginary pirates. Suddenly they stopped playing and noticed ships were about to leave. The ones that were boarding the huge ship were the greatest sailors of all time: the Ming Treasure Voyage fleet. As the ships were about to leave, one of Guang Yong's friends suggested an exciting idea. They snuck past the guards and crept onto one of the smaller ships and onto the bottom deck where no one was around to see them. The ship sailed off, creating a loud honking noise, Guang Yong and his friends entertained themselves by playing hand games. After a few hours, the crew ships made a sudden stop. Silence. Then BAM! BOOM! Cannonballs fired everywhere sending ships to flee and sink. The friends looked at each other nervously while the intense battle was going on, frightened as porcupines. They should've obviously shouted and screamed, but they didn't. Instead, they went onto the deck and something got caught in the corner of Guang Yong's eye, something small and shiny: a glass bottle with a message inside it, the enemy suddenly stopped firing. They fished it out of the disgusting sea water. It said, "GIVE US ALL YOUR TREASURE OR WE WILL MEET AGAIN." When they looked up to see the enemies ship, they were gone...

Thousands of ships returned back to China with an extra surprise: little kids and a message from the fog. Zheng He showed it to the emperor. As he showed it, he felt a tingle in his hands, then saw a vision of the world exploding in front of his eyes. He then snapped back to the real world. 'What could that mean?' He thought. He shook that thought away, for it might not be real. A few moments later, the emperor said strictly "We will have to go to WAR." The Chinese citizens never thought this day would come, packing and leaving their hometown. Millions of pirates from the ship crafted swords, working as a team to create a massive cannonball that can take down huge ships, but they didn't think about the fact that the most exciting moment in history was about to commence!

With their weapons, they were sure to win the battle. In the battleground, the ship waited until... BOOM! A cannonball fired at one of the weakest ships in the fleet. Immediately the enemy ships came out of the fog, it was a huge surprise. The enemy ships were from Africa but one thing made China laugh at them, their ships were so tiny. However, they were not to be underestimated. They had the most advanced technology, with the power to send China's ships down into the bottom of the deep blue sea. They did the best they could, using bows and arrows and spears, but in one hour at least half the crew was gone. Seconds went by, then minutes, finally only half of the African pirates were defeated but only ten pirates from China's ships were left. One by one they fell to the ground until Zheng He was the only one left. Sweat rolled down his cheeks, down his neck. His arms were trying to fight but, his brain was telling him to stay in position. Then, China's allies came out of the fog to help. Zheng He thought, 'Oh my, I should have thought of that: finding help.' But wait, his thought suddenly hit him, this was the very place he saw his life coming to an end. They are going to die as well!

Swoosh! The last one of the African army had been shot! "But that isn't right, You guys aren't even professional pirates" Said Zheng He. Guang Yong had a cheeky look and said: "I knew I could help." When they went back onto land that is when the Emperor's palace exploded. Everyone's mouths were wide

open, tears flowed down from everyone's sorrowful eyes. Zheng He was so miserable that he kneeled onto the hard sand ground and then PAM! A bullet shot Zheng He, it was an enemy that snuck onto their boat. The person who shot him said only these words " WE SHOOT 'CAUSE YOU GIVE NO TREASURE TO US". They continued to shoot the other ships as they wanted no other Chinese sailors to ever sail the seas. Guang Young thoughts of escaping were interrupted as he remembered something: the ship carried a giant bomb that could wipe out the earth. Unfortunately, the enemy was not told about this, the last bullet was shot, causing the ship to explode...

BOOM! The earth as we know it. Gone. One small mistake and that was the last time Chinese sailors ever existed.

Lifesaving Voyage

Sha Tin Junior School, Ma, Grace – 10

As I waved goodbye to my family, the ship's horn honked, shattering the distant chatters in the crowds on the deck. The boat pulled away whilst I was busy adjusting the humongous, crimson-red sail of the boat. As the madding crowd gradually disappeared from sight, all I could think about was my dear family and how they would be for the next two years.

I had spent half a year of tough training with the boat team on basic operations of the boat, mending and defence systems. Finally, it was the day of the real thing. It was no longer a training session. I felt nervous, like what if I did something wrong that caused the ship to sink or I forgot what this lever did. Life on the boat was actually hard. I had to make sure that the floors were always clean, no enemies were about to invade, the sails were tight and facing the right angle, we were going the right direction... and if I made one tiny mistake, something terrible could eventually happen. Zheng He had a giant boat crew, with about 200 boats filled with delicate silk and china, elite soldiers and horses, engineers to help with repairs and even cartographers to figure out where we were going. These valuable goods were for trading with the other countries in order to get their native goods back to present to the king. That's the reason why we were sent to this voyage.

It was a few months from the mournful departure, and I was used to the homesick and tired feeling on the boat. So far, the weather had been fine, no huge waves nor pirates. The thing I enjoyed was the delightful view of the sunset as nightfall came. The sky would turn into a rainbow of reds, yellows, and navy blue. But when the moon came up, I felt homesick. It was like Li Bai's poem when he misses his hometown at night. Luckily, I slowly got used to this feeling, and my mind focused on the positive side. Trading, receiving new goods and even learning new languages. It was not too bad. Trading with people from different countries and cities was interesting. We gave them gunpowder, ceramics and silk and in return, they give us various gifts. Once, the people in Africa gave us a giraffe! I was immediately surprised by how long its neck was and worried about where should we keep it. We had to keep the precious yet rare giraffe alive and healthy for our king to see. It lived on the storage boat with a wooden enclosure to keep it safe. I looked after it to keep it safe, and it soon felt like I had a new animal companion with me on the boat. This put everyone in a determined and positive mood. But there were strong winds in the middle of our trip, but I liked the refreshing breeze and the way the waves rocked the boat. While I was taking a break from anchoring the boats. This seemed to groom the giraffe's messy hair while continuously tickling its extraordinarily long neck. This hilarious scene always made me laugh.

Occasionally, we stopped on islands to rest or stock up on food and supplies. I really enjoyed the pleasant views of the sea and how friendly the people are. I learned a few of those new languages, which sounded really unusual. However, a huge, raging, uncontrollable storm broke during the return trip. The sky gradually turned from light blue to grey. Storm clouds floated around and buckets of rain began splashing and pouring down from the skies splashing on the sea. A few moments later, there were ferocious winds and colossal waves leaping out of the ocean and crashing onto the rocks on the reef and our boat. The giraffe sadly stared at the rainy sky and wailed. A rapid bolt of lightning slashed the sky in half, followed by booming bangs of thunder. A terrible thought came into my mind. My family! Our house wasn't strong enough to withstand this destructive storm. Mom had a lack of survival skills. Meng isn't strong enough to rebuild the house if needed. And what about Mei? She's only 3 years old! Completely devastated and anxious, I began to cry.

The crew might become stranded near the sea, unable to go back home, lost forever I thought. As I looked up, I saw my crewmate, Chan, frantically waving two red-and-white flags, signalling the ships were sinking. Another patch of lightning illuminated the sky, flashing vigorously. There was absolutely no time to worry or think. I speedily packed the valuables, including my emergency kit and the giraffe, which I pulled with an old rope. I saw one of the army battleships dramatically, yet slowly sink and crashed onto some rocks then shatter into pieces.

I jumped into the water. My robes and uniform were drenching wet and felt tight and baggy. Suddenly I saw a young girl and a mother with a toddler on her back. I knew who this had to be. My family! I signalled all the crew to swim towards the people. In the freezing cold water, I suddenly ran out of breath and began sinking! When I woke up, I was in one of the 50 remaining boats, completely confused and baffled by what had happened. But when I saw my family, I immediately knew how I got from the middle of the ocean, to here. They told me the tragic story: "*And when she leapt in and grabbed you, you were drowning!*" I saw a tear trickling like the rapid glimpse of time after my drowning, down my mother's cheek. This voyage was broken by the storm but saved from my beloved family.

My family had come to save me. Despite being sort of faint from drowning, but I knew it was all too clear how complex this trip was.

The National Gallery of Exploration – Exhibit 87 – The Ming Treasure Voyages

Sha Tin Junior School, Tan, Shannon – 10

1410, January 13th
31.027640, 120.699072

The winds were in our favour as we departed. Our ship, a Green Eyebrow surged ahead, the hull cutting through waves. The oarsman's veins pumped, and Liujiagang was merely a grain of rice on the horizon. I dutifully carried out my chores – scrubbing the deck, sweeping Commander Wang's quarters and when I had time, I set about exploring the vessel on this, her maiden voyage.

We're off to win over the world. The Chinese will be respected, worshipped, honoured. Our riches, achievements, sophistication will wow those barbarians. No one can defy us.

1410, October 24th
2.196, 102.2405

Just when I think I have seen everything we arrive at yet another exotic land. Towering beasts with nasty-looking tusks and rough, saggy skin. Black pandas who effortlessly clamber to treetops. And a lumpy pomelo! A taste and texture so meaty and tangy, what bliss! The natives are fascinated by our luxurious silk and soothing tea. I'd assumed they were cavemen. But in truth, they're much like us. I have seen the world with new eyes.

But my senses are on high alert tonight. I have a feeling something is astir with Commander Wang. Ever since we have neared Ceylon, he seems distant and aloof. Perhaps it is a bout of homesickness.

1411, February 3rd
6.927079, 79.861244

As I soundlessly scratch out this entry, I peep through the bamboo floorboards into the galley. I hear muffled tones below my sagging hammock. I thought it must have been the cook... but he was in the doctor's office, getting treated for a grotesque gash. So who was downstairs?

This is what I overheard:

"So, Zheng He and his troops shall be lured with some imperial order to King Alakesvara and His Majesty's army will cut off the old seadog from the fleet. Then we just sail off!" Wang's distinctive ShanXi accent declared with his trademark aura of authority.

"Wha-what do we tell the Emperor?" a meek whispered reply. It sounded much like my half-sister, Song Jiang, who was also on board.

I have no time to waste. I have to alert Zheng He! I shall be back soon, hopefully with good news.

1411, February 4th
6.927079, 79.861244

Alright, the dilemma I am facing is anything but *good*.

As I ran in a flurry to the bobbing rowboats, I heard cursing interrupting the serene night. Wang's lean figure charged like a bull at me. "Where are you going, Tai? You know the boats are off limits while we're docked!" he hissed, spittle flying everywhere.

He caught me glancing back at Zheng He's treasure ship. "Aha! You little snitch! It was Song, wasn't it?" There was nothing else I could do but valiantly defend my sister and let him dump me in the hold where I am currently locked inside.

It is over for Zheng He. This King Alakesvara they spoke of strikes terror in the hearts of the Ceylonese. The unsuspecting Admiral will be marooned and erased from history forever. At least I have this logbook I'd discreetly pocketed. At least someone will uncover the true story someday.

1411, February ?
6.927079, 79.861244

The days wear on so reluctantly even a snail can outrun it easily. I have been holding my wretched breath ever since I'd heard Zheng He leave. To secure diplomatic ties and whatnot, Wang insisted he must leave and fed Zheng He a load of lies. Nobody was too sure. Zheng He tramped off anyway.

1411, February 27th
6.927079, 79.861244

I was pacing the room when a bone-rattling BOOM! The floor shook. I was thrown off my feet into a corner where I violently bashed my head. Fireworks exploded in my brain.

That's when I heard the army. Like a stampeding herd of buffalo, footsteps thundered overhead. Battle cries in a tongue-twisting language echoed in my drumming ears. Suddenly, like a guardian angel from the heavens, a filthy boot knocked the flimsy door open.

"Hey, you I to free?" The man demanded in broken Mandarin. I nodded vigorously. What else could I do? He looked me over with piercing onyx eyes. "You come." Freedom! Fresh air! The soldier probably had the wrong guy, but here was my chance. I obediently tailed him.

"Tai, Tai. Thought you could sneak away, huh? Well, you won't escape me again." The scent of gunpowder. A gun cocking. My head swivelling. A stone striking me, hard, on my temple. The world going dark.

When I came to, I was back in the prison of my nightmares. I blindly groped around for my logbook, but with no avail. It had tumbled out when I was blacked out. Then again, for the second time today, a filthy boot knocked the flimsy door open. Except it wasn't a tanned, linguistically challenged young man who barged in. It was Zheng He himself.

"Admiral! Admiral sir?" I blabbered, forgetting how to speak.
"Hello, young lad. I just wanted to return this to you," he boomed, handing me my tattered logbook. "But first, would you be so kind to let me flip through?"
"O-of course, s-sir." I stammered as he skimmed through pages.

He smiled momentarily. It must have been my recounts of his courageous voyages. But suddenly his face contorted into horror and he stormed off without another word. He returned with Wang in tow. "Wang, you will stay here locked up. Don't even think about tricking me ever again."

Needless to say, we arrived home quite safe and sound.

Exhibit 87: Tai Sun's logbook detailing the events of the third voyage of the Ming Treasure Fleet. For more information about Zheng He, see Exhibits 100 ~ 103. – The National Gallery of Exploration.

Translated from Chinese to English by Jackie Lee.

Life At Sea (the thrid voyage of the Ming Treasure Fleet)

Sha Tin Junior School, Xu, Amy – 10

“We need sailors!” Calls and shouts to the emperor’s people rang throughout the city. I hesitated, then strolled toward the announcer.

“When does the fleet take off?” I asked, “I want to join as a sailor.”

“In 2 weeks’ time.” the man cast an inspecting look over me. “How old are you, boy? Not very likely to get a good job. Not very big and strong”

“I am 19,” I answered, a bit louder than normal, seeing that this man did not like me much. “And also, my name is Yang Bi ming (楊碧明)!”

“I am not deaf, you know.” He said, disapprovingly. “The more sailors, the better. All that want to can get on a boat. You’ll be on a Bao Chuan, the same one with the great man himself, Zheng He. Powerful man. I would have put you on a horse boat, but that would be unfair. The emperor says everyone should get chances. Be grateful for that, and work hard! Now go!” I scurried off, relieved. I had always wanted a life of adventure and travel, life on the sea. But what would sister think about me going on long journeys, travelling on a huge boat? I was petrified to tell her. But when I got home, I knew I had to.

“Yang Ying Yue?” I mumbled, “I have something to tell you.”

“Yes?” She answered, not even looking up.

“I found a job. I’m going to sail away on a huge boat too far off lands and explore the unknown.” I said, shaking more than ever.

“So you’re going to be a fisherman?” she said with a laugh, “And ‘explore’ the seven seas on a small, scrappy boat? Oh, you can be funny sometimes.”

“No! Not that! I’m going to sail on a Bao Chuan with great Zheng He and will return with stories of far off lands that no one has yet ventured to.”

“You’re not joking, are you?” she stared at me with that look, like she did when I was still a little boy.

“You’re not lying to me, right?”

“No, I’m not! I have never lied to you!”

“When you were 6, you lied that you went to school! But guess where I found you? Fishing with your bare hands in the pond infested with algae! And when you were 2...” trust Yang Ying Yue to remember *all* of my flaws.

“I’m going to set off in 2 weeks!” I continued, “And guess what? I won’t be back for 2 years!”

“Really? Bi Ming, you’re such a silly little boy sometimes! Don’t you know it’s hard to earn money here? And now you leave me all by myself? I’ll have to wait for 2 years until you can bring your money back! Can’t you be more thoughtful?” My sister was only 10 years older than me, but she acted like our long lost mother sometimes. I felt ashamed for a second for not thinking at all before signing up.

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A few weeks later, I stood in the middle of the village, a buzz of excitement and anxiety in the air. Announcers were calling at the top of their lungs, “Sailors! Sailors! Come out anyone that signed up! We’re leaving!” I said goodbye to my sister, regretting for an instant. But a new confidence took over me as I marched behind the announcer, knowing that I could earn more money, whispering that I would be back soon.

We arrived at Liu Jia Gang, where the boats would set off a few hours later. There, a majestic fleet of 62 boats was waiting for us. Thousands of people from villages all over China were crowding around and gaping at the fleet of boats.

“Get on!” People shoved us towards the boats. “Bao Chuan here!” I quickly squeezed on, taking in the surroundings, stunned to silence. The boat was the most majestic I had ever seen. My thoughts were interrupted by a voice.

“Stop blocking the way!” I bolted off.

For the rest of the day, I did backbreaking work. Scrubbing the deck, raising the sails, hauling the anchors, waving semaphore flags like crazy, and much more painstaking work. I couldn’t spot anyone I knew on the massive boat. The boat was trapped in a cage of silence (except for the shouting of orders) as it roughly floated on the waves, no one wanting to talk to the strangers amongst them.

“Get in a cabin! Faster!” Someone shouted at us. I scurried into the closest cabin, stumbling a bit as it was nightfall already. There were already 5 people inside. These were the new people I would share a room with for the next few years. I stared at a rat outside our cabin with disgust. I hoped I wouldn’t be on the bottom bunk. “I’m Yang Bi Ming,” I said anxiously. We all introduced ourselves simply. The other people in the cabin were called Li Ming, Chang Yi, Ying Di Qi and Tang Li Yong. I shared a bunk with Li Yong. I guess he was nice enough. But I was still a bit disappointed that they were all strangers in my room.

The boat rocked side to side as it continued on with its journey, even in the dark of the night. I tossed and turned on the top bunk, not able to fall asleep. After a while, I could tell that the others were asleep. Although asleep, I could sense they were all restless. I couldn’t see Tang Li Yong, but I could feel movement beneath me, so I knew he must be awake. In the dark of the night, he crept out our cabin. I followed silently, but only to the door. I peered out the crack of the door, moonlight shining onto the sea. Our boat headed swiftly forward. Li Yong was staring hard at something. Staring at *someone*. Who was he staring at? Suddenly, a shrill shout echoed around the boat, startling everyone on it. A sailor’s nightmare.  
“Pirates!”

# When the Battle Began

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Gosain, Shimona – 11*

“GET THE CANNONS READY! THEY ARE ABOUT TO ATTACK!” My voice screeched across the ship as I ran towards our largest cannon. Soon enough, acidic smoke filled the air. I tried my best to look strong and confident from the outside, but I was terrified and unsure of what I was doing from the inside. I don’t think you understand. Let’s start from the beginning.

It all started when I agreed to go on my first ever voyage as captain of The Ming Treasure Fleets, Captain Zheng He. The Chinese king thought I was capable to be captain. He said I had to deliver back the jewels that were stolen before. We were headed all around South–East Asia, going to Vietnam and Indonesia, and then returning back to China. We were ready to set off to Vijaya which is in Vietnam. There, we met the minister. He gave us a tour of his palace and even let us keep some of the gold we were supposed to deliver. He was so generous to the villagers. He was so kind. After a long and tiring day, I went to check where we were going to next and saw that we were going near Indonesia, and my mind drifted into deep thoughts. Shen Chen walked up to me, “What are you thinking about, captain?”

“Oh. Hello, Shen Chen. I was just thinking about Chen Zuyi...” I dazed off as I answered.

“Chen Zuyi? Who is she?” asked Shen Chen in bewilderment which you could see by the look on his face.

“Well... ‘HE’ is an evil pirate who always attacks ships like ours, bigger than his own, and somehow, has not been defeated. If we come across him and his crew, we are doomed.” I explained with a slightly terrified but stern look on my face.

“Oh. In that case, you don’t have to worry. We have the best crew members ever and a great captain to guide us. I believe in you, captain.” His words flattered me.

The next day, I woke up early, so early that the sun was nowhere close to rising. I got dressed and got to the kitchen for a midnight snack to take my mind of Chen Zuyi. Not so soon after my snack, we docked at Palembang, Indonesia. There was no sign of Chen Zuyi, and I was relieved. I was so worried, I didn’t sleep. I tossed and turned all night. Finally, the daylight shined in my room. I changed into my clothes for the day and went to wake up the others. The king had sent us a chariot. How kind of him! The royal guard took us to the king’s palace. It was huge and mostly red and gold in color. We stayed there for hours, touring the city before heading back to the ship.

As we docked from Palembang, I was so happy that we had not come across Chen Zuyi yet. Famous last thoughts. The ship suddenly stopped. I went to where the ship was being controlled and there was a BIG problem.

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t the pesky little fleets. Give me the gold, and you won’t die. Don’t give me the gold and you die!” Chen Zuyi commanded as he pointed his sword at me.

“Look, we don’t have any gold. We are just heading back to China and don’t mean any harm so please, please just let us go,” I say, trying not to get any fright in my voice.

“Alright, fine! We will let you go.” He waited for us to move away a bit before yelling, “FIRE AT THEM!” We turned around, surprised, but luckily for us, they had tried to use a broken cannon. I ran across the ship, my voice screeching, “QUICK! GET ALL THE CANNONS READY! HURRY EVERYONE!”

Smoke, fire and destruction filled the air, and all I could see were the foggy figures of my crew. The canon fire got louder and louder. I crouched down, moving my hands to cover my ears. I just wanted to go home, but I knew I had to stay strong for my team. Within a second, I stood up. I glanced at my team with faith, “It’s time. We need to use it.”

“Are you sure, captain?” Shen Chen shrieked through the sound of the battleships. I nodded with certainty. I knew it was risky, but I knew it was the right thing to do. Our secret weapon: The Golden Cannon, the biggest, most explosive cannon ever invented. Shen Chen fired it up, giving me the most confident smile I’d smiled in a very long time. It flew across the ash–filled seawater and blasted the ship right through the middle. We sunk all their ships, killing more than five thousand people. My crew and I were jumping with joy, hugging one another, when Shen Chen pointed to a man in the waters, “How? That’s Chen Zuyi!”

Some men from my crew jumped out into water and dragged Chen Zuyi by his wrists up the ropes towards the ship. We brought Chen Zuyi back to China and he was be–headed. I was so proud of my crew, and they were proud of me. The mission was difficult, but my crew and I are always looking forward to adventures.

# The Diary of Zheng Lian

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Kao, Yung Wai Candace – 11*

Oh, the sea, the endless sea, when will our journey end?

My friend Li An Xi assisted me in scrubbing the deck as my daily job while ‘Oh–I–am–above–your–level’ Ma Zhu and my brother Zheng Zi stood around scoffing. I really wanted to smack them in the face! While Li and I were busy cleaning, Ma Zhu mocked us viciously. “You are so stupid. We already finished our chores! Oh, and little maid Li An Xi, would you do me a favor and lick my shoes clean?” I knew that Ma only did that because Li is his step brother, the child of the woman Li’s father married after he was widowed. I saw Li trembling with rage, and before I could stop him, he rushed at Ma and landed a heavy blow on his jaw. Ma’s jaw was dislocated, but my brother fixed it back again with a sharp click. As payback, we stood outside our brothers’ cabin yelling abuse at them, accidentally waking up father. I am currently in hot water.....

Goodnight, fair diary!  
Zheng Lian

Mother, I miss you so much! I wish you could see this, but sadly, my diary is not magical. Yes, believe it or not, your 17–year–old son actually wrote in a diary that he misses you. Today, we are sailing across the sea to visit the leader of Indonesia. Zheng Zi, Ma Zhu, and father have thrown up more than 20 times in the past 5 hours, as Li and I just sit here getting nauseous while watching countless crew members vomit in the water. How entertaining. I am being sarcastic, of course! How fun would it be? I have asked my fellow crew members for the date, and all they say is that they do not know as well. This journey feels like it is lasting for thousands and thousands of years. Who knows if we will make it off this boat alive?

Goodnight, diary!  
Zheng Lian

I wish we could now go and sail off to visit other countries instead of waiting for the night to pass (hopefully leaving Zheng Zi here). Speaking of that, I think it is his turn to keep watch—I need to get a rest to get ready to help the crew tomorrow. Who knows if we will run into Chen Zu Yi and his pirates? Oh well, I better go get some sleep and stop fretting, eh? I think I can see the dawn light approaching in the distance!

Goodnight, fair diary!  
Zheng Lian

Today we are setting off to another country! Is it just me, or do I hear thumping? Is it another ship arriving? I will go check and see if there is any need to go and sound the alarm. Oh, dear god, I can hear them coming! I need to go sound the alarm! Please, save us, ancestors watching up above! This can’t be our destiny to die!

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Father is lying on the brink of death, and Zheng Zi is dead! The merciless Chen Zu Yi boarded our ship a few minutes after dawn, taking us by surprise. His cruel pirates brandished blunt shards of metals, swords, and some fired cannons on us. One of his leading pirates had set fire on our boat, burning Ma and Li badly. Ma is fighting against his looming death, expelling high pitched wails of, “I don’t want to die! Who will take care of mother?” Chen Zu Yi’s crew killed around a quarter of our crew, injured most of them, and stole some treasure. If brother hadn’t leapt onto the other boat and stolen some of the weapons, we would be dead by now. Please let him live! Our crew...all of us have lost something. We are all grieving. I think I should elaborate on how the pirates attacked?

Everyone was sleeping. The pirates attacked seconds after I sounded the alarm. Our people woke up and drowsily entered their defense positions. The Admiral challenged Chen, asking him why he was doing this. After that, I felt woozy. The pirates shot a strange liquid into me, knocking me out. Then I heard Li dragging me into the Admiral’s cabin like he had ordered him to, and I fainted. Li then poured a bucket of icy sea water on me. I sat up immediately and whispered that someone was approaching. I grabbed the admiral’s wine bottle and his broken sword. Li did the same, finding bits of metal and glass. As one of Chen’s goons broke in, bruised and bleeding, we attacked without mercy. Within minutes, he fell at our



feet, dead. We tossed him overboard to the hungry sharks and hid, waiting for some idiots to walk into our ambush. The two of us killed many pirates! I am exhausted!

My father has...gone on. I am alone. How will I explain to mother? She will blame me, and go out of her mind! How are we going to cope? We have no more money—no father, no Zheng Zi. It's all my fault. Why couldn't I have died instead of them? There is only one thing that can console me. The fact that my father died doesn't mean that I will not survive. I have to survive for their sakes and mother's. Li An Xi has also lost his step brother and his father. Not only that, his step mother hates him. I told him that if there is any problem, he can go live with his grandparents or us. He is less dejected already!

Goodnight,  
Zheng Lian

This will be my last entry in this diary. I will have to toss you out. You did nothing to deserve this, but you bring back many bad memories. I suppose I should burn you up, but I decided not to, as you are just an innocent diary. Goodbye, and thank you for being there when I needed you!

Goodbye forever,  
Zheng Lian

# The Fierce Battle

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Kolhapur, Aneesh – 11*

“Watch out Zheng He! Chen Zuyi is about to attack you. Quickly, get ready for the fight. We need to win,” someone shouted.

In 1407ce, Zheng He was continuing his journey back to China after he had gone to collect goods from Bengal, Ceylon, Southern Vietnam and Malaysia. While he was returning to China, Chen Zuyi, the Guangdong Pirate, attacked him. The fierce battle went on and on for hours until the pirates had taken over the bases of the Ming treasure fleet ships. Chen Zuyi killed many Ming forces and stole all of the goods from the ships. The Ming forces were weak, but Zheng He didn't give up. He tried to use canons to blow up the ship, but since the treasure was on the ship, he couldn't fire bullets and the canons weren't working properly. Chen Zuyi sailed up ahead. Then Zheng He told his crew members to catch up with the pirate ship and attacked them. They all had to agree with Zheng He because they had no other plan to retrieve the goods and beat the pirates.

Zheng He started to sail and speed up against them. Zheng He said, “Stick to the ship and throw the fireballs!” After they started to throw the fireballs, more and more pirate ships came to protect the main pirate ship. Then Zheng He started to sail at full speed and he instructed them to bump against the main pirate ship. Zheng He jumped onto the pirate ship with some crew members helping him. They all used swords to attack the pirates. Zheng He said, “ATTACK!” and they started to attack the whole ship. Other pirate ships were coming. They were being outrun, but some of the Ming forces were still alive so those forces attacked and battled with the pirate ships who were about to kill Zheng He and his crew members. Zheng He had to face up against Chen Zuyi.

The battle between Zheng He and Chen Zuyi was fierce, and the crew members faced up against their worst enemies. Zheng He defeated Chen Zuyi, but the crew members didn't beat the other pirates, so Zheng He defeated the other pirates and gained back his crew members. They all took the treasure back and defeated the Guangdong Pirates. They had blown up the bases of the pirates in Palembang.

During the journey, the Wokou pirates had raided the Ming forces but the Ming forces were able to defeat the Wokou pirates. They had a rough journey through the western ocean. The storm had caused most of the damage and a lot of crew members were lost in the ocean. Zheng He was fine, but he didn't notice that the Wokou pirates had stolen the goods. When he went down to check the goods were still there, he just saw empty boxes. Zheng He said, “Everybody come down right now! We have lost the treasure!” Now everybody was shocked. Ma Huan the scribe was surprised that the treasure was stolen. Zheng He was wondering who had stolen the treasure. When he remembered, guess who it was? It was the Wokou pirates. They had tricked him into thinking that they surrendered and then stole the treasure.

They followed the tracks of the Wokou pirates and eventually found them. They had a fierce battle for two days! The Wokou pirates suffered a big loss, same for the Ming forces, because many people died in the big battle. They got the treasure back after the Wokou pirates really surrendered.

Well, we all know that there is traitor in every single story. A few of the Ming forces were teams with the Wokou pirates and the Chen Zuyi. While both pirates are enemies, the traitors had a fight between all of them because they all wanted the luxurious goods and treasure. Both teams' heads secretly called their big boss. One of them was Cheng Zhou Lian, the Wokou pirate, and Chen Zuyi. They were stepbrothers. They went near ship and the traitors threw the treasure on ship. Zheng He saw the traitors, so he took action. He killed the traitors and kept Cheng Zhou Lian and Chen Zuyi captive. After they reached China, Chen Zuyi and Cheng Zhou Lian were sentenced to death. Zheng He was the imperial hero of the Ming Dynasty because he had a lot of bravery inside him. Finally, after so much fighting everybody was happy and peaceful.

# Story Of A Violent Storm

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Ma, Chung Ho Joe – 11*

Whoosh! Whoosh! The bigger storms told me that someone called Zheng He was coming to the Indian Ocean for his first treasure voyage. It was the Ming Dynasty and the other storms told me, “Hey little storm, if you can crash Zheng He’s treasure ship, you can be a bigger storm.” I thought of the reward and decided to give it a shot.

Finally, one day, Zheng He’s fleet of ship sailed to the heart of the Indian Ocean to find treasures and build relationships with other countries. The bigger storms told me not to show mercy to humans. I was hesitant but eventually agreed because humans kept fishing from the ocean. Many of my friends lost their family members. Before I finished my thoughts, Zheng He’s ship arrived. I saw the smaller scout ship nearing land followed by the bigger ones. The biggest treasure ship, as big as the palace, with Zheng He inside emerged!

I began to doubt myself. Will I be able to conquer the treasure boat? I was a pretty small storm, the bigger storms told me that the bigger the ship was, the slower it would turn. I was reassured. I mustered all my strength and with a puff, the waves churned! As soon as Zheng He saw me, he ran into the treasure ship and without a warning, they turned out of my way. I was hard on the heels of his ship and tried to suck it into my belly. Finally, reward was not too long, I paid the sweat to reap the benefits. Parts of the fleet were in my belly. I tried to devour the entire fleet, but I did not have such a big appetite. What I could do was only to destroy a small part of Zheng He’s fleet and watch him and the rest retreat and sought refuge on land. I tried my best, but still was unable to change the result.

About a year later, the other storms told me that Zheng He was making for his second voyage. “This is my chance to prove myself,” I was determined. I went over to wait for Zheng He and his fleet to come. It was then probably the last time I would encounter Zheng He because when I got there, a typhoon approximately four times bigger than me had arrived earlier than me. She was already demolishing the fleet. I thought she was there to claim her reward. I needed to have my share too. I reckoned it would just be a piece of cake for her to destroy the fleet, but to my surprise, the typhoon was also unable to devour the treasure ship because the ship was very steady albeit losing steam to fight back. I saw a glimpse of hope and plucked up my courage to attack. I found out that the typhoon was definitely not very smart, so I threw some war ship that were just a little smaller than the treasure ship to twenty meters away. To my expectation, the typhoon raced to the war ship, leaving the treasure ship free to be attacked by me, solely.

“I did it! I did it! Woohoo! .....” I cheered as I flew towards the bigger storms.

# Mal de Mer

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Pan, Qi – 11*

“I will never go overseas again!” Even though Zheng He had just regained consciousness, he was deep in thought. He had just fainted from exhaustion. Zheng He and his followers had just come back from Java Island, Indonesia. Java had been caught in a civil war between Java East and Java West, and Zheng He and his crew had been suffering in a Western jail. At last, when Java West had won, the emperor of Java finally found out that Zheng He was from “China.” He nervously apologized and sent a lot of gold and jewels back with him.

When Zheng He and his crew finally returned to their ships, they set sail. Afterwards they figured out that in total they had lost eight ships and a quarter of his crew, destroyed by the war. On the ship, Zheng He and all his crew were exhausted, especially Zheng He, who soon became extremely seasick and regretted getting on the ship. The ship’s crew was deeply homesick, which added to Zheng He’s misery until he finally fainted. There was chaos!

The weather did not help either. There was a thunderstorm for two nights, and they lost another two ships and almost one sixth of their crew. Zheng He was lucky to survive; the furious waves almost threw him overboard, but his trusted aide, Wang Jing Hong, pulled him back onboard in the nick of time. At first he thought Zheng He might be dead since he was unconscious, but they were relieved to see him breathing.

During the time that Zheng He was unconscious, the news of his coming sailing ships spread throughout the whole Samboja Kingdom, near Palembang, Indonesia. “Tap, tap, tap, tap.....” The notorious pirate Chen Zuyi was deep in thought, tapping his fingers on the table. As a cunning plan gradually developed, the smile on his face expanded. He had already snatched many ships, and had never failed. From his spies, he had learned that Zheng He was skilled only on land, and also suffered from seasickness. Most importantly, he knew that Zheng He was now weak. Now was the time to strike.

Chen Zuyi loudly announced, “My dear crew, Zheng He and his lovely ships are coming our way. Don’t be afraid about their numbers. They’ll cause no harm since their captain is sick! Let’s deceive them!” Chen Zuyi was confident, but he didn’t notice the shivering black shadow standing behind the curtain, which never belonged to there.

After the storm, the weather cleared and Zheng He finally woke up. His assistant Wang Jing Hong told him that while he was asleep, they learned that the notorious pirate Chen Zuyi had been nearby, but had died due to sickness. Wang Jing Hong said that since Chen Zuyi’s crew had lost their leader, they were tired of the pirate life, and they wanted to go back home. The people in Samboja confirmed that the evil Chen Zuyi’s time was finally over!

No doubt that Zheng He believed Chen Zuyi’s trap. Zheng He’s crew went to visit the Samboja “villagers.” However, the “villagers” were really Chen Zuyi’s crew!

After lying to Wang Jing Hong, Chen Zuyi’s crew headed to trick the town villagers. Chen Zuyi’s plan was perfect, airtight. Still, nothing is COMPLETELY perfect.

Zheng He’s ship stopped near Samboja, and he was about to rest. Suddenly, a mysterious dog appeared, and Zheng He stared at it. It had beautiful blue eyes, golden fur; it was a golden retriever. The dog looked Zheng He right in his eyes, as though trying to tell him something. Zheng He was perplexed. It looked so similar to his own dear old dog. It could have been his little brother. Following the dog, he went down through the ship and the complex passageways, finally discovering a mysterious man with a black cloak. There was only a broken lantern shining in the corner. Just before the light went out, he spoke. “Chen Zuyi did not die. He was lying to everyone. He was trying to get you.....” The light faded. The man melted into the darkness, and disappeared.

The next day after checking drawings of Chen Zuyi’s face so they could recognize him, Zheng He’s crew headed to Samboja. There were six pirate ships flying skull and crossbones waiting. Zheng He was ready to board Chen Zuyi’s ship. Chen Zuyi pretended to be Chen Zuyi’s “son,” but still Zheng He figured this out and thought of another plan for his crew and for himself. The other crew members should enter the other five ships. Then, if the ship Zheng He was on got into trouble, the crew would burn the other ships.

As Zheng He went into the ship, it smelled like rotten old socks. There were rats everywhere. Going into the meeting room, Chen Zuyi, pretending to be his son, was waiting. “My father died because of a disease, it was from rats (sob)! No matter what we do, we can’t get rid of the rats.”

But Zheng He was not tricked and shouted, “Chen Zuyi, save your speech for the devil!” Ten knives flashed and thrust towards Chen Zuyi and his crew.

Chen Zuyi stuttered, “Wha—what is this ffor, you’re wrong! I’m his son! This is a mistake!”

Zheng He continued, “We will see if this a mistake when we check with the villagers. Bring them back onboard!”

Zheng He secured all of the ships, killed half of Chen Zuyi’s crew, and took the ships they needed. Once back to China, they cut Chen Zuyi’s head off along with the rest of the crew.

For Zhen He, he had the honor of being praised by the Emperor. Then he finally traveled home and got his much needed rest. While Chen Zuyi’s ships burned and sunk to the sea floor, the story of Zheng He became inscribed in the history books.

# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Park, So Yeon – 11*

It's been 20 years since it happened. I'm lucky to be alive and writing this. Many of my pals and respectful elders weren't as lucky as I was. Praying for my dear friends, I will unravel the story that has haunted me almost every night for the last 20 years.

My name is Hung Li. I was only 17 then. I was called to set off on a trip. A lot of you might know, it's called the Ming Treasure Voyages. We had to set sail for India, trade goods, and come back safely with chests of valuable presents. Of course it was a frightening, daring voyage. We might have a shipwreck, or face the possibility that the country refuses to take us in as friends, or—worst of all—we might encounter pirates

Since I was the youngest and strongest man on the ship, I was the one pulling up the goods for trading. As I stopped for a rest, I saw the captain on the deck, gazing out into the blue sea.

“The day sure is good for sailing, isn't it?” I said, grinning.

The man jumped. He looked at me as if I was a weird, three-legged monster, then shook his head slowly, “You must be new if you think that. We've got a long journey in front of us. This,” he gestured at the open sea, “is fake. An invitation from the sea monster. Who knows how long it will last...”

He went back to his deep thoughts, and I quietly clomped down where things were still being loaded. Worries and fear wrapped around my guts. I hoped we would return safely.

The journey began! With a sudden jerk, hundreds of ships set off from the main dock. People waved good bye and good luck. Some of us on board stared silently at the people at the dock. But most of us got working right away.

Unlike the captain's worries, the journey to India was fairly smooth. No shipwrecks, no pirates. Now the only worry was whether India would take us in. If they didn't, there might be a battle between us.

“Hung Li! What are you doing over there! Come and help! No use standing there like a fool!”

I whipped around. Four sailors were pulling on a rope. One rolled his eyes when he saw me.

“Come now, it's no use standing there. Captain didn't call you for that!”

I strolled down and swiftly pulled down the rope. A sailor guffawed.

I smiled and shuffled away back to the deck. I spent most of the time there.

Soon we were in India. We strode down the wooden steps and stepped onto the sandy ground. The people of India stared at us. Our captain spoke to someone who looked like the chief. After what felt like hours, the chief nodded and said,

“Bharat me apka swaagat hai!”

That meant ‘welcome to India!’. So we were friends with India now.

We were led to a castle. It was beautiful. Swirls of colours filled every single room, with antique vases and pictures decorating the hall. We marched across the thick carpet and stopped in front of the king. The chief explained something to the king. He nodded and gestured to the slaves. They scurried away to what looked like the treasure room.

The next morning, we left with soft silk, special spices, and exquisite jewelries piled onto the ship. This was when the scariest part of the trip began.

We sailed across the Indian Ocean, happy and contented. I sighted a small dot floating towards us. However, it wasn't a dot. As it got closer, I realised it was a ship. And it didn't look friendly. There was a moment of silence amongst all our ships.

Pirate attack.

“Captain?” I whispered, “What are we going to do?”

“Hush! Everything is under control!” he reassured. But I could tell by the look of his face it wasn't.

The pirate ship loomed closer until it was in front of us. Three men jumped off. They each had a beard and tattoos. Long silver swords dangled in their hands. The sailors looked for our weapons. We had swords too. And shields. One of the pirates walked towards us. One step, two step. And swiftly, he slashed his sword across the neck of a sailor who was standing nearby. We raged.

“Charge!” our captain shouted. There was a frenzy of screaming, red liquid, and slashes of swords. That was when I saw the canon ball on the pirate ship getting turned towards our ship.

“Everybody get off the boat!” I yelled at the top of my lungs. I dived into the ocean.

When I woke up, I was lying face down on a sandy beach.

“Thank god you woke up,” somebody said, “We have already lost many sailors. I can’t bear to see another die,” I sat right up. It was the captain. He smiled. I looked around. There were about 15 of us in all, most of them leaning against the tree staring off somewhere, some of them not yet conscious. Wait. Where were we?

“Are we on an island?” I asked. My voice surprised me. It was more like a dry, creaking noise. The captain nodded, then got up to take care of another sailor. I tried to crawl to a nearby tree, but I felt a sharp pain in my right leg. Trying not to look at it, I slowly scooted inch by inch to the tree.

# The Pirate's Attack

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Rao, Tanvi – 11*

Many years ago, a Chinese mariner named Zheng He made seven voyages with his treasure fleet. They gave treasure bags and gold coins to people and they sailed to the South China Sea, Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and along the east coast of Africa. They travelled around the world during the years between 1405–1433. During those years, they experienced many difficulties and miracles. Now, people in China and other countries still remember Zheng He and his miraculous adventures. I will tell you a story about them, while they were on their way back to China from the first voyage.

Zheng He was born into a noble family. When he was born, he was named “Ma He,” but when he received extra military trainings, he became a trusted assistant and advisor to the emperor. That’s why the emperor gave him a new name, Zheng He, instead. He was a hardworking boy and because of the extra military trainings, he wasn’t scared of anything. His parents also taught him to be a kind and a well-mannered man.

During the first voyage, Zheng He and his treasure fleet set sail from Liujiagan Port in Taicang of Jiangsu Province and headed westwards, but while coming back, they faced a problem. They saw a big ship in front of them and on that ship, there was a symbol that related to the mean-spirited and inconsiderate man called Chen Zuyi. Chen Zuyi and his pirate fleet were on the ornamented boat. There were over 500 men on Chen Zuyi’s ship, so Zheng He’s group was scared, but Zheng He was not. Zheng He was still confident, but not over-confident, because he knew that if he was overconfident then he could fail

First, Chen Zuyi made a wicked face and told Zheng He, “Zheng He, give me your treasure and if you don’t, I will say ATTACK.” Zheng He replied, “I am not a servant who when you ask for something will give it to you, so I am not frightened of any words like ‘attack’ or ‘get away’ or ‘run’ or....”

Suddenly, Chen Zuyi closed his eyes with so much anger that smoke was coming out of his nose. He raised his hand to Zheng He and shouted to his crew, “ENOUGH! What are you looking at? Do I have to tell you what to do, or are you going to do it yourselves?” and at last he announced attack.

As soon as he had spoken, Zheng He made a quick move of the gear and went in a direction where the pirates couldn’t catch them. The pirates also ran at bolt speed to get their ropes so they could throw them to Zheng He’s ship and pull it next to their ship. Suddenly, Zheng He’s ship made strange noises and stopped. Zheng He sent one of the members in his team down below the ship’s deck to the engines to fix the noises with the ship. Since the ship was not moving, the pirates caught Zheng He’s ship. The members of Zheng He’s team became more hopeless, but still Zheng He was brave.

Chen Zuyi told all his pirates to attack Zheng He’s ship at once, and they took out their swords and went to Zheng He’s boat, aiming to kill Zheng He so that they could get the bags of gold. When they jumped to Zheng He’s ship, the members of the treasure fleet took out their weapons and started fighting with the pirates aiming to kill them. Zheng He was the one who was in charge of making sure that no pirate stole their treasure. As the pirates tried to attack the bags of treasure, Zheng He took out his weapon and tried protecting the bags by blocking them so that the pirates couldn’t steal them, but since the pirates all came at once, he slipped down the edge of the ship. He nearly went into the sea, but he held on to the corner of the ship. He waited patiently for one of his team members to appear and hoped that no pirate appeared in front of him. Suddenly, Chen Zuyi appeared in front of Zheng He.

He lifted his feet and was about to step onto Zheng He’s hand, but suddenly the member of the treasure fleet who had gone to fix the engine shot an arrow at Chen Zuyi. He laid on the deck, asking for help and shouting in pain. Meanwhile, that member pulled Zheng He up into the boat and Zheng He was rescued. He was so grateful that he thanked god.

Zheng He took out another sword and started fighting with the pirates. He was trying his best not to kill, but he killed some pirates. Overall, Zheng He killed 200 of Chen Zuyi’s pirates. Even though others were happy about killing the pirates, Zheng He was not because he was a good man and he didn’t want others to be killed as per his early life. Chen Zuyi also killed many of Zheng He’s treasure fleet members, which Zheng He was sad about. Later, Zheng He remembered a wheel barrow that the emperor had told him to take with him throughout the journey, so he took out a rope from below deck and tied all the leftover pirates together, including Chen Zuyi, and put them into the big wheel barrow. He pushed the barrow into the pirate ship and untied them. He didn’t kill the pirates because if he did, there will be no difference between him and Chen Zuyi, and he ran as fast as a cheetah back to his ship.

Zheng He and his members of his treasure fleet returned safely to China in their ship. They had a very good journey. Stories about them have been passed on to us and are still told now.



# New Tales of The Ming Treasure voyages

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Roine, Kai Kustaa – 11*

I was a crew member of Da Ming's treasure ship, we had gold and silk and other exclusive items to give out to other countries for exchange. We aimed to build relationships with other countries so that we would not be enemies.

One day the emperor commanded us to sail to the west to explore and collect more exotic items that we have never seen before. So we set sail. On the first week, we only traveled under a hundred kilometers as some crew aboard felt ill. They have gotten seasick and had to be rushed off the ship and went to a nearby city for the rest. We had another ordeal the following week as a storm struck our fleet and almost swept everyone off the ship. When our food supplies ran out, Zheng He ordered, "I have explored many species of fish in the sea. So let's try to fish to get food to eat." Everybody appreciated the idea and we ate fish for about ten weeks.

Suddenly some land emerged not far from my sight and I exclaimed, "Look! We're not far from land. Let's be ready to get there. Let's steer our ship there. So we packed our things and about an hour later, we arrived at Siam. The local people saw us and welcomed us there. We gave them our luxurious things and built friendship with them. In return, we received an Asian elephant I had never seen before. We took it aboard and locked it in a cage in case it attacked humans. We continued our journey and we passed the Malay Archipelago and headed toward Burma. Everything was made of gold even the pagodas. On the way to India, a greedy pirate saw that we had lots of fabulous things and he wanted murder us to get those treasure from us. I steamed up and fired a cannon on his poor ship which left the ship sinking like a piece of melted ice on a hot pot. Everybody cheered! Kai fired the evil pirates down! I beamed with pride.

About two weeks later, we arrived in India. It was not easy to deal with them and they did not like us so they attacked us. We did not take revenge due to the high damage to our ship after the encounter with the pirates. When we left India, we headed to Ceylon. We chose Ceylon as it was one the nearest countries to India and Persia was also nearby. Neither people from India nor Ceylon welcomed us so we traveled to Persia, a country in the middle east.

On the first day traveling to Iran, we fished. A couple of weeks later, we continued to eat the same fish. A man tried to affect the morale of the crew by saying, "Oh gross! This food stinks!" Then he intimidated everyone, "There's poison in the fish, don't eat it!" Everybody started groaning, "Come on this fish stinks. How long will it take us to finish this fish? We want to get to the glorious city of Tehran." Zheng He got really mad, he punched the man's face and he raged, "What in the world are you doing here?" The man replied, "I am a spy sent by the sect who is opposing the Ming emperor." Zheng He ordered the man to be thrown overboard. Then next day we arrived in Tehran. We met the Mirza who welcomed us. We sat down and started to ask the Mirza, "Can we rest a day here around or in the palace?" He replied, "Sure, there is a very comfortable place behind the palace. You can rest there." We returned the favour with gold and silk. The Mirza was a nice guy. But that is not true about everyone. Some tried to chase us out of the city. They sneered, "Even there is the Mirza's permission, you still can't come. Look at your clothes! They are like people who do farming. Beggars are not allowed or welcomed to this city. If you don't leave you will be severely punished." An arrogant man almost attacked Zheng He but he was stopped by the imperial guards. I tried to appease him by giving our luxurious things to him and his gang. Zheng He thanked me for resolving the conflict but we lost some precious silk and other treasures. I told him that I gave them some aluminum cans coated with gold paint. He was impressed by my quick-wit.

We still had not travelled to Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabi, Somalia and Kenya. I had heard some stories on these lands. Somehow, we reached Somalia and there were lots of unusual looking things. We saw giraffes and lions that never existed in Ming China. We asked the locals if we could take these incredible animals from this grassland. They answered, "Yes, you may." The crew members had to secure the animals in case they escape. We really liked the presents. On the way to Kenya, Zheng He got seasick and also had illness so he could not come with us inland. I had to lead the rest of the crew and searched for outrageous things. We caught a Hippopotamus and brought it up the ship. The crew said, "It is so hard. We can't do this." I burst out my fear and roared, "Hang in there! You can do this with your strengths and wits!" We got most of the treasures and set sail home. Unfortunately, half way through the journey, Zheng He suffered as he accidentally ate the poisonous part of the puffer fish. He passed away onboard at 61 years old. We could not do anything to keep his body so we threw it into the sea. Even though the was his last place, we kept his shirts and belongings but in 1480, people took out the things and burned them. His exploration left behind treasures for people up till this day.

# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Yang, Si-Han – 11*

I had joined the Ming Treasure Voyages when I was five years old. Even though six years had passed, the memory of the voyages was crystal clear. The leader of the trip, the great Zheng He, had told his crew to pass on the great and unusual story of the Ming Treasure Voyages to our children. Well, I don't have any children but I could tell this unordinary story to you, right?

I am Zheng He's most loyal dog, Tian Tian. On July 11, 1405, we prayed to Tian Fei, the goddess of protection for sailors. Despite being different in size, I closed my paws and prayed for safe travels.

It was a marvelous sight to see millions of people clapping for us as we set off. Some were holding brightly-coloured flags while others were praying for our safe return. The Yongle Emperor was there in his yellow robes with intricate designs. He had a long sooty black beard and a special black hat on his head. He was the one who had sent us on this special trip. He strutted towards me, I was a bit fazed, thinking something bad was imminent. Looking into my eyes, he whispered, "Take care of Zheng He and be safe." That would be my mission throughout the voyage.

The ship was brown, like the colour of dark chocolate, and was tall and massive. It had enough storage for thousands of people and chests of gold and treasures. The sail resembled a dragon's tail, with ropes pulling it upright. On this ship, we sailed to unique lands and had epic adventures. However, the journey back to Nanjing was most unforgettable.

We had beaten a hasty retreat from Ceylon because the ruler there was hostile. He thought we were enemies and tried to attack us. After that belligerent trip, we went to the west coast of India, the city of Calcutta. The emperor there was much friendlier. As I jumped off the ship, I could see the people's confused faces. The indigenous people were not used to outsiders. Some were staring at Zhang He and the other sailors' unusual clothes with misery, while some were whispering. Mothers grabbed their children tightly. Their native ruler came and Zheng He commanded his men to bring out the gargantuan amount of gold and pottery. After offering the precious items to the emperor, the latter invited us to the palace.

Along the way, I saw people donning different clothes. Some women were wearing red pieces of long cloths wrapped around flimsy blouses. Xu Li explained that it was a 'sari', and was India's traditional clothing. Some women were wearing three pieces of different cloth wrapped around the main blouse. I discovered that it was called a 'Mekhela Sador'. The men were wearing special clothing too, such as the 'dhoti', a long and big piece of white cloth wrapped around the body and sometimes had a belt at the waist.

In the palace, the native emperor, Akbar the great, served us with a Bengali cocktail called 'Kaal Baisakhi'. I would like to taste some but Zheng He waved his hand in my face and drank till the very last drop. I knew I was barking up the wrong tree, so I begged Xu Li for a sip. Big mistake. I swore never to try a cocktail again. After receiving gifts like gold, spices and tea from the emperor, we left Calcutta gaily and began our return to Nanjing.

"Prepare for attack!" the sailors suddenly yelled.

"What's happened?" I wondered nervously.

Xu Li told me that it was Chen Zuyi. I remembered the gruesome pirate. We had met him and his crew when we first begun our voyage. I followed everyone and started barking at the sailors and officers, commanding them where to go and where to hide. Everyone was busy preparing for the attack.

Chen Zuyi's pirate ship arrived, but Chen Zuyi did not fire any bombs or weapons. Instead, Chen Zuyi jumped onto our main ship. He looked apologetic.

"I surrender."

The crowd let out a gasp. But Zheng He didn't look convinced.

"I realised that it would be a lost battle fighting against your strong army. I have learned my lesson and won't mess with you again."

Zheng He's pensive expression softened a little. "I believe you will not bother us again," he bellowed.

I didn't trust the pirate; this situation was fishy. I followed my gut instinct and bolted to the storage room.

I was right! I saw three men attempting to steal our treasures! I bit and scratched like a lion. The pirates yelped, retreated, and hobbled up the stairs, with looks of regret on their dirty faces. When the sailors and pirates saw the three escapees, they gasped in shock.

“Attack!” Chen Zuyi suddenly yelled.

From nowhere, a myriad of pirates appeared and bombs were fired. Boom! Ships were sinking, blood was everywhere, and pirates jumped onto the ship.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Zheng He’s army retaliated. I watched the pirates scream in terror as their ship sunk deep into the ocean.

I knew I had to do something. I ran towards Chen Zuyi. He was battling Zheng He. I leapt and snatched the gun from his hand, just in time before he fired. Zheng He grabbed the rope lying on the deck and firmly tied him against the burnt wooden pole.

“Ouch! I’m sorry! Let me go!” Chen Zuyi cried.

“Too bad,” Zheng He boomed and patted my head.

Crash, bang, bong! Another ship had sunk. Wait a second, it was the ship Xu Li was on!

“Woof! Woof!” I barked as tears cascaded down my cheeks.

“I’m sorry buddy.”

I wasn’t sure how the battle ended. I was wailing for Xu Li throughout the journey home. I could have saved him. I felt ashamed of myself.

Today, although I am still left with a void having lost a good master, I yearn to experience such adventures again.

# Zheng He's Fleet: The Last Treasure Ship

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Zhou, Yi Chen – 10*

The emperor had died.

The man who had once supported his voyages the most was gone.

Nobody cared about the old man and his fleet anymore. They were fighting over the empty throne like hungry wolves fighting over a poor lamb.

However, one day in 1430, the new emperor Xuan De declared that Zheng He would be starting a brand-new voyage! Why? The emperor was making the announcement to other countries—of course by Zheng He—that a new emperor had been throned.

I was supposedly tasked to write diaries of the grand voyage. Can you imagine how excited we were when we watched the endless coastline! It went farther and farther until it disappeared out of sight. I was on the massive treasure ship of Zheng He. The ship was so big that there would be no difficulty fitting a running track and a stadium on it—Olympic sized ones (Do not ask me what is 'Olympic' or 'stadium', I merely dreamt about the future.)!

However, I had an odd feeling that the voyage would not turn out all right... or maybe I was just too nervous. After a delicious breakfast one morning, we arrived at the first country. It had been awhile since the last voyage, but the people recognized Zheng He, so they greeted him politely. We exchanged information such as the emperor's enthroning, and goods like silk and spice. Then we moved on to the other countries.

For months, it was the same work. It was never dull, but I dreamt of more adventurous moments, such as encountering pirates like during the first voyage. There were also rumours that Zheng He himself had another reason for the voyage. We were kept guessing until finally, the answer was revealed in our last planned stop—Mecca. Yes, the great explorer was a Muslim!

Being told the adventures of his father and grandfather, Mecca was Zheng He's dream place since young. He had worked so hard for fifty years, had encountered countless catastrophes, and the hard work had now paid off—he was sailing towards Mecca!

Unfortunately, all his powers and perseverance were spent during the seven voyages—he died when we sailed past Coulee. The odd feeling! Coulee was the final stop for his first voyage. Now it had become the final stop for his life and historical achievements.

And that was the end of my story too.

# Bloodbath's Arrival

*Shrewsbury International School, Zarin, Henry – 10*

“We are approaching Japan,” yelled Yang the Lookout.

“Yay!” shouted the Ming team with joy.

They were aboard the Golden Boy ship (the ship wasn't actually made out of gold or boys, because then it would sink or be cruel).

“Excellent work, team,” exclaimed Captain Ming, a seven-foot tall adventurous sailor with a six-pack stomach. He looked tough and mean but was actually a big softy who loved butterflies and unicorns.

Yee was the team scout and secret agent. His hand was eaten by his greedy pet goldfish which was named Chubby because of his round shape. Now Yee has an automatic grapnel rope as a fist instead of a hand. He was very relieved that they made it because they were on a mission to give gold to poor Japanese people. He wanted to give gold to poor people because his Aunt Po once said, “With bionic grapnel fists, comes great responsibility.”

Suddenly, the world-famous pirate Bloodbath appeared on the ship in a puff of red smoke. As quick as lightning, Bloodbath slammed his spear (also named Bloodbath) into the deck, causing a ball of fire to appear. It started rolling all over the place as if it had a mind of its own. It was really fast, and the adventurers could barely dodge it.

Mong the Chef was not as sure-footed as the others so every time he jumped out of the way he fell on his face. Yee used his bionic grapnel fist to pull himself up to the lookout.

Meanwhile, Captain Ming was fighting Bloodbath with powerful punches in the face while Bloodbath was kneeling the Captain in the nose. Mong the Chef was throwing gallons of “Buddha Jumped over the Wall” soup (that's an actual soup, which the Buddha really enjoyed trying) at the ball of fire, trying to extinguish it.

Bloodbath magically teleported up to the lookout and pushed Yang into the red smoke. Yee had to save Yang so before the red smoke disappeared, Yee thrust his grapnel fist into the devil cloud and was sucked in. Suddenly, Yee found himself falling through an endless red abyss. Two seconds later, he found his body five feet deep in snow. He quickly jumped up from the snow prepared for battle. In the distance, he saw a lot of huge, towering, snowy mountains but did not see Bloodbath or Yang.

Shivering, Yee slowly began walking towards the mountains. Halfway there, he heard a distant howl that scared him. He slowly turned around and saw a pack of snow-white wolves staring at him. He knew that there was only one option – RUN!!

Yee ran for what felt like an eternity. Just when the wolves were about to bite him, he saw an avalanche coming down from the highest mountain. The wolves did not seem to notice it and Yee ran straight towards the avalanche. Just when the snow and ice was about to hit him, he flipped out of the way and the avalanche knocked the wolves unconscious.

At last he accidentally found glowing red footsteps in the snow leading up to the highest mountain around. On the top of the mountain stood a dark red fortress surrounded by a layer of fog. Exhausted and shivering from frostbite, Yee finally reached the top of the mountain which he could now see was made out of blood red ice. Guarding the fortress was an eight-foot tall, red furred Yeti, wielding a giant spiked flail. Yee knew he had to defeat it to get inside the fortress. He ran toward the Yeti and yelled, “For Yang!”

When he realized he had left his weapon at the ship and was unarmed it was too late to retreat. The Yeti kicked Yee to the ground and started swinging the flail around to get more power. Just before the flail hit him, Yee rolled out of the way. While the Yeti tried to pull his mace out of the ground, Yee ran up his arm and kicked the Yeti in the eye knocking him unconscious. Yee ran past the Yeti and saw Yang tied to a pole.

Yee bit through the rope and freed Yang who whimpered, "Bloodbath teleported somewhere else." In a rage, the two adventurers started wrecking Bloodbath's throne when they discovered five tons of treasure hidden underneath.

Suddenly, a portal appeared with their ship on the other side. Smiling, Yee and Yang jumped into the portal with all the treasure planning to give it to the poor.

In a different ship, The Siwang, Bloodbath swore he would have revenge on Yee for stealing all of his gold. He started scheming his master plan.

# Life on an Explorer's Boat

*Singapore International School, Chia, Rachel – 10*

Once the boat sets sail, there's no turning back. Getting sea sick is not an option and neither is bad weather. Admiral Zheng He looked back at the shore with the wind howling loudly at his ear and the thunder rumbling. It was now a thunderstorm and the lightning flashed above him. Rain poured down on him and he looked up at the dark, cloudy sky and sighed. Tonight's sailing was not going to be smooth at all. The waves were bumpy and the crew were checking that all the systems were working. The first mate directed the third mate, the two engineers and the two bosun's mates as they all ran around the ship, fiddling with levers and dials of all kinds.

"Sir! All systems are working!" exclaimed the first mate. Zheng He nodded as he carefully watched the second mate maintaining up to date navigational information.

"We will arrive at Champa in a few days" the second mate announced with delight. The wind seemed to swallow his words but Zheng he could still hear a far-away like voice. Zheng He nodded once again and went into his cabin to rest for tomorrow. Zheng He turned and tossed in his bed, not able to fall asleep. The thunderstorm was still going on but was slightly stronger than before and the ships were tossed about in the waves. And at last, rocking with the waves, Zheng He fell asleep.

The next day, Zheng He woke up to the sound of heavy rain and thunder. Flashes of lightning appeared in the sky and rain heavily poured down the cabin window. The thunderstorm was still going on but it was worse than the day before. Zheng He scrambled out of bed and went out to the deck to see how things were. The cook and cook's assistant were in the kitchen preparing breakfast, and the first mate, bosun and the two bosun Mates, the chief engineer and second engineer were preparing the ship for a coming storm that the first mate had predicted. Zheng He looked around and turned to see a piece of rigging that was supporting the ship's front masts and sails loose. He gasped and ran towards the loose piece of rigging and tried to secure it, but the wind was just way too strong. He needed help. And fast. In no time at all, the ship's mast and sails would fall and the ship would stop moving and go off its course, making it even harder to reach Champa along with the terrible weather. Zheng He immediately ran towards the quarterdeck, hoping to find the crew members there.

"Guys! It's an emergency! The rigging for the front sails and masts are loose! The ship will be out of control and we will go off our course! We might not be able to reach Champa then!" yelled Zheng He as he pounded on the door of the quarterdeck. A few moments later, all the crew members came running out of the room and to the front sails and masts.

"Yes, Captain! We're here!" they saluted. Zheng He ordered the engineers to check that all the equipment were working, told the second mate to constantly check when the storm was going to arrive, and finally, told the bosun and the two bosun mates to follow him. They arrived at the sails and began to work. They tied secured knots on the masts, connected the sails to the masts by tying dead knots onto them, and at last, made sure the riggings were tight.

"Captain! We are on course! We will arrive at Champa hopefully around tomorrow at midnight or so." exclaimed the second Mate excitedly. Zheng He nodded happily and went to check on the engineers.

"Captain! All systems are working down below! We should be fine. Tell everyone that the first mate said we will be approaching a storm in about twenty minutes.!" the chief engineer shouted. Zheng He nodded and gulped. The storm was coming soon.

Twenty Minutes past and the ship was going to go through the storm. Lightning flashed and thunder roared. Rain poured heavily down the windows as the wind howled loudly. "Everyone in their cabins except for me and the captain. Zheng He, meet me at the ship's wheel!" commanded the first mate. Zheng He ran to the ship's wheel as the first mate waited impatiently. "Come on! We've got to steer the boat out of the storm!" Zheng He and the first mate grabbed onto the ship's wheel and tried to control the boat. The waves rocked the boat violently and the boat tilted side to side. Suddenly, the first mate accidentally jerked the ship's wheel to the left and the boat tilted to the right. Zheng He and the first mate were flung from one side of the ship's wheel to the other. Zheng He however managed to grab the ship's wheel and pulled the first mate back to the helm. Moments of anxiety passed from then on, they had almost made a big mistake

and could not afford to do it again. The whole boat's safety was in their hands. Half an hour passed and the boat was out of the storm. From violent and rocky sailing, it became smooth sailing once again. At midnight, Zheng He spotted a faint glow coming from an island. Could it be Champa? Zheng He thought. He reached for his binoculars and immediately spotted a port filled with boats of different sizes. They had made it. Alive.

The boat stopped at the dock and Zheng He lowered the gangway. Zheng He smiled as he stepped onto the ground. They had made it to Champa. Now all they had to do was sail back to China after trading with the people.



# The Mad Storm

*Singapore International School, Lin, Xiyao – 11*

Zheng He looked out across the sea where his fleet of ships would soon be sailing to Africa. He swore inwardly, “God, these Eunuch are so slow, taking all the goods. I need to be at sea in three days time!” He cast an anxious glance at the sky. He could see a storm brewing in the not too far distance.

“Admiral Zheng He,” bowed a young Eunuch, “His majesty, the Emperor would like to speak to you.” The Eunuch stepped aside politely and Zheng He walked towards the Emperor, Xuande.

He kneeled down and asked, “Yes, your majesty?” The Emperor rose from his throne, above Zheng He.

“Admiral Zheng He, this is a very important mission. You have to bring the African ambassador, Johannes Mahlangu to China. I have great trust in you, so do not fail me.” he barked loudly.

“Fail me, fail me, fail me...” echoed the stony wall.

Three days later, the whole sea was swamped with ships.

“There is a boy on the ship, Admiral Zheng He!” an Eunuch said loudly, “Hey boy, get out of here! Stop hiding.”

He dragged the boy out, and brought him to Admiral Zheng He. Admiral Zheng He stared at the boy, eyebrows furrowed. The frightened boy looked down at his shoes timidly and scared of what Zheng He was going to do to him.

“Throw him overboard.” Admiral Zheng He spoke quietly. “We have no time for a stowaway.”

“No, no, please spare me.” begged the boy with fear and panic in his limpid eyes.

Suddenly, a wave several storeys high crashed against the starboard of the ship, sending it lurching to one side. Admiral Zheng He stumbled across the cabin. The sky had turned ominously dark with heavy black clouds. It was as if someone from high above had turned on a switch for the downpour. The rain and wind lashed out violently on the unsuspecting naval men.

“Bring the mast down!” yelled the second captain, blinded by the biting cold rain. Several men climbed up, but were flung into the sea by strong winds. The lower decks had been flooded. Everyone rushed to the top deck.

Admiral Zheng He could see a violent tornado was aiming in their directions. The ship was swaying precariously like a seesaw, as the sea threw its cold spray across the threshold. The men staggered across the deck, fighting to keep their balance. The tornado caught up with them, taking the whole ship and men swirling in mid-air.

Other men were shouting and struggling in the waters. The ships were gone, only left with furniture floating on the surface of the waters.

Vium!!!

Everyone were caught in the storm, as if they were flying in mid-air.

“Where are we?” asked one of the Eunuch.

“ I don’t know.” Admiral Zheng He said slowly, quietly observing the surroundings. All the men blinked in the bright sunshine taking in their strange surroundings. They were nervous and unfamiliar to the surroundings and were all just frozen there, not knowing what they were going to do.

A mom and a boy walked past them and looked at Zheng He and his men strangely.

“Mom, are the men shooting a movie?” a modern boy tugged the corner of his mom’s shirt curiously.

# The Missing Stone

*Singapore International School, Lui, Jun Yang – 10*

Before the dreams descended upon him, Professor Woods was breezing through his week, who being the busy propounded historian, famous archaeologist and popular university teacher he was, wasn't really saying that much. He had just wrapped up a lecture on the treasure voyages of Zheng He, and was looking forward to a well-earned night's rest. The cloudless night sky was patched with countless stars, glimmering as if luminous lights had just been randomly sprayed. Woods crawled into bed, and lay still under the warm heavy blankets, soon to drift off to sleep, when suddenly, a voice spoke in his mind,

"Take me home". It was barely audible, but it was clear as anything in the silence. "Return me", it rasped.

"Where?" Woods demanded.

"To the place where I belong, where the vile Chinese Hasat removed me from." Then, all fell silent again.

Woods sat bolt upright, his spine tingling with a feeling of dread. He surveyed the area, examining everything with care. The old bookcase stood alone in a corner, he looked to the other corner, and his gaze rested on an antique collection shelf. Squinting, he focused his vision onto the variety of strange looking rocks and stones, illuminated in the dim light of the moon. Wait, illuminated? He stared at the glowing stone that sat on the topmost shelf in awe, wondering if he was dreaming or hallucinating. The rock was a rough stone, jutting out at odd areas, which seemed to be glowing faint gold. He studied it with great precaution, then

"take me home", "to the place where I belong!" Woods was sure now, in three big strides, he had marched over and gingerly retrieved the stone. He turned it over and over, now he remembered, this was a stone that he had recovered from a Chinese shipwreck.

"Is that where your home is?" he wondered aloud, relieved there was no one to see him talking to a stone. No reply. He inhaled deeply and sighed "Well, it's worth a shot".

A few hours later, they were seated in a plane, on a hastily booked flight to Indonesia, where they would switch to boat and travel back to the shipwreck. The suitcase felt heavier than usual in its position on Woods' lap, as if the five layer bubble wrapped stone was sharing his excitement and anxiety.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" questioned one of his colleagues, Prof. Birch, the hundredth time. "Are you certain it wasn't just a dream?"

"No," Woods patted his hastily packed suitcase and replied firmly, "I haven't quite gone senile yet." "Ok," Birch replied half-heartedly, "whatever you say."

"You chose to come. Why would you question it now?" demanded Woods. Birch decided to shut up.

The boat trip wasn't too pleasant, after hours of the ship tossed around like a rag doll on the choppy waves, the sea slamming repeatedly into the hull, and the Captain singing TV theme songs. A dive with a talking stone into an abandoned Chinese shipwreck didn't seem like a bad idea. After changing into diving suits, the two professors dived into the sea. The water swirled and swallowed them whole, as they went under, and glided towards the giant hunk of rotting wood. Suddenly, Woods jerked sideways, the pouch he was keeping the stone in started shaking violently like something trapped in there wanted to get free. Then, it glowed gold, and the stone burst out, burning a hole through the pouch, and speeding towards the opposite of the shipwreck. Woods lunged and felt his hands wrap around the rough surface of the rock, felt the currents sweeping at him, then, the stone erupted out of the sea, dragging Woods with it, hanging on for dear life. The stone rocketed up and down, soaring over the startled crew who yelled and ran, but it just shot higher. It bounced around, several times almost throwing the professor off, rocketed skywards, and then, suddenly went into a nosedive. The wind sliced at Woods' face like knives, as the stone hurtled towards earth as if drawn by a magnet. Woods closed his eyes and braced for impact, which never came. Just before plummeting to the ground and making a mess, the stone jerked sideways, and tossed Woods off onto the grassy fields. He looked up and realized that the stone had tossed him onto a cliff. While observing about him,

"Hello," came a raspy voice.

Professor Woods had been in many interesting situations, but none was as strange as registering that the stone's home was an abandoned island housing an old man.

"Who are you?" Woods managed.

The old man laughed, "I am the chief or I used to be, of a tribe. When a Chinese admiral came and convinced us to support some emperor, we accepted and gifted him our sacred stone as a gift. We were foolish, yes we were, but alas, the stone is magical. It cast a wicked curse upon that poor fellow, who died in a few days from diseases. Most people would not know the true story, and would not believe. The old man gazed at the sun, and exhaled,

"Mistakes, Mistakes" then, turned, and walked into the cave, the stone floating after him.

"So, that's it?" marvelled Woods as he pulled himself up and shook his head. "That's the end? "That's how Zheng He died?" "Because a stone wanted to go home?" Woods patted the dirt off, and dashed after the old man.

The old man had disappeared, but the stone had not. It sat on an altar, resting contentedly. Upon his return, Woods reported what he heard, but no one was willing to believe him. The island however was investigated and explored, resulting in marvellous and unpredictable rewards. But for now, he was safe. He had changed the wordings on his research on Zheng He, to the real reason only he knew. It didn't matter if they chose to believe it, or not.

# Pirate Conflict

*Singapore International School, Takafuku, Yumi – 10*

Ben mopped the floor of the deck silently, thinking how stupid he was to think that a group of seventeen-year-olds will be able to sail a ship, defeat pirates and find treasures all by themselves. It all started with his admiration for Zheng He, a trusted naval officer of an emperor in the Ming Dynasty...

Ben admired him for his courage and resilience, wanting to be just like him, and so did his friends. They knew how to control boats very well, being taught by Ben's father, a skilled sailor, for more than five years. When Ben told them his plans for the "little adventure", they eagerly agreed. They rented a small boat and sailed but they were caught by a pirate crew within an hour, where they were forced to clean up an entire pirate ship.

"Let us go!" Ben could hear his friend, Zach shouting. "We didn't do anything wrong! You captured us when we didn't even harm you! Why should we be your servants?"

But the man only replied in his hoarse voice, "Shut up and get to work! Or you can choose to have your head chopped off! All of you are my servants now and you will never be able to escape! If you try to do so, then the next thing you know is that you'll be walking the plank blindfolded." He grinned.

Ben glanced at him. He had long hair past his shoulders like a girl, an eye patch around his left eye, a moustache, a black hat, a hook on his hand, and a green parrot on his shoulder.

"A pirate," Ben thought and continued to mop the floor.

During their break time, they gathered together, sitting at a corner of the deck.

"We have to escape!" Zach whispered, but Ben and his other friends shook their heads.

Ben replied, "Are you mad? It's a crazy idea! To think we can get out of here – a pirate ship, no way!!"

Zach glared. "I'm not stupid, you idiot," he said. "I'm not going to live like this forever."

Just as Ben was about to reply, the same pirate with an eye patch walked towards them and yelled, "Get into the dungeon now!" and shoved them into a small empty room. "Here is your dinner and breakfast for tomorrow," he added, throwing two loaves of bread and a quarter-filled bottle of water onto the ground.

"Here is your dinner and your breakfast for tomorrow!" The parrot repeated.

"What!?" Zach shouted, "Are you crazy? You're just stupid, how are we supposed to do with so little? You made us your servants when we did not do anything to you at all, and --"

"Shut up," Tom whispered as they noticed the pirate's face beginning to change from a red tomato to eight different dark shades of purple.

The pirate clapped three times in a row, and when two muscular men appeared, he whispered something into both men's ears.

Nodding, they grabbed Zach by the arm and leg, and dragged him outside. Ben and his other friends anxiously ran outside behind the muscular men.

The pirate grabbed a sword and followed behind, grinning.

"This is your end," he cackled, and the parrot repeated what he said.

Ben whispered nervously to his friends, until he saw the pirate holding a sword. He opened his mouth and desperately tried to scream but no voice came out.

Zach tried not to giggle when he saw the pirate swing the heavy sword weakly and he could not even hold the sword properly! He was well-trained in Martial Arts, and he tried to turn his laughter into a fake cough.

Zach dodged effortlessly and moved swiftly as the amazed pirate tried to stab him. When the pirate went left, Zach moved right, and when the pirate went right he dodged left...

This went on for quite a while which shocked the 'spectators' and caused the pirate to feel very exhausted. Zach watched sweat trickle off the pirate's face and laughed. At last, Zach decided to just snatch the sword from the pirate. He felt bored as what he called the "game" was getting too uninteresting. He snatched the sword from the pirate's trembling hands and kicked him, which caused him to fall down. Zach was about to kick him again but he stopped as he heard a

"STOP!!!!!! Argh!!! I surrender!"

"Okay, I'll stop," Zach grinned.

Tom and Ben ran towards the pirate and sat on him to make sure he would not be able to move while Zach pointed the sword at the shocked pirate crew and shouted, "If anyone dares to step forward, I will fight you like him!"

He whispered an address into the sailor's ear, and the pirate ship turned to face the direction of their village. Halfway through, they spotted an old, small brown boat floating in the middle of the sea, and Ben recognised it immediately— it was the boat that they rented! Quickly, he ordered the sailor to sail towards the boat.

The sailor turned the direction of the ship cautiously towards the small boat, and when the ship was next to the boat the boys hopped off the ship into the boat, waved a goodbye at the furious pirate who was still swearing at them, and then continued their journey home.

Later, they returned the boat at where they rented it from, and imagined their parents' faces when they told them about their adventure! They gasped and dropped the cups of tea they were having and the cups shattered into countless ceramic pieces. To Ben and his friends, it was a huge 'accomplishment' and this will definitely not be their first and last adventure!

# The Last Pearl of The Sea

*Singapore International School, Tan, E-Shyan – 10*

Heaven, he thought. This must be heaven. The soft, warm sand and the sun rays wrapped around him like a warm hug. The salty smell and taste of the ocean. The light breeze tickling his skin. The symphony of waves crashing onto shore and the call of seagulls. Heaven.

“Admiral! Admiral!”

Admiral Zheng He’s eyes shot open, the blinding bright light stung his eyes, burned it. Then he felt the throbbing pain in his head, he could feel the hammer chipping at his skull. He winced. After blinking a few times and shaking his head, the pain subsided. He surveyed the area and saw it was not heaven, he and the remaining crew were washed up on the island! Instantly the pain in his head came back. They had encountered a fierce storm on their way to the Kingdom of Thailand. All the treasure that they were supposed to give to the King is lost! How could he have failed Emperor YongLe so easily! Guilt poured into his heart like a flood. He looked up and saw his trusted first mate, Li Wei, stumbling towards him.

“B—bring me to the wreckage.” Admiral Zheng ordered, trying to sound confident.

Admiral Zheng ordered the surviving crew to salvage what they could from the damaged ship and build a raft for them to head back to China. Admiral Zheng told Li Wei to take charge and he went to explore the island. As he walked deeper into the jungle he could not believe the beauty found within it. Flocks and flocks of rainbow coloured birds fluttered from tree to tree. The birds were so fast it just looks like a blur of colour. The lush vegetation bore large juicy fruits of different shapes and colours that he has never seen before. The trees were so tall and the branches and leaves on the treetops spread out so much that from below it was a roof of green. And you can hear the endless song and hum of the animals.

As Admiral Zheng was blown away by its beauty, he noticed smoke coming out from a cave on the side of a rocky cliff. This island should be uninhabited.... Out of curiosity he started climbing up the treacherous cliff, relying on small holes and ledges to put his foot on or hold on to. After much effort, he finally reached the cave. He was surprised to see an old man sitting by a fire at the entrance. His clothes were tattered and filthy. The man noticed Zheng looking at him and he smiled.

“I am General Wang. I was sent here 12 years ago to retrieve the Infinite Pearl of the Sea”, the man pointed into the cave, “it’s right inside, but it is guarded by fearsome monsters. They have killed all my men...but I am not giving up. I have been guarding this cave ever since, waiting for my chance.”

“Wait”, Zheng interrupted, “You are the famous General Wang that went missing years ago? I will help you retrieve it. Let’s finish this mission!”

Wang guided him into the cave, the deeper they went, the scarier it became and they could feel it radiating evil. Finally, they came to a large area, the core of the mountain. The place was filled with mermaids. Now these are not those kind of mermaids in fairy tales. They had no pupils and had claws three inches long. Their mouths were filled with razor sharp teeth, and they had scratch marks all over their body, some were bleeding. Worst of all, their tails were decorated with bones; human bones. The two looked up and saw that the entire place was decorated with human skulls. At the centre of the core was a glowing object. The ancient treasure, Zheng thought.

The minute the mermaids saw them, they lunged, screeching, demanding blood.

“Quick!” Wang yelled, “Get to the treasure!”

Together, the duo ducked and sprinted towards the treasure. Several mermaids lunged at Zheng but he managed to defend himself with his sword. All the screeching and slashing attracted more and more mermaids to fight him. He backed away and slashed his sword wildly in desperation, as the mermaids howled in delight at the thought of human flesh and blood. Soon the mermaids cornered them. They kept coming closer and closer until he could feel their horrid breath on his skin...

Suddenly, Li Wei jumped in wildly swinging his sword. The mermaids were taken by surprise and howled even louder.

“How did you know where to find me?” Zheng cried with relief.

“You were gone too long so I came to find you, I figured you were here when I saw the smoke coming from the entrance.” Li Wei replied with a smirk. “The raft is ready to sail!”

Together, they fought as one, shielding and slashing, drawing blood. While the mermaids were distracted with Zheng and Li Wei, Wang sprinted to the pearl and snatched it from its place. Immediately, a powerful force of white light burst out, throwing everyone back. When they recovered, to their horror, they noticed that the cave was collapsing and huge rocks and boulders were crashing down all around them!

“Come on! We need to get out of here!” Zheng yelled.

The trio sprinted to the exit, dodging falling rocks and blinded by the dust. Finally, they threw themselves out of the cave just as a gigantic boulder crashed down and sealed the exit. They cried with joy. They could still hear many hungry mermaids screeching from the other side. They hurried off to the beach and got onto their newly built raft with the crew. As they sailed into the horizon, Zheng held out the Infinite Pearl to the sun. He thought of the story of the old man Sai losing his horse.

“This is turning out to be a great day after all!”

# The Adventures of Admiral Zheng He

*Singapore International School, Wang, Jiamu – 10*

“Now you go and find Zheng, I have an assignment for him,” the Ming Emperor, Zhu Di, demanded of his administrator.

“Yes, my Lord.” the administrator replied while bowing and retreating.

“Now that we have overcome our enemies and gained control of the land surrounding us, we need to extend our sphere of influence and venture to foreign lands so that they too can know that China is a powerful but friendly nation. They will then show respect to us and pay tribute. I want you to go to the four corners of the earth and take with you animals, plants, silk, dye, tea, and other items that we can trade with them.” the Emperor ordered Zheng He.

“Yes, your highness! That task is well within our compass.”

“As you have obediently prepared the entire fleet, I want you to leave at sunrise on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day from now!”

Two days later, Zheng He set off from the Nanking harbour. Over 1000 vessels and over a hundred thousand men set sail – a sea of red sails and an array of different-sized vessels proceeded through to the open seas and sailed south. “What a site it was!” Zheng He thought excitedly.

But not everything went as planned. The responsibility was daunting and the work demanding as the commander in charge of such an expedition.

“Rise and shine, sailors!” yelled the first shipmate onboard Zheng He’s first flagship. There were four flagships. It was the second day at sea and it was a new day. The sailors went about their duties efficiently. Soon the vessels had been at sea for a week.

The weather had been calm for most of the journey during the first week until that horrendous day. Jia Jing, Zheng He’s best friend, was onboard as one of the officers in charge of the ship. He was captain. It was about 0300 hours in the morning that day when the some of the watchmen had practically nodded off, when one of them pulled himself together and muttered,

“What is wrong with me?” Zheng He had been awake and was pacing anxiously back and forth up and down his quarters before looking worriedly out of his window. He observed that the sky looked blood red. He then heard a loud Bang! It was from one of the sailors.

“Admiral, you might want to see this...” The watchmen’s voice trailed off as he quailed under Zheng He’s furious but disturbed look. The sailor directed the Admiral to a large funnel-like cloud that was approaching.

“Tornado! Go and wake everyone up!” Zheng He contemplated.

Within a few minutes, everyone was yawning and grumbling on deck, facing Admiral Zheng He. Their faces were concerned.

“Men! Quickly! Fold the sails, and secure all loose items before retreating to their quarters!” Zheng He commanded. He then thought of his friend Captain Jia Jing.

“Jia Jing is still in his quarters sleeping!” Zheng He bolted along the deck hoping to find his friend in his cabin. He saw him sleeping soundly. The tornado began to turn the huge 100 metre long flagship around as the sea began to swirl. Eventually Jia Jing woke up. He glared at Zheng He furiously.

“Admiral! Captain! Get underdeck!” a sailor shouted.

“Now Go!” Zheng He yelled at Jia Jing as he dived underdeck.

After a while, Zheng He did not see even the shadow of his friend, so he poked his head up casually onto the deck. There, he saw his best friend holding onto the mast. Whoosh! The ship had been teetering in and out of the tornado’s absorption circle for too long.

Too long.

The tornado came upon the ship like a roaring lion, ripping and tearing everything in its path. The center mast which Jia Jing was holding onto collapsed and Jia Jing was forced to let go. “I must save him!” Zheng He thought. But as he was going to climb onto the deck, the wind blew him beneath! All he could do was watch his best friend get sucked away, and drawn out to sea.

The tornado wreaked havoc on the deck and headed underdeck for more. The ship was ripped cleanly into halves like a giant had torn it in two, not the wind. Zheng He yelped trying to escape, scampering wildly but was not successful. The ship fell apart. Everywhere, you could either see sailors struggling to keep afloat or sailors clinging onto pieces of driftwood to save their lives. Zheng He himself was flung into the sea.

After two weeks of arduous survival, drinking nothing but seaweed and sleeping on a piece of wood shorter than two meters, he arrived at a seashore. He leapt joyfully onto the shore. He found a small village not far from where he was, and got many strange looks and whispers from behind.



“Excuse me, will you be so kind to tell me where I am?” He asked.

“Welcome to our humble village – Shell Village,” a woman replied politely. “I believe you are one of the survivors of that Great Shipwreck!”

“Yeah, I am one survivor,” Zheng He muttered. After that, he found out he had landed right back where he started!

“My Lord! Zheng He has survived the Great Shipwreck!” A servant notified the Emperor. The Emperor demanded the servant to bring Zheng to him.

“Well, Zheng! You failed this mission.” The Emperor glared at him, “But you have shown bravery beyond that of my own.” The Emperor paced with his chin up high. “But, much merchandise has gone to waste and been damaged at tremendous cost and sacrifice, so we will become unpopular among our subjects. This unfortunately cannot be undone. You’d better set off again immediately after you are nursed back to health.”

“Yes, my lord!”

*(Zheng He was a great voyager who sailed with three other Chinese admirals to the four quarters of the earth c. AD 1421, appx. 70 years before Columbus.)*

# The Unexpected Experience

*Singapore International School, Wong, Derrick – 10*

“Splash!” Glancing down into the water, Zheng He sighed to himself. This was the last part of this voyage, but for the whole time he had been the Admiral on the ship, nothing exhilarating happened throughout the journeys he had been requested to command. “Bring me a cup of tea please, Shao,” Zheng He said quietly with a wave of his hand. Shao was Zheng He’s loyal servant, who always followed Zheng He and respected him a lot.

“Don’t you think these voyages are a little too boring?” Zheng He asked Shao.

“Yes sir, I agree. They are unbearably boring. I wouldn’t even mind if there was a tremendous storm in the seas, as long as the experience is exciting.”

“Mmmhmm...” Zheng He nodded and gazed towards the horizon, watching the sunset, and Shao did so too, making himself comfy on a bamboo stool beside his master.

After a while, Shao placed a cup of tea on a desk beside Zheng He’s bed, then skipped down the steps of the Admiral’s compartment back to his own tiny compartment on the side of the ship, where he spotted a note on his bed. He started reading it. The note said:

Dear Shao,

Thank you for the lovely tea you have given me today.

Please meet at my compartment tomorrow at sunrise. Thank you!

Zheng He

However, little did they know, that something disastrous and terrifying would happen tomorrow afternoon...

The first rays of sunlight shone dimly through the windows and it was drizzling. Shao stretched his arms, and trudged to the Admiral’s house after drinking a warm and delicious cup of tea.

“Sir, I am here.”

“Great. We can finally start.” Zheng He exclaimed, and rubbed his hands.

“Wait...” Shao squinted, looking out onto the horizon. “Sir, I see a peculiar black dot far away.” Zheng He instantly whipped out his pocket telescope and peered eagerly into the lens. However, the excitement written on his face quickly melted into dread as his face darkened, his eyes wide open at what he saw. “The Pirates of the East— They are one of the most feared pirates in the world, and they have no mercy for anyone. Hit the Great Gong at once.” Zheng He ordered, his heart beating so hard his ribcage almost cracked.

“Yes sir,” Shao replied as he bolted as fast as he could to the Great Gong and smashed it using all his might. “BONG!” The sound rang through the ship and the whole crew scrambled out to find out the reason behind sounding the Great Gong. “Pirates, the Pirates of the East,” Shao breathed rapidly, a shiver crawling up his spine.

Zheng He commanded, “Everyone must prepare. Soldiers, prepare to battle. My dear oarsmen, row as hard as you can. Shao, come with me. ”

A tense atmosphere filled the ship as everyone rushed to do their duties, hoping that their lives would be safe.

“I spy a giant ship! Wonderful to attack!” Captain Horman shouted with glee. “Let’s go full speed!”

Captain Horman demanded, “Fighters, get ready! We have a ship to hijack!”

“This is going wonderfully,” Assistant Nosmos cackled.

“Yes,” Captain Horman saw eye to eye with his assistant.

“I have an ingenious idea. Other people can fight while we go into a petite boat, sail to their boat and start climbing up to attack them by throwing a rope up onto their ship, and then we will steal some of their food and money,” Assistant Nosmos began imagining the scene.

“That’s a marvellous plan! Then I will ask them to carry this plan out.” Captain Horman grinned from ear to ear and so did his assistant.

“The ship is ahead of us right now!” Assistant Nosmos screamed.

“Let’s put Plan A in action!” Captain Horman bellowed.

The fighters on the pirate ship fought and started shooting when some soldiers from the Chinese Treasure ship began catapulting rocks. Meanwhile, Captain Norman and his assistant had got into the boat and had sailed to the ship where Admiral Zheng stayed. “Lasso the rope!”

Unfortunately, when Captain Norman and his assistant nearly reached the top, a shark appeared and began biting on the rope to drag them down. “Help!”

Admiral Zheng heard the cries and he and Shao hurried to the source of the sound. Admiral Zheng and Shao used all their might to pull them up, and Captain Norman and his assistant both felt ashamed and guilty that they plotted to attack these kind and helpful people, and decided that they no longer wanted to battle them.

“Thank you so much! You saved our lives! I’m incredibly sorry for attacking your beautiful ship. I will command my crew to stop.”

Admiral Zheng smiled politely, and told his crew to lower their catapults.

“Crew! Stop attacking! They will not harm us. They saved our lives!” Captain Norman ordered.

Even though Captain Norman’s crew wasn’t sure why they had to lower their guns, the pirate crew still lowered their guns slowly.

“I need to leave now. Just keep this white stone so you would remember us. Thank you for helping us. We are extremely sorry. Bye!” Captain Norman and Assistant Nosmos waved goodbye and climbed back down to their ship. They sailed away to their pirate ship in their tiny boat, red in the faces, feeling deeply guilty.

After returning to China, people cheered and clapped to congratulate them on finishing their journey. Admiral Zheng arranged a big feast, for two reasons: not just celebrating the knowledge they brought back with them, but also their wonderful experience that would be unforgettable.

# The Zheng–Chen Sea Battle

*Singapore International School, Wong, Shang Le – 10*

On 7 October 1407, the great admiral Zheng He was anxiously pacing around his ship. He was due to return to China by year end. Zheng had yet to destroy the pirate Chen Zuyi as ordered by Emperor Yongle before his return to China. The pirate was endangering trade, killing Chinese nationals and causing chaos in the high seas.

Suddenly, one of his crew shouted, “There is a large fleet of ships coming toward us. They may be a pirate fleet. There are about 17 ships.” Then they heard loud shouts came from those ships. His lookout yelled, “I think they are trying to tell us something.” An arrow thudded onto the mast of his ship with a message attached to the arrow, which said “This is a robbery. Send three men with all your valuables to the main ship or die. You have until tomorrow afternoon.”

Zheng sent his right-hand man to gather his crew from his fleet for a meeting. During the meeting, Zheng strategized in destroying the pirates. They concluded to send three men to the pirate ship with fake diamonds and jewels to trick the pirate into lowering the guard and letting them go. This would give Zheng’s navy the opportunity to attack them with the full force of the mighty Chinese armada. The pirates would be crushed, and either be taken as prisoners or killed.

When Zheng’s men presented the treasures to the pirates, the pirate chief became suspicious that the jewels were not as sparkling as other gems they had looted before, so he locked up Zheng’s men.

Upon learning his men were locked up by the pirate, Zheng kept calm and decided to stick with his original plan. However, Zheng did more research and found that the pirate chief was none other than the legendary Chen Zuyi. He was overjoyed with his good fortune in finding Chen. Zheng learnt that Chen had terrorised the seas of Southeast Asia and ruled several cities including the Indonesian city of Palembang. At Palembang alone, he had 10 ships and 5,000 men. Chen was also one of the most feared pirates to terrorise the Strait of Malacca and had amassed a following of over 20,000 pirates and 30 ships. Zheng muttered “No wonder Emperor wants him dead.”

Zheng knew that Chen was not an enemy to be taken lightly and unnecessary bloodshed could be prevented by having the pirates surrender to his fleet. Therefore, Zheng sent a messenger to ask Chen to surrender peacefully. Chen read the message and thought: I could attack Zheng’s fleet from behind if I pretended to surrender. Then I could destroy his fleet and plunder Emperor Yongle’s treasures.

Later that day, a Chinese official from Java rushed onto Zheng’s flagship, panting and yelling, stuttered “Chen ... trick ...” Zheng said to the official “Calm yourself down first. Have some buns and tea.” When the official felt good enough to speak, he said “Pirate Chen will launch a surprise attack on you tomorrow. He will attack you with 17 ships and 8,000 men.”

The official had been overseeing a fishing boat when he saw the pirates and overheard what they were saying. He was able to pass undetected because his boat was small. Zheng replied “Thank you for your information. I will make your contribution known to Emperor Yongle. If I had not known this, our navy would be crushed even with our superior firepower.”

Zheng thought: “How interesting, Chen and I are deceiving each other with our false surrender. If the official did not come, we would both been surprised.” Although both fleets were similar in size and strength, Zheng believed he had the upper hand because he knew about Chen’s plan.

Zheng summoned his officers and told them about Chen’s plan. All his officers were outraged at the thought that Chen would attempt to trick the intelligent Ming naval officers.

On the fateful day of the pirate’s pretended surrender, everyone on both sides were nervous. The Ming soldiers were stricken with fear by having such an infamous pirate as their adversary. The pirates were fearful that Emperor Yongle had sent such a powerful naval fleet to destroy them.

Zheng attacked first with his archers which showered flaming arrows and burnt six ships. The pirates retaliated by firing 50 cannons and sunk five warships. Zheng’s eyes were ablaze with fury as he recalled how pirates would torture their defeated enemies and let them die. He ordered another round of flaming arrows and burnt another four ships.

At that time, the pirates were overwhelmed with fear, as the mighty Ming navy had yet to unleash their full destructive power without firing any cannon. Chaos reigned on the pirate ships. Zheng ordered the soldiers to raid the pirate’s flagship and to capture Chen.

It was a long and bloody battle, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. Although the pirates fought zealously, they were no match to the powerful Ming navy and fell to Zheng's scheme. Over 7,000 pirates were killed, 10 pirate ships were burnt, and seven pirate ships were captured. Chen and his lieutenants were taken to Nanking to be tried and executed. When Zheng returned, he was greeted by crowds of celebrating citizens who had heard of Chen Zuyi's defeat by Zheng He. Emperor Yongle was also impressed by Zheng and continued to fund his future voyages

# Pirates' Tyranny

*Singapore International School, Wu, Audrey – 10*

What a stormy night it was: lightning flashed, rain attacked, wind roared and whipped the hulls of the Ming treasure fleet, howling with vexation when they refused to give in. Standing tall and proud on the flagship, Zheng He, the captain of this fleet, was ecstatic for they had received many priceless gifts and alliances from the countries they visited. He marched towards his advisors, expecting them to share the joy of surviving the storm, but instead, they were muttering feverishly towards each other in hushed tones.

“What’s the matter?” Zheng He boomed with ardor. “Aren’t you joyful for the news we’ll give our Emperor?”

An advisor stepped forward hesitantly: “Er... Captain, we’ve detected some...pirates.”

“Pirates?” He repeated skeptically, facing the advisor with an arched eyebrow. After an earlier encounter with them, he knew that pirates always preferred brawl over brain. “Well, avoid it, then. No need to worry.”

Another advisor shook his head. “I’m sorry, sir, but it’s not a fleet of one, but over a hundred ships, and they’re heading our way! They even switched route – they obviously want a fight.”

Zheng He nodded slowly. “Alright. Alert all ships to prepare for battle, stop our ships in a semi-circle, and to gather ten soldiers per ship to man the cannons of 100 ships,” Zheng He commanded briskly. The advisors promptly saluted in unison and, looking gratified to be doing something useful instead of dawdling fretfully around, marched away.

He sighed and turned back towards his quarters. It had been a long time since he’d fought, but he trusted that his skills were not rusty; after all, pirates’ solution to everything was to fight. He grabbed his golden breastplate, and opened the cupboards to the rest of his armor. As he donned his ivory-silver helmet and gingerly lifted his sheathed blade, there came a furious series of knocks on the door, and barely a moment later, a squadron of black-armored soldiers rushed in and knelt down. The leading fighter stepped forward. “Admiral, we are approaching the enemy fleet. All soldiers have been notified, but we are useless without a plan from our leader,” he began, his solemn voice slightly muffled by his helmet. “Tell us what you want us to do.”

Zheng He allowed himself a grim smile. He’d pondered over all the possible battle plans against the pirates, and after debating them with every criteria, he’d created a final strategy. “Find every soldier. Separate five hundred soldiers per wave. I want every wave to go when they see my signal. The first two waves will go together. Men who aren’t fighting try to stay at the front, and don’t do anything rash.” The soldiers nodded and hurried away. Zheng He didn’t want to spill any blood; he would try to reason with them, he decided.

Zheng He burst onto the top deck. Stretching all the way to the horizon, he stared at the pirates, dumbfounded: countless faint outlines, standing fearlessly on pirate ships, a hand wielding a glinting weapon barely visible. Zheng He shivered. Convincing the leader of this powerful fleet to stop would not be easy.

He stepped onto the bow of his ship and took a deep breath: “Pirates!” He called at the top of his lungs. “We do not seek to harm you; we prefer peace over war. Please, let there be no bloodshed.”

The pirates collectively turned to look at a man at the front of the army. Although Zheng He was far away, he could feel that this particular pirate radiated an intense energy, like that he ought to be in charge. Zheng He could see how the other pirates had “fallen under his spell”. This man was obviously the captain.

The leader stared back at Zheng He and started yelling in a foreign language. Although he could not understand the pirate, he heard fury from his tone. These pirates were obviously hungry for a fight.

But then Zheng He turned back to his own army: thousands of loyal soldiers, swords at the hand, waiting for his command. Warmth gushed through Zheng He. He ripped the scabbard off his blade and yelled, “Attack!” and pointed his gleaming sword towards the pirates. Despite the fierce cannon fire from the Ming treasure fleet, the swifter pirate ships got into position and closed in quickly.

All around Zheng He, he could hear the sharp sound of metal clashing. He parried a sword and stunned his attacker with a jab on the ribs. After twisting and stabbing for a few minutes, he suddenly remembered his battle plan and signaled to the soldiers in reserve, who immediately rushed into the fray.

The battle raged on. Now all of the Ming treasure fleet were battling for their lives. As Zheng He slashed at two pirates, he suddenly stumbled onto something. He instinctively looked down, and instantly wished that he hadn’t: a soldier was limp on the deck, sprawled in an awkward way. Dark blood was pooled around his neck, mouth and injured hands, and more crimson liquid was slowly pooling out of a deep, huge gash on his chest. His dented helmet was lying a few feet away, exposing his ivory eyes. His tongue was lolling out like a pink, fat worm, with milky-white spit bubbling around his lips. Zheng He’s stomach flipped.

Zheng He's hands were suddenly clammy with sweat and his tongue seemed to have disappeared. More soldiers would perish, like this unfortunate soul, if he didn't do something quickly. Zheng He tried to raise his voice. "My soldiers!" The sound of his weak voice barely escaped his lips. Drawing in a breath, Zheng He tried again. "My soldiers! We must drive these pirates back before they do anymore damage to our fleet!" The soldiers raised their swords with renewed spirit and rushed towards the pirates. As the tide of battle turned, and more pirates fled, Zheng He smiled proudly. His crew really was the best he could ask for.

# Bottled Up

*Singapore International School, Yao, Elisha – 10*

I was thrilled to be chosen as a member of the crew on the second Ming Treasure Voyage. When we set sail, I felt an adrenaline rush as I set off for a new adventure. Having turned eighteen a few months earlier, in 1407, I was one of the youngest crew members and my naïveté showed. The ships were so colossal that they engulfed a large section of the sea. Ninety of us were on board each one, and there were thirty boats altogether. My ship was one of the longest, at nearly 100 metres long. However, after a while, the novelty began to wear off. The sweltering heat, bumpy sea, a lack of food, and being surrounded by frustrated, aggressive, perspiring men twice my size began to make me wish I'd never set sail.

But one day, around a year ago, as we approached the beautiful island of Java, Indonesia, the most dramatic day of my life occurred. We were preparing for war. We had an infamous history with the King and residents of Java. Some of them would love nothing more than to murder us all. However, we had a mission in mind. To improve relations, allowing for peaceful trade between our two regions. My best friend on board the ship, Lee Boy, came running into my cabin.

“Sam! Quick! The captain has sent us to get food reserves for the crew. We need to get our energy before the final approach to Java.”

I was hesitant to go. I knew that they always sent the weakest members of the crew on these errands, because it's so dangerous that we might die. Lee Boy, however, seemed to have no fear whatsoever. He threw me onto a wooden boat previously attached to the side of our ship and jumped on after me.

“We're heading to that coast!” he shouted buoyantly as the wind swirled gently above our sail. Ahead, I saw the long, sandy bay of a beautiful beach. The sky was blue and the sun shone above. I might not have been looking forward to the errand, but I was sure looking forward to eating some real food!

As we approached the bay, the weather changed faster than I'd ever seen before. Blue skies turned gloomy in a matter of seconds and the gentle winds became so strong that pieces of wood began to crack like the branches of trees in a tornado. A wave sent us flying three metres into the air and came crashing back down, the ominous taste of salt water filling our mouths and noses. A storm was upon us! We landed with a huge thud back into the ice cold sea.

The last thing I remember from that storm is a sudden bolt of lightning striking the boat and filling the air with the acrid smell of burning wood. When we woke up, it was dark and calm. I could hear the gentle waves lapping against the surface of our vessel like the quiet tick-tock of a grandfather clock. We must have been unconscious for a while. I tapped Lee Boy on the shoulder.

“Wake up, Lee Boy!” I said, urgently.

There was no sound.

I shook his body to awaken him but it was limp and cold. All the blood rushed from my head and I felt dizzy as I staggered back. I felt for a pulse, and there was none. He was gone. I was alone.

As I looked down at the swirling seawater, I realised the gentle calm of the night was deceiving me. I was not safe. Below me I saw the dark fins of several sharks weaving between the waves. Not only that, but I hadn't realised I was up to my ankles in saltwater. The boat had been badly damaged and I surely only had ten minutes before the whole thing collapsed and I became a snack for a shark.

Just as I began to give up hope, I heard a deep rumbling sound. Vibrations seemed to make the whole ocean quiver. I looked down and was confronted with a truly horrific sight. I was looking at the contorted face of a creature so huge, I wondered if I was hallucinating. The width of its head was at least



two metres with eyes bigger than my stomach. Its mouth opened wide and I saw what seemed like hundreds of teeth, as sharp as blades and each as long as my arms. I tried to run, but my feet were blocks of ice. With a deafening murmur, its entire head lurched forward and its jaws closed around me. I saw giant tonsils, felt slimy flesh and that was when I knew my life was over.

I squeezed my eyelids tight and prepared myself for the deathly journey into a cauldron of acid.

I waited.

But I didn't move.

Then the entire creature moved forwards in the water, gracefully. I could see only darkness but could feel steady movement. Why wasn't this monster swallowing me whole? What was happening?

What seemed hours later, the jaws opened again and the tongue on which I sat lowered me gently and softly onto a patch of sand. I turned to say goodbye, but she had gone already. My saviour. Not a beast at all but a gentle giant of the night.

On that island I remain today. I have been here for 365 sunrises and sunsets. I live alone, with no other human life, but I thank the gentle giant every day for allowing me the chance to live at all. The island is lush and fertile. It has life, which is all I need, having trodden a path so close to death. Every day I look out of the window and the clouds wave at me, the gentle breeze calls my name and the trees rustle to the beat of my heart.

If you find this note, please come and find me.

# The Attack of Fireclaw

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Chan, Ying Yong Grace – 11*

“What’s that?” someone asked, pointing towards the clear blue sky.

Was it a bird? A huge insect? Some random new invention by man? As it flew closer and closer I could slowly make out its shape. Gasping, I realised what it was. It was the legendary dragon of China named Fireclaw! It was invincible and could take out anything in its way. We would be dead for sure.

I ran inside, breathing heavily. Being the “mighty Admiral Zheng He”, I was always responsible for everything that happened. But in this situation, I had a dragon to defeat, with only a small army on a ship to help me.

A few seconds later, I could hear frenzied shouts and footsteps of people scurrying along the deck, running everywhere. Not long after, a few of the officers found me and ran to my side.

“Admiral, what are you doing here? We need to face that horrible beast!” worried Officer Tian.

“It is no use. We will never be able to face Fireclaw! Even if I tried to stop it, it could still kill us, and it would all be my fault! Emperor YongLe should have never put me on this mission. We have not even started our voyage to any of the other cities or countries, and our voyage is already coming to an end.” I replied sadly.

The officers shook their heads and explained, “Although there is a high chance that we may not succeed in defeating the dragon, you have to have faith in your army, and have confidence in yourself, and the determination, courage and perseverance in defeating Fireclaw. After all, if you do not try, we would lose for sure. If we give it a shot, we at least have a chance of winning.”

I considered the officers’ wise words. Even if we could not make it, we still had to try and not give up.

All of a sudden, a wave of heat swept over us, and we instantly knew what it was: Fireclaw’s fire.

“Quick, Admiral! You have to make your decision now! Fireclaw is attacking!” cried Officer Chen. We had no time to waste.

“Let’s go!” I shouted determinedly.

We ran up to the deck, and there Fireclaw was. It had long, pointy horns; blazing hot red eyes the colour of fire; sharp fangs that could cut through almost everything; majestic, large wings; and bright yellow scales glistening in the sun.

Taking a deep breath, I said hurriedly, “Everyone, listen up! I want the soldiers to get their weapons immediately and start attacking the dragon. Sailors, maybe your team could make sure that the ship remains in working order and try to steer the ship towards Indonesia. If we go far enough, Fireclaw may return to China and leave us alone. Officers, umm... maybe...” My voice trailed off as it was overcome by panic, fear and nervousness.

The officers shot me an encouraging look. I smiled back, regaining my confidence.

“Officers, go and hide our precious Chinese treasures from Fireclaw, and defend the treasures from it, because its main mission was to steal our treasures in the first place. We must not let Emperor YongLe down. Remember, we are all on one ship, so if you have materials or knowledge that may be useful, please help others. Most importantly, stay calm and do not panic. Start now!” I shouted.

“Come on! Let’s go!” one of the soldiers yelled. They all grabbed their weapons and began fighting. Gunshots were heard and Fireclaw roared, not backing down. There was chaos everywhere. Bang! Slash! Swords cut through Fireclaw and fresh red blood squirted everywhere, but Fireclaw did not seem the least bit concerned. Guns rapidly shot out deadly, explosive bullets strong enough to kill a whole army of humans. Fireclaw got really furious and began to lose its temper. Fiery bolts shot out from its mouth, scalding the people who were near, burning down half of the ship and spreading the fire on the water all around the ship. After all, it was one of the legendary, most powerful dragons in the whole world.

Fireclaw came closer and closer to the treasures.

“No!” someone screamed.

My heart was pounding in my chest and I broke out in sweat. What were we going to do now? Fireclaw is going to kill us! I paced around the deck nervously, trying to remember what my grandmother used to tell me about the dragons of China. I just needed to concentrate. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes.

She used to say, “There used to be many, many dragons in China, but thanks to the brave leaders and soldiers, most of them were killed or captured. One of the dragons still alive is the Fireclaw. It is red in colour, can breathe fire, invincible towards gunshots and swords, but most importantly.....”

ROAR! My thoughts were interrupted by Fireclaw, ready for another attack. I needed to focus! I cleared my mind, blocking out everything in sight and all of the noise.

My grandmother continued, “.....most importantly, it is powered by fear.” That was it! Fireclaw came to our ship because it sensed my nervousness and gained power from it. I had a plan. I ran up to the deck, addressing all the remaining soldiers, sailors and officers.

“Everyone, Fireclaw is actually powered by fear. Step forward and do not be afraid. Just be brave and have confidence in yourself and others around you.” I commanded.

Slowly and steadily, everyone stepped forward and formed a circle, not at all bothered by Fireclaw’s menacing glares or bolts of fire. I joined them, glaring right back at Fireclaw.

“Fireclaw! We are not scared of you anymore, so stay back and back down! Do you hear me? We are not afraid of you!” I screamed, punching a fist in the air.

One by one, all the soldiers, sailors and officers started to join in.

“Yeah, Admiral is right! Back down, Fireclaw! Get out!” everyone yelled, smiles creeping up on their faces. This was truly the power of teamwork.

Fireclaw’s jaw dropped down. It was shocked. How dare these people treat Fireclaw, the mighty dragon, this way! It had to make one last attempt. Fireclaw flapped its wings and flew into the sky. It took one huge breath and blew as hard as it could, but only air came out of its mouth. It was defeated at last. Shooting us one last furious look, it disappointedly flew away, most likely back to China.

Everyone cheered loudly, clapping and hugging each other. I smiled. We were safe. This was just the beginning of a whole new journey, and there was more to come. Now, I am ready for anything that comes my way. Let’s d

# Belly of the Beast

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Chen, Kee Fay June – 11*

A stocky, grizzled sailor, perched on the tip of a rocky samba, strained his eyes surveying the horizon ahead. Hong was a veteran of Admiral Zheng's Nanyang fleet. His hair was greying and receding rapidly and his eyes lacked that killing flair he had when he was young. In his mind, he tried to picture the fearsome creature that he would encounter soon. According to the local village elders, in the forbidden island of crashing waves, there dwelled a giant mystic beast that blew fiery fires. It guarded a hoard of treasures beyond men's wildest dream. *Emperor would surely be delighted if I acquired it*, Hong thought.

His thought was disrupted by a violent jolt as the samba came to a rest near an alcove jutting out of the island.

Grabbing a bow, Hong jumped off his trashed ship, sprinted past the pink sand beach, arriving at a jungle bristling with noises he had never heard. The sounds of exotic insects chirping, a breed of dwarf deer chorusing and oversized oxen grunting overlapped to form a beautiful melody, each perfectly complementing the other. Then a jagged note disrupted the music, followed by another and another. Verses were left hanging in mid-air and the entire tune raised to a higher octave. Birds took off, the deer and oxen darted for cover. A snaking figure emerged from a cavern to let out a low growl, a sign of dominance before retreating back into its cave.

That must be the beast, Hong thought, loading his bow. Lowering his stance, Hong crept towards the opening of the cavern.

Though Hong was known for his bravery and recklessness, he couldn't help feel panicked staring down the dimly-lit passageway. Taking deep breaths, Hong tried to assure himself that going in was the right choice. He was nearly bankrupt and desperately in need of money. Just as he was about to enter, he heard a faint murmuring in the jungle behind him and the sound of leaves crunching underneath boots, but he didn't spare it a second thought and plunged himself into darkness.

The beast's lair seemed endless, filled with forks and dead ends. Just as Hong was doubting whether he took the right turn at the last crossroad, a serpentine hiss filled the tunnel, bouncing off the rough, course walls and amplifying to an excruciating volume. Panic started to set in. The thought of looting the beast's lair immediately wiped off of Hong's mind as all he cared for was to get out of this nightmare, yet no matter where he ran, the hiss seemed to follow.

Suddenly a low, human voice resonated through the cave, "Shoot her!"

Hong wasn't alone.

Turning another two rights and sprinting down a narrow passageway, the hisses only intensified. A moist, slippery tongue brushed Hong's ankle, leaving a burning sensation. Hong turned and in the dim light managed to make out his attacker.

The monster was like a lizard on steroids fitted with a monstrous head. Two amber eyes the size of dinner plates stared unblinkingly at Hong, sizing down its opponent. A forked tongue slid out of its nightmarish mouth, crazily licking its lips. Two pairs of legs jutted out from the sides of the creature's snaking body, each bulky and muscular. A beefy tail curled up by its legs, twisting and weaving as if it had a mind of its own before curving back to land squarely on Hong's chest.

The wind was knocked out of him. Stumbling back, Hong slammed into the rock walls, sliding to the ground. Stars appeared momentarily in front of his glazed eyes, circling him like a halo. Returning to his senses, Hong fingered the trigger on his bow, squeezing off six shots in quick succession, yet none could pierce the creature's thick hide, bouncing off and embedding into the ceiling. Infuriated, the monster lowered onto all fours, ramming its crocodilian head into Hong's chest. Dizzied and a nabbing pain in his torso, Hong threw down his weapon, sprinting towards a blinding light at the end of the passage. Not giving up, the beast charged towards Hong, jaws gaping revealing a set of serrated, yellowing teeth, growling in discontent. Never had prey caused it so much trouble, evaded it for so long. Then suddenly, the growls stopped. A giant blaze of red appeared behind Hong. The smoke and heat was almost unbearable. The distance between Hong and the exit never seemed to decrease for when Hong finally emerged into the buzzing jungle, it was as if he was born again.

"Hey!"

Ten men appeared from the cave, the lead carrying a flaming torch. He was a short, stocky man in his late thirties, draped in expensive cloths and wearing an elaborate headdress atop neat, jet black hair. But his most striking feature was the emblem engraved on his cape – the mark of the Emperor.

“His highness did mention a certain sailor fetching treasures for him but he later thought that he needed somebody more trustworthy and with more men,” Zhenghe, the great explorer, began. “I really should get going, I’m due back in a week. This second voyage was exhausting.” Pausing for a moment, he looked down at the crippled figure laying on the ground, “Also, you might want to know. The beast was only guarding her egg.”

And with a wave of his sleeve, Zhenghe and his men disappeared into the jungle.

Beaten and exhausted, Hong rested against a large, sandstone boulder, watching the sun set on the desolate island, contemplating the worthwhileness of the expedition.

# Perfect Timing

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Choi, Yun Xi Chalsie – 11*

It was his fifth month, twenty-fourth day and fifth hour onboard the ship, the Sail-breaker when Admiral Zheng He spotted the skull and bones motif. He was lounging on deck when he saw the skull and bones emblem, embroidered on a blood-red background, the symbol of the very thing he had dreaded glaring bright against the bright, hot noon sun.

“Sir, pirates are nearing,” a sailor boy skidded to a stop in front of him from his perch in the viewing mast.

The admiral rubbed his chin, contemplating. “If it is a battle they wish, ready all that can wield a sword, and tell those who can’t to defend the treasure.” With that, the boy ran into the decks below.

The pirate’s alliance stretched far and wide, to China, all who joined them boasting a tattoo of a bleeding skull and bones. He had fought them tons of times—the pirate alliance, or called the Valew. With that, he held his prized, ancient horn and blew deeply into it.

The sound signalled, *a battle. Be ready.* And so they readied.

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## *The Battle Begins:*

The pirates were upon them less than twenty minutes later. The Valew’s arrows aimed at the ship.

“They’re shooting arrows! Shields up!” General Killian commanded the soldiers. He shouted in English, though, and thankfully the majority of the soldiers knew basic commands in multiple languages. One of the generals from far away, and keen to help guard the treasure and had good battlefield healing skills and knowledge, he was general for a reason, lethal cunning helping him to claw to the top. It didn’t help that he was also a kind and charming person. Zheng He definitely didn’t want to mess with *him*.

Zheng He himself followed the orders given, though his bow was in a hand and an arrow was nocked.

Arrows rained down upon them, the majority of the arrows blocked and gathered into quivers.

“Our turn,” General Killian grinned. “Bows up,” bowstrings groaned as the soldiers obeyed. “Arrows nocked,” he continued. “And... VOLLEY!” He bellowed as dozens of arrows flew and found their mark.

Impossibly, the Valew ships sailed closer, until Zheng He could see the whites of their enemies’ eyes.

“They’re coming onboard!” The scouts yelled. Even though their gangplank was raised, the Valew either swung across on ropes or hoisted a plank to get onto the Sail-breaker.

Within seconds that seemed like an eternity, the Valew had swarmed the deck of the boat. Lethal, ruthless, and heartless, they overpowered some soldiers, slaughtering them mercilessly. Most of the soldiers were engaged in combat, and as time went by, blood stained the floor, slick and red. Zheng He observed for a second, then plunged into the fray.

When he had gotten at least ten cuts and his clothes were bloodstained, he received a huge slice to the thigh that sent him collapsing.

His vision spotted, black and white dancing over his vision as he faded into eternal darkness...

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## *The Healer:*

“Sir, I could help.” A petite, dark haired young girl hesitantly approached him when he woke and bobbed a curtsy. He was groaning in pain, a huge cut slashed down his entire thigh, slicing through skin and muscle, with a slimy green substance dripping from it. Poison. The girl knew immediately what it was, apparently.

“Poison?” Zheng He rasped before gritting his teeth tightly. She gave a grim nod.

The girl knelt before him, and wrapped her small hands around his leg. Slowly, the poison leached from his leg, dribbling out in a way that made the general retch. Gradually, muscle knitted together, and blood scabbed, as the wound healed.

“It would scar, but otherwise it would be completely functioning in a few days of rest,” the girl whispered in a small, sweet voice, and left.

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## *The Warrior:*

A door banged open with a loud bang, as a girl with cobalt blue eyes and black hair braided into a coronet stepped out onto the gore-filled, bloody deck.

“Aww, I missed all the fun!” The girl pouted. Mei An, city guard for the royal family and self-appointed hunter to feed her family. She was a skilled swordswoman, and was fine with a bow. Perfect timing.

She fought in the midst of the chaos, bow cast away, her sword drawn, engaged in hand-to-hand combat, well sword-to-sword combat, deadly sharp knives tucked into her boots and belt. She made the fight a lethal dance, weaving around the Valew Zheng He was pretty sure was a lord, which means that the Valew was one of the best fighters. She was skilled, both in physical training and her “ability training”, so bone-shattering shadows crept unseen and destroyed places her jagged sword failed to reach, and shields protected wherever her defences failed. She was a whirlwind in a fury, a maelstrom.

However, despite her skills, she soon got a slice to her upper arm. Red blood flowed freely, blooming on the embroidered tunic she had been wearing and had not gotten a chance to change out of, and dripping onto her prized vambraces. She snarled, some feral instinct she kept on a tight, tight leash slipping. She leapt onto the pirate and she brought her sword down...

The Valew's head just fell off and rolled around the deck, as the people in close proximity retched and looked away.

She continued the fatal choreography until the bodies of dead soldiers lay scattered by her feet, her blade a wine red, blood-spattered head to toe. She turned away, and began hauling the mauled bodies into the water.

That night, she fell asleep under the stars, lulled to unconsciousness by the voices cheering “*Mei An! Mei An! Mei An! Mei An...*”

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### *Epilogue:*

*As the sun sets, tears are forgotten.*

*Though loved ones were lost,*

*None were broken.*

*The heroes were tossed*

*Into the air*

*As cheers sounded,*

*Everywhere*

*People stumbled towards bed*

*To celebrate the precious dead.*

*In one night, things changed*

*The tides turned.*

*For good, or for better,*

*Only time will tell.*

*~ Chalsie Choi*

# The Gold-crusted Book

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Dong, Jane – 11*

“ Hey , you children! Shhhhhhh !” The librarian glared at us with her swollen eyes that narrowed to slits from her old-fashioned brown, rusty counter as she left the room for the toilet .

Alexander was with his friends Rosy and Luke, researching on the YongLe Emperor in the library until a girl wearing pink Luke had a crush on walked by and sat down at a table with some of her friends chatting about something he couldn't hear. . .

Suddenly , the rusted ship sailing in dangerous waters pictured on the page Luke had just flipped open from a gold-crusted book with a dragon imprinted started flipping back and forth , rustling , shooting out gusts of stormy , aggressive wind every now and then . The usual chill in Alexander now started shaking like a dried leaf about to fall off . He stole a glance at the others , who were spooked , feet rooted to the marble-tiled floor as this had never happened before .

The wind that had come out of the book now all gathered around Luke , Alexander and Rosy , swirling around them like a tornado , sweeping them off their feet and propelling them inside the book. Their screams for help were drowned out by the water that had suddenly filled their mouths as more seawater came pouring down on them . All this had happened in less than a fraction of a second but seemed to happen to them in slow-motion.

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! Where are we ? ” They all gasped for air on the surface, legs treading water

“ Whatever ! We can find that out later ! Oh no! ” Alexander exclaimed , pointing at the black clouds gathered up , the howling wind blowing at them from all sides.

“ What should we do ? We can only tread water for this long before we all get swept away by the waves that are about 3-storeys tall !” Yelled Rosy , struggling to keep herself afloat.

“ Wait , where's Luke? They both turned around but couldn't find their friend anywhere.

“ Over here guys!” Alexander and Rosy's heads turned at the sound of Luke's voice and saw him swimming ferociously towards a ship that he had sighted in the distance but kept disappearing out of sight due to the fog around it. They instantaneously followed his example and paddled towards it , determined to get on that boat.

“ Man overboard ! Man overboard ! ” Someone onboard the ship bellowed into his loudspeaker as the rest of the crew threw down ropes and let down the anchor in a jiffy as the ship came to a stop . Rosy was so relieved when a sturdy man hauled her up onto the deck , even though she usually acted very confident and brave , she was actually terrified inside .

Luke , Alexander and Rosy had expected a welcome and a nice hot bath with some food from the ship's crew but what came next was greatly unexpected .

“ Blimey! What are these people wearing !? ” Several crew members uttered in surprise at the sight of the children's clothes , for they were like nothing they had ever seen before.

Suddenly , there came a collective silence as the gang made way for Admiral ZhengHe who strolled out the cabin doors and came to take a look at the newcomers.

“ Who are you and what is your business here? ” Admiral ZhengHe demanded , and Luke knew to tell the truth .

“ We come from another place called Hong Kong and we have absolutely no business here , we don't even know you or any of these people ! ” Luke gestured around him .

“Ok , this is definitely not Narnia,” Rosy muttered under her breath , “I was hoping to be queen Susan ! I guess next time . . .”

“ Ha! Definitely a spy from the Indonesians ! Such a good disguise ! Who ever thought of someplace as weird as Hong Kong ! And just look at their peculiar clothes !We should try to send some of our own spies in like that too ! I knew they were going to send someone to steal our treasure sooner or later . . . mustn't trust them sir ! ” A skipper shouted out .



“ We don’t even know who you are ! How are we spies? ” Alexander argued.

“ Then how did we find you in the middle of the Indian ocean , as if it was a coincidence ? ” He retorted.

“ I TOLD YOU ! We are NOT from here ! ” Luke shot back .

“ Enough !! Back to your positions ! My eardrums are about to burst ! Li , throw them in the lowest and smallest cabin and lock them in! ” Admiral ZhengHe roared in a menacing tone , then , turning to the children he stared into their eyes , “ I’m watching you . ”

After being locked in , Alexander , Rosy and Luke tried their best to pick the lock , but finally gave up and sat down stubbornly , out of hope .

There was a knock on the door and a dark haired man threw an overcooked fish harshly onto the ground , “ Ye’ food ! ” then left .

Before the children even had time to get a whisp of the smell of the fish , a gold–crusted book fell from the wobbling shelf to the ground , opened up it’s pages and started counting down in a robotic voice “ The portal will close in 10 seconds...10....9.....8...7...6.. ” The children looked at each other , nodded , and jumped inside with absolutely no clue where it leads to , they just hoped that it was better than where they just were.

“ Ewww , what’s that smell ! You guys smell like fish ! ” A girl wearing pink covered her nose and tried in vain to swat away the nasty stink coming towards her.

“ I have to go to toilet ! Meet you somewhere later whatever! ” Luke stammered and ran off , leaving a trace of dust behind him .

Rosy threw back her head and laughed out loud.

# Eye of the Hurricane

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Koh, Xin Yu Cheryl – 11*

“A storm is coming from the portside!” The nervous and anxious shouts ricocheted through the thick walls of the ship, immediately alerting me. I got up, hastily putting my uniform on. I was about to leave when the frazzled commodore dashed into my cabin.

“Admiral Zheng He!” he exclaimed frantically, “The men reported that a storm is spotted on our portside!”

“That I am more than aware of,” I replied as I exited the room, the commodore trailing behind me. Some men were running every—which-way, while others were looking around, unsure of what to do. Their faces screamed confusion. Needless to say, disorganized was an understatement. “Commodore, please gather all the officers on board. I will be at the wheelhouse.” He nodded curtly, swiftly rushing off.

Shortly afterwards, the officers gathered. I hurriedly gave them brief but nonetheless specific instructions as to what to do. Efficiently and promptly, they carried out their roles. The plan was to steer as many ships as possible away from the hurricane. As the men scurried around, notifying others as to what was happening, the confusion subsided. Soon, everyone in the fleet was on standby, ready to carry out the next order.

“Alert! Alert!” Someone hollered, “The mothership is headed directly into the storm! ALL HANDS ON DECK!” Chaos broke out once again, upon the crew knowing that the mothership had been engulfed by the tropical cyclone. Despite the pandemonium, men remained on task, adjusting the sails, completing whatever tasks were assigned to them. The storm seemingly grew bigger, and soon, the other ships faded into nothingness.

A tumult of screams and bellows rang out as the ship started rocking vigorously on the rough waters, leaving men nauseous in its wake. “GET OFF THE DECK!” I roared loudly, my voice barely covering the shrieks and shouts. Men struggled to crawl off the deck, most barely managing to escape the raging waters. Some clutched their stomachs tightly, sweat sliding off their crinkled brows, while others were puking at each step. Weaker men passed out, and even those who didn’t get seasick easily were pale and uneasy. The furious waves whisked away multiple men leaving only echoed cries for help behind. It had objects and treasures, some worthless and others sacred, tumbling into the dark waters, taking my clear vision with it. I could barely see anything as I once again thundered to get off the deck. My sight felt worlds away as everything became a blur. Things crashing onto wooden floors, tables tumbling and things sliding from side to side were heard through deafening *clangs* and *booms*. Silently, I put my hands together and prayed for a miracle to bring us to safety. Over the ear-splitting commotion throughout the ship, I could barely hear my own thoughts as I wished for the best.

But despite my prayers, we were still cutting against the raging ocean, dizzy from the noise and sheer fear from how lethal the cyclone was. I felt useless, unable to do anything to help.

Suddenly, a divine glow took to light the tips of the huge mast, allowing me to regain my sight. The people on the ship quickly went from being in turmoil to gawking in pure silence. In a daze, their eyes wide with hope, they tried to observe the unworldly light from wherever they stood.

“Admiral!” One of the officers called out, but it was too late. I was already climbing onto the deck, wanting to investigate the cause of this strange phenomenon, as ready as ever to face whatever was before me.

*Were my prayers answered?* I thought to myself, *What could possibly be the reason behind this? Is our journey protected by the gods?* I took a step forward, feeling the wind wrap its arms around me. My thin cloak was scarcely wrapped around me, and the cold bit at my fingertips as water and wind swirled around me. I was unaffected by the harsh conditions as I beheld the barely visible fire that seemingly burned at the mast. Everything else faded away as I stared at the godly occurrence in awe. It was truly a glorious spectacle. The unreal glow wasn’t put out by the waters of the storm, but instead grew more and more radiant, along with the world seemingly becoming brighter and warmer...

“The storm has subsided!” someone exclaimed abruptly. I regained my composure, straightening myself almost instantly. I looked around me and saw men slowly coming back onto the deck, most barely standing on their feet, their faces reading many different emotions. Some were still in awe, others joyful. Some were bittersweet, while others had solemn, unreadable expressions. It was incredible that we had survived the storm, but nonetheless sad that many capable men were thrown overboard by the ferocious cyclone, nothing of them remaining.

Gradually, the other ships and men of the fleet came into view, but none were even close to being as dishevelled as my ship's crew. One of my officers counted the number of ships and nodded at me, indicating that we weren't short of any ships.

Without delay, I took note of my surroundings; things were sprawled across every surface, either wet, broken, or both. I couldn't bring myself to imagine how I looked when I observed men stained with salty water and vomit, hair tousled, clothes damp and damaged. Their faces were drained of colour, their eyes tinted red. I noted that many of them were being held upright by fellow companions, or even carried by them. It was a pitiful sight, seeing so many men weakened to the point of fainting. Still, they should get used to the nauseating waters.

This encounter with such an otherworldly sight signified that we were guided by the gods. We were able to overcome such an impossible storm, we could and would overcome even more. And thus, we continued to sail, to venture on to our next location, India.

# A Close Call

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Lau, Yih Tong Adele – 11*

The ship sailed on, battling against the waves. Bit by bit, we pushed on, our determination not wavering. I stood on the bow of the ship, as we headed for new land. I held my head high, many supporting ships behind ours. The pattering of light rain created a steady rhythm. I looked over my shoulder, the sudden murmuring breaking my train of thought. The crew was shocked, but for what reason I did not know. A wave of gasps came over the crew. I followed their gaze, and glanced up, then it hit me. We were approaching our own doom.

The dark, gloomy clouds lingered over us ominously. A flash of forked lightning tore through the clouds, a great clap of thunder following afterward. A sudden shower of rain then came upon us. I was not surprised, as a feeling of *déjà vu* came over me. I walked down to my cabin, my hand sheltering the rain from my eyes. Then, a speck of black caught my eye. It seemed to get bigger and bigger as I blinked my eye repeatedly, wondering if my eyesight was letting me down. Desperately, I was hoping it was.

As the blackness grew bigger and bigger, the dot started to take shape. The dot morphed into a ship, fully painted black. A grey skull was painted on the front, its hollow eyes as dark as a black hole. At the front stood a lady, her dark hair flowing in the wind. A sheath attached to her belt was empty, and in her hand was the shimmering sword reflecting the very few rays of light. It was raised, the tip pointing upwards, as if she was directing our attention to the approaching storm. But there was a deeper meaning. They were the storm.

I looked around, but we were trapped. Stuck, in the midst of a storm, under attack by pirates. “You know what to do,” I grumbled, my eyes closed, trying sound as brave as possible.

“But, Admiral Zheng, couldn’t we—” argued my advisor.

“I will not tolerate rudeness! I am your commanding officer, and my word is law! Now get it done!” I insisted sternly, interrupting his speech.

In a instant, the mahogany sails imprinted with the Royal Ming Emblem was soon replaced with white sails. We were surrendering. A loud boom rang in the distance, causing a commotion. The pirates lowered many of their own onto our ships. They shouted out orders, and we proceeded with following them. We stood with our hands behind our heads, as we watched silently, our chests filled with treasures being loaded onto the pirate ships.

“Ms Chen... I mean, Captain. The loot has been safely stowed away. I have found the Admiral, as you requested,” he stuttered as he prodded me with his finger, nudging me forward.

I looked up, their leader observing me. “Now, now. Listen carefully. Don’t you even think about escaping. I know who you are, I know your ways, Zheng He. You will tell me everything you know. Everything. A little mistake, and your whole fleet gets it,” she said, her eyes penetrating through me, as if she was reading my thoughts. She gently caressed the the cool metal blade of the knife on my cheek, a smirk across her face. “Take him away!” she shrieked, putting the knife back in its sheath.

Oh no.  
I’m doomed.

The pirates threw us in separate jail cells. I sat in solitude, as my comrades whimpered and complained, fearing for their lives. I thought about escaping, but I wanted no life in danger. Outsmarting them wouldn't be easy, it would take time to plan and I did not intend to test their patience. What would such mighty pirates want?

Power?

Fear?

Treasure?

A day later, with my plan in mind, I sat at a table, waiting patiently to decide the fate of my men. I did not know how likely my plan would succeed, but it was the only way. Chen approached, her men behind her. They bore firearms, but I showed no sign of fear. She pulled the chair away and sat, leaning on the backrest of the chair. Dramatically, she stabbed her knife into the wooden table. Failing at threatening me, she asks, "Tell me, Admiral. What is the real reason you asked to see me? To secure a deal? Fat chance."

I took a deep breath, "Why, you are certainly correct. You have something I would like, and I have something to offer in exchange for it."

Chen stared me down and nodded, beckoning me to proceed.

"I want my men. You have my men. You want to be feared. I can help you with that. I have a life to spare. Mine. I do not seek the treasure you took, just the lives of the loyal and innocent. In exchange, I will let you take my life," I continued, my voice confident.

"Deal?"

"No tricks, Admiral,"

"Certainly not. So do we have a deal?"

"A deal it is. I've got my eyes on you, Admiral. No tricks. I've got a knife at your throat,"

My men were released, and Chen's men handcuffed me, placing me under their control. I was given a last chance to say my goodbyes. Even if my plan did not work, I would be honored to sacrifice my life for these courageous men. I was dragged onto the pirates' ship and as I silently said goodbye to my people, a cannon boom rang in the distance. A ray of light came across my face. There was hope.

The Royal Naval Fleet.

Just before we were captured, I commanded my men to release an emergency flare into the sky, hoping to attract the attention of the Naval Fleet. We had encountered such situations, but never encountered such a close call. The Fleet came onto the pirates ship, and released me from the pirates' captivity. Captain Chen was captured, along with her crew.

As I approached Chen, she stared me down with a deadly look in her eyes. "I've got my eyes on you, Captain. No tricks," I quoted, using her own words against her.

# Heroic Adventures with a Ming Dynasty Companion

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Tang, Sze Ching Caitlyn – 11*

*On the coast of South China Sea lies a sunken shipwreck, believed to have been part of the Ming Dynasty Treasure Fleet...*

“I’ve found the shipwreck!” I cry, gesturing madly to the shipwreck ahead.

My fellow archaeologists and I swim towards the shipwreck. As we near, I realize it’s far from bulky. It’s enormous!

Circling the shipwreck, I realize on the ship’s body is an inscription, saying 1433. 1433? That is almost 600 years ago! To my surprise, beneath a floorboard is a box covered with intricate carvings.

Click! The box opens. Inside is a musty book.

“Quran...” I read.

But before I can even think, a whirlwind of seawater flings me about as I hang onto my precious find. What’s happening? I kick my legs out frantically. Then my world turns black...

I soon awake. Blinking woozily, I make out the silhouette of a seven-foot tall man against the glaring sunlight.

“Where am I?” I clumsily sit up, astonished to see the man dressed in old-fashioned uniform.

“Who’s he?” I inquire.

A sailor, surprised by my ignorance, cries, “He’s our honourable admiral, Zheng He! He leads our mighty fleet of 300 ships on naval expeditions!”

I am greeted by a 400-foot long flagship, followed by a massive fleet of 300 ships following behind. Red sails, high masts... Everything astounds me.

“All aboard!” shouts a voice far ahead.

I see Zheng He addressing us. “We shall set sail on our seventh epic voyage, as far west as Africa, bringing back exotic goods for Emperor Xuandi! We must show the world the Ming Dynasty’s power, and develop a rich network of trade with neighbouring countries!”

“What’s your name?” Zheng He asks me.

“I’m Abbo,” I reply.

“Call me Sanbo!” Zheng He replies, chuckling.

I am appointed the role of translator, because of my ability to speak many languages. Despite having been on this ship for so long, I often get lost. I am so impressed that Zheng He can navigate the ocean by observing the stars. I think to myself, “Even with today’s GPS, I still cannot get around easily!”

One night, a storm breaks out. Panic-ridden, I stumble onto the deck. Cries of anguish erupt as many of us are flung into the raging ocean.

Into the distance comes the deafening roar of a pirate ship approaching. This is pirate Chen Zuyi's ship! The Treasure Fleet seems to brace itself from the impact, its hackles raised as it approaches. Boom! The ear-splitting crack of a cannonball rings out in the air as war brews between the fleets.

Zheng He is barking out orders. We stumble across the deck to appointed positions. I am a gunman. We load up cannons, firing with all our might. Zheng He takes the helm, swerving the boat away from the cannonballs expertly.

"Fire!" he cries as cannonballs whiz through the air. Then, I see the cannonball flying towards us at a frightening speed.

"Watch out!" I scream, just in time for Zheng He to spin the helm in another direction.

As the last cannon is fired, the pirate ship erupts into fiery red flames.

We sail towards Africa as we mourn the loss of brave sailors. It isn't long before we arrive at the coast of East Africa.

I step off the ship with Zheng He. King Abuja is waiting for us. Looking at the huge fleet of ships, his jaw drops.

Zheng He presents the king with gifts of silk and porcelain.

The king seems to gasp, gazing at the gifts, before thanking us profusely. Then, he says, "Please follow me. I have something to show you."

We follow the king into a safari, where some dancers are performing.

The king says, "This dance, Tamenaibuga, means friendship. It represents the friendship between China and Africa!"

After the dance ends, we are led around the safari. Zheng He looks curiously at the animals, taking in the sight of lions, zebras and giraffes with awe and wonder. This is his first time seeing them!

The king speaks. "I shall send these animals to Emperor Xuandi. Send my warmest regards to him."

"What animal is that?" Zheng He asks, pointing at a giraffe.

"That's a giraffe." I reply, grinning.

After we thank the king, the animals are led into cages to be brought back to the Emperor.

On the way back, Zheng He amuses me with stories of encounters with notorious pirates and exotic species he had found. He also tells me childhood stories and his humble beginning as a poor Muslim boy.

Months later, we arrive at Nanjing, where Emperor Xuandi receives us with a feast.

"I heard that you had an eventful voyage," he announces. Zheng He launches into stories of combat with pirate Chen Zuyi. I am surprised to hear Zheng He say "I must thank my good companion Abbo for saving my life. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here today." I nearly faint in pleasure of being given such high praise in the presence of the Emperor!

Shortly after returning, Zheng He falls sick, passing away in 1433. Before he dies, he gives me a book.

“Read it after I’m gone,” he’d said tearfully.

Zheng He is buried at sea along with his favourite ship. “1433” is inscribed on it for the remembrance of his passing.

After his funeral, I take out that book he’d given me. “Quran” it says. I open it, seeing the familiar scrawl “To Abbo” written on the first page.

Suddenly, something fizzles inside me and my vision blurs...

As I break the surface of the water, cries of relief explode.

“Where have you been?” my teammate cries.

I just smile silently.

At home, I sit down to write a story, “Heroic Adventures with a Ming Dynasty Companion” to honour the memory of Zheng He, noble admiral of Treasure Fleet, and Sanbo, the bravest friend I’ve ever had.

إنا لن أنساك أبداً

(I will never forget you in Arabic)



# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Wang Rahman, Safiya – 11*

“Zheng He!”

One of the sailors sprinted towards Zheng He within a heartbeat.

“Zheng He!

“Yes?” asked Zheng He impatiently, obviously being in no mood to be disturbed.

“There are a bunch of pirates that want to raid our ships! They’re right there in that giant pirate ship!”

The sailor pointed at what looked like a big blob of dirt heading straight towards the ship with the pace of a snail. It was a very pathetic sight compared to the Emperor’s 300 ships.

“Tell everyone to get their weapons and get them over here, now!”

The sailor did as he was told, and within five minutes, everyone had their swords ready while Zheng He kept giving them orders to get ready for attack. While the pirate ship got close enough to see the pirates clearly, the pirates and sailors immediately started attacking each other.

After a good 20 minutes of people getting stabbed with swords, Zheng He and his team eventually won the battle with no problem. With over 27,000 sailors, how could you lose?

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“Stop the ship!”

“As you wish, Zheng He.”

It has been two days since the pirate attack happened, and Zheng He and his team stopped at an island that they had visited around 10 years ago. When Zheng He’s crew released the plank, Zheng He started walking and jogging towards an old looking cottage.

“Hello? Anyone there?” Zheng He shouted, banging at the door frantically as if wolves were chasing him.

The door slowly opens as a short redhead greeted Zheng He.

“Zheng He, it’s been a while...”

“Look, I only came here for your help, the emperor needs you to help give some of his treasures to the rest of China to make some new alliances, and he thought that you could help, but you cannot take any of it for yourself.”

“In that case, then no, I won’t help you.”

“Well, then I hope you’ll have a great time rotting on this island for the rest of your life!”

Zheng He furiously stormed off, his heart filled with guilt and disappointment, knowing that this mission would have to be a lot longer than planned.

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Being the leading boat, the boat accidentally fell into a gigantic whirlpool. Shouts and screams couldn’t be heard over the loud crashing waves hitting the ship.

“Everyone, do not panic, we just need to steer the ship around!” Zheng He shouted, still in his pajamas.

However, no one could hear him, so everyone started running around everywhere and panicking. Zheng He narrowed his eyes as he started to slowly make his way up to the steering wheel to turn the ship around.

After all that mayhem, Zheng He decided that they should ask someone to take a midnight shift just in case there was any danger ahead.

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Three days later, the ship finally reached an island that they haven't discovered on the southeast of China, this island seemed to have an emperor ruling it, so Zheng He managed to meet the emperor and convinced him to befriend the emperor of YongLe and became their allie. In fact, it went so well that even the emperor gave a gift for Zheng He to give back to the YongLe dynasty which was a new fauna that the people of the YongLe dynasty has never seen and 142 of his greatest warriors in return. Zheng He thanked the emperor as he started to walk back to the ship with the fauna.

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After another week, the 300 ships came back with more treasures than they had before. YongLe emperor was very happy that Zheng He and his fleet of ships managed to earn so many goods through this journey and was amazed by the story they had. However, 1 month later YongLe emperor was found dead in his palace, which meant that Zheng He wouldn't be able to get more recruits and allies without the emperor's treasures to bribe the other dynasties, so Zheng He was only able to go on adventures every 1 year instead, until he unexpectedly died on a voyage to India. This upset many people because he was friends with almost everyone, which made Zheng He one of the greatest admirals that YongLe had ever had.

# The Little-Known Voyage of Zheng He

*St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Kuo, Kin Lok Darren – 10*

A long time ago in China, the emperor wanted his people to voyage to the western seas to spread his imperial influence. Therefore, he designated his minister, Zheng He, to be the fleet admiral of this voyage. Then, Zheng He started the preparation for this voyage.

One day at a shipyard near the emperor's castle, the fleet was preparing to sail to the western seas. The emperor told Zheng He and his fleet, "Your main purpose of this voyage is to spread our Chinese culture and showcase the strengths of our majestic nation. You also need to establish good relationships with the western countries." "It will be as you wish, my majesty," replied Zheng He. "Has everyone prepared?" shouted Zheng He seriously. "Yes, we are all ready to go!" the sailors replied in high spirits. "Open the door to the shipyard," shouted Zheng He loudly. Then, they set sail and waved goodbye to the emperor.

On the first few days of the voyage, the weather was pretty good. The sun always shone above the fleet and the breeze blew softly in daytime. However, the sky turned grey gradually afterwards. "Oh no! A thunderstorm is coming. I think we have to take preventive measures," thought Zheng He. He called all hands on deck. A sailor asked, "Admiral Zheng, why did you call all of us to come over?" "A powerful storm is coming. I've prepared some garlic and ginger water. They will help you to avoid sea sickness," replied Zheng He.

However, the captain refused and said, "I hate both garlic and ginger. They stink!" "Please try some, or you will have sea sickness when the storm comes," said Zheng He. "No way! My body is strong and I'm a pro at sea. I ain't afraid of a little storm! This is just a piece of cake!" shouted the captain. Then, the wind and waves got stronger and stronger, and the boat also swayed side to side. A waterspout formed in a flash and it suddenly swallowed the whole fleet! Everyone felt dizzy.

After some time, the storm stopped and the ship was floating in the air! Zheng He woke up and was transfixed by the wondrous view he had before him. He saw countless colorful nebulae all around! "Is everyone alright?" Zheng He asked weakly. "Our ship is uncontrollable," a sailor said. Zheng He opened his star navigation handbook to check where the ship was. As he looked around, he saw enormous bright and special stars shining in the starry space. Most of the stars had not been seen before and not even found in his star navigation handbook. He thought, "Where are we?". Finally, Zheng He remembered an ancient astronomy book mentioned that there was an unknown dimension in space. He just realized that they had fallen into that unknown dimension!

Suddenly, a strange force sucked the fleet towards an unknown planet. They landed on the surface of the planet and saw many small elves wearing red metallic clothes. "Well, I think our visit to the western world has begun," thought Zheng He.

The elves took Zheng He and his sailors to see the ruler of the planet, Buddha. "Welcome to Planet Leshan," said the Buddha. "Greetings, we are the envoys from China on planet Earth. We want to have cultural exchange with your planet. Here are some presents for you," said Zheng He as he handed over many precious treasures to the Buddha. "Wow, thank you. It's my honor to receive your gifts and share our cultures with each other. Please let me give you a present too. We will teach you how to build structures such as city walls, palaces and statues. I also want to send our envoys to visit and learn from your planet too," said the Buddha. "That's very impressive! We will report to our emperor about the friendliness of Planet Leshan," said Zheng He.

Then, the Buddha took Zheng He around the planet with their super-duper space ship. After that, the Buddha sent the whole fleet back to Earth together with his envoys. Zheng He safely went back to China and told the emperor everything about their incredible tour on Planet Leshan. The emperor was very amazed at what Zheng He said and he praised Zheng He for his effort and bravery. Meanwhile, Planet Leshan's envoys taught them how to build various infrastructures. They then returned to Planet Leshan after the people in China had mastered the building skills.

In the following years, Zheng He instructed many people to build and fortify their structures including the boundless city walls and the royal palace. Afterwards, those city walls helped them to defend their country in many battles. Zheng He and the emperor were happy about that and were very thankful to the Buddha. Then, the emperor named the fortified walls as "The Great Wall of China" and the palace as "The Forbidden City". They became the biggest city wall and the greatest castle groups in the world. To show their thankfulness and respect to the Buddha, they also built an enormous statue of the Buddha to commemorate him. The emperor named this statue "Leshan Giant Buddha". Zheng He hoped this biggest Buddha in the world could help the people on Planet Leshan to spot their location easily and visit China again in the future.

In fact, Zheng He thought the Buddha was highly intelligent and had advanced technological skills. Therefore, he believed that the Buddha was actually a god. He spread the word out to all the people. Since then, the people of China had been building a lot of statues and temples of the Buddha. It also became one of the biggest religions and that is why Buddhism has been passed on from generation to generation in the Chinese history.

Zheng He had done a very wonderful job in leading the fleet. Now, he is known as a very famous voyager, explorer and diplomat in the Chinese history.

# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*St. Margaret's Co-Educational English Secondary and Primary School, Del Mundo, Giuliana Sero – 11*

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2405, Zheng He and his crew stepped nervously inside NASA's Space Voyager. They put on their helmets, the same colour as their silver spacesuits, and walked into the cockpit.

A voice spoke through the TalkBox, "T-minus 1 minute, 30 seconds," Zheng He fiddled with some of the controls and buckled on his seatbelt.

"This is it," he thought.

"T-minus 1 minute," the boosters started, ready to launch.

"T-minus 30 seconds."

He gulped.

"10, 9, 8..."

He glanced back at his crew, who looked as nervous as him, their faces as white as the clouds they were about to shoot through.

"7,6,5..."

"I'm ready," he said with determination.

"4,3,2...1!"

And they blasted off!

A few days passed. As Zheng He scanned the area, he noticed a strange planet in the distance.

"What is THAT?" He pointed towards a planet with dark blue spots all around its yellow surface.

"Let's land," suggested a crew member.

"Yes, let's inspect it!" replied an eager Zheng He.

The spaceship suddenly shook vigorously, causing the crew members to scream in fright. Zheng He held onto the emergency lever and the spaceship gradually stopped shaking.

"Strange," mused Zheng He. "That has never happened before."

They landed on the planet. A small sign read, "Welcome to Champolia! Enjoy your stay!"

"Champolia sounds familiar. I must have read about it in a book..." Zheng He pondered. "It's the former name of Vietnam!"

He pointed towards a citadel and a moat surrounding a small, ramshackle village. "Let's go there!"

They marched to the citadel, passing through the village. The villagers looked like just like them. The villagers, confused and suspicious, started murmuring to each other as they stared at the astronauts.

"Who are they?"

"Where did they come from?"

"Why do they look like us?"

The crew stepped inside the enormous citadel. It was decorated with yellow and red sparkles and floating candles. At the center of the citadel was a king, proudly sitting on his throne, dressed in red, yellow and cerulean satin.

"Who are you?" He asked.

"We are humans from Earth!" said a proud Zheng He.

The king's eyes widened. "The myths are true! Show me how you got here!"

They led him to the Space Voyager, as commanded.

The king gasped. “We have never seen this type of magic before!”

Zheng He laughed. “It’s not magic. It’s technology!”

“Sounds interesting,” said the king. “Could we possibly trade anything for this... technology?”

“Could we have your cape in exchange?”

“Ah, not my cape, but we have the fabric!”

Zheng He nodded and pulled out the latest iPhone XX. It had a hologram screen and an accurate voice detector. The king’s face beamed.

“Splendid! Very well then. I will prepare the fabric.”

When he arrived back with the scroll of fabric, Zheng He taught the king how to use the iPhone and contact Earth.

“Thank you so much.” Zheng He replied courteously, receiving the fabric with admiration.

“No, thank *you* for this technology!”

They filed back onto the spaceship, waving goodbye to the king.

“Farewell!” yelled the king, looking down at the phone in his hands with wonder and fascination.

They flew back to space, searching for more planets. The spacecraft wobbled again, this time with more strength. Suddenly, some of the doors of the ship opened! Zheng He whipped his head around to look at the doors, mortified.

He looked around and noticed a crew member, Yu Shen, looking too relaxed, on a seat with a control panel. Zheng He instantly knew he was the culprit.

“Abort, abort! Yu Shen is trying to hijack the spacecraft! Do you copy?!” screamed Zheng He into the TalkBox while trying to hang on. The culprit initially looked shock at his accusation, but the incredulous look was quickly replaced by a sly smirk. After he sent the message, the doors closed and the spacecraft stabilized.

Zheng He stood up and rushed towards Yu Shen.

“You!” scolded Zheng He. “You almost killed all of us! Why on earth would you do such a thing?”

Yu Shen laughed. “I was supposed to be the legend. The myth. But then *you* came. I was going to be the captain shown in every history book. *YOU* stole the chance from *ME*! Do you know how *MUCH* I wanted to do this since I was a child?! Do you know how important this would be, to finally force my family to acknowledge someone they call a nobody?”

He tried to strike Zheng He with a tool he was holding.

“Don’t do this!” gasped Zheng He, but he ignored him.

The tool was a split second away from hitting Zheng He when another crew member, Lin, hit him first.

Yu Shen gasped and toppled over, falling to the ground.

“Thank you, Lin,” said a relieved Zheng He.

“No worries, really.” said Lin.

They landed the spacecraft soon after the brawl. Reporters and police officers surrounded them, noticing Yu Shen, handcuffed and under observation by Lin.

“Take him away!” Lin shouted to the nearby officers. “He violated protocol. Take him into questioning!”

He was arrested then and there.

“You!” snarled Yu Shen, full of spite. “You are not going to see the end of it!”

He was pushed inside the police hovercraft before he could say another word.

Reporters crowded around Zheng He, spilling out questions.

“Who was that young man that got arrested?”

“Did you see aliens?”

“What did you trade?”

“What do you think of the voyage?”

He looked at the reporter. “This voyage was truly an eye-opener. We now know that life exists on other planets. We traded our technology for various goods only known to those on other planets. I want to share my experience around the world so that we can conduct another voyage,” said Zheng He, live on TV. He then looked at his crew with pride. “Loyalty is valued in every mission. I’d do it again with this team!”

## New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*St. Mary's Canossian School, Liu, Rachel – 11*

Looking up to the bright blue sky, a young lad sat on the deck, taking a break. He was meeting with Zhou Gong when...

“Land ahead! Throw the anchor, we are getting close!” the lad’s friend, Old Chan shouted. The lad woke up in a fright. “L...a...n...d, finally...” He stammered with joy. He hadn’t smelt any dirt for 2 months and 18 days already! This was Leung’s first journey but had already been Old Chan’s fourth. Old Chan had been on board the Treasure Fleet since Zheng He’s first expedition. “Are you slacking off again, Leung Yue?” “I’ve finished all my work... And how many times have I told you not to call me by my full name, old man?” Chan chuckled as the Treasure Fleet stopped rocking.

Leung and Old Chan were from the same village and he heard that Old Chan was going on for another adventure. Old Chan had, by that time, risen to the rank heading the caretaking of livestock. Yes! Zheng He took a lot of livestock on board before setting sail to ensure the dietary requirement for his crew could be satisfied while they were at sea. Leung had thus begged Old Chan to take him on board. Old Chan, unable to withstand Leung’s constant bombardment, gave him a job on the fleet --- assisting Chan to take care of livestock on the ship. That’s how Leung became a shipmate for this voyage.

Leung, given his low rank, stood far behind Zheng He as he followed him off the ship. A man whose skin was as dark as coal welcomed Zheng He with arms on his chest and spoke in an unknown language. “Do you know what he is saying?” Leung whispered to Old Chan, who was examining the area in great curiosity. “Of course....Not a clue...” Old Chan replied. Leung was amazed how Zheng He could communicate with the man.

“Soldiers! This is the Patriarch of Malindi! Respect this man the same as you respect me. Take out our finest silk and treasure!” Zheng He commanded. Old Chan and Leung both stared in awe as the soldiers carrying fine china, stacks of jade, several coral trees, piles of silk and boxes of gold and silver stood in line.

The Patriarch’s eyes glinted a spark of excitement. After the soldiers had placed the goodies with care, Leung watched as the Patriarch spoke to a servant. Moments later, the servant came back, leash in his hand. Behind him was a creature whose neck was long and thin. Its skin had brown spots and on its head, was something that seemed like two mini deer’s antlers. The crowd didn’t know what to make out of this exotic being when suddenly Old Chan shouted, “It’s the mythical Qilin!” Murmurings spread through the soldiers.

“Is it really THE Qilin?” “It doesn’t look like the Qilin my great-grandfather told me when I was young.” “I have waited for this day for so long! People said that you will SURELY rise to heaven after you have seen it!”

“SILENCE!” Zheng He yelled angrily. His attitude completely changed when he turned his back towards the soldiers and thanked the Patriarch with a big grin on his face for such a great blessing to have a Qilin on the fleet. A few days later, after they had replenished their supply, Zheng He bid farewell to the Patriarch and the Treasure Fleet sailed away from the port.

Old Chan and Leung were put in charge of taking care of the ‘Qilin’ since Chan was the Head of livestock and Leung was his personal assistant. At first, they thought it was an honour but...

“Its droppings smell so bad!” Leung complained as he cleared the dung. “Quit complaining and make sure the Qilin stays healthy and happy before we reach Shuntianfu, young man! Or else, your head won’t be able to smell anything after we reach home!” ‘Clever’ Chan had used two fingers to stick up his nose, trying to block the stench while Leung stuck his tongue out in a silly face.

What seemed like years later, they arrived back home on the eighth day of the seventh lunar month in the thirteen year of Yongle, almost two years since they first set sail under the imperial order. A crowd formed when the fleet parked in the port and the soldiers marched off in different directions, meeting up with their wives, parents and children. There were tears of joy but there were wails for the fallen during the journey. Leung was one of the first people off the Treasure Fleet. He found his wife in the sea of people and learnt that she had given birth to a healthy son. “Where’s Old Chan?” an old woman asked Leung. His face darkened. The woman buried her face with her hands, “N-no... He promised... His daughter is still at home waiting...” “Surprise!” Old Chan appeared behind her, “Did I scare you, old woman?” She looked up and cried, “I thought I had lost you forever...” she punched him on his chest and cried as Old Chan’s fingers ran through her silky white hair...



Weeks after the journey, a messenger came and told Leung and Old Chan they were summoned by the Emperor. They were both terrified. Had they done something wrong? Would they get executed? They couldn't help but shiver from the thoughts of the many punishments they had heard about. They hurriedly went to the Palace with the messenger and bowed before the Emperor, expecting him to shout, "Guards! Take these men to be executed!" Instead, the Emperor said with a smile, "Well done for taking good care of the Qilin during the voyage! Guards! Give these men their reward!" Bags of gold dropped to the floor. Leung was startled. Old Chan bowed and thanked Emperor Yongle for his kindness. Happily, they went home, sharing their adventures of their recent journey with their family and neighbours.

## And the Journey Continues...

*St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Sung, Jacqueline - 9*

I was one of the sailors on Captain Zheng He's fleet of ships. We brought cargos of gold, silver and other fancy jewelry like jade on our ships. They were for us to give out to different countries, to show that China was in peace with the world.

I really missed home after a week. Some sailors even had tears in the corner of their eyes. We sailed to some remote islands that no man has ever found. There were only different kinds of birds and rare animals on those isolated places. As Zheng He loved nature and wildlife, he decided to set foot onto one of the islands. Suddenly, the sailor with a pair of sharp eyes shouted, "Hey, why is there a ship?" He pointed to the horizon. At first, we thought the sailor was pranking us. Then, we saw a tiny lump that resembled a ship! Everyone, including Zheng He, gasped. "Why would there even be a ship except for us in this part of the ocean?" Zheng He wondered aloud, astonished. I guess he thought that the ship was just passing by, because he told us to continue exploring the island. We lost sight of him when we became more and more enthusiastic in looking at the birds that we had never seen before.

In the blink of an eye, the sky turned dark. "It's almost nighttime," one of the sailors called. "We should return to the ship." Some of us objected. "But we haven't seen Zheng He yet!" "I want to see the puffins a little more!" they argued. "Maybe Captain got bored and returned to the ship," I said hopefully. Then, something bad and unexpected happened...

When we returned to the ship, Mr Co-Captain ordered us to search the ships to see if Zheng He was there. He "assigned" another batch of sailors to search the islands nearby. Then, the bad news came. Zheng He was missing! With a pang, we realised that either Zheng He was kidnapped, or he drowned, which was very unlikely of him. Zheng He was clever enough to be careful of "the traps of Nature". "Maybe Captain was kidnapped by the people in the ship we saw earlier today," I said. "Let's hide our ships in that channel over there and send some sailors to search for him."

Mr Co-Captain sent three of the bravest and smartest sailors, including me to find Zheng He. Everyone wished us good luck as we set off eagerly at dawn the next day. We lost sight of them quickly. We trudged along the rocky path, with a leather bag full of food and water. Suddenly, we heard some footsteps approaching. "Quick! Let's hide in that huge underground nest of the puffins!" Chan, my teammate whispered urgently. We slipped into the hole and covered it with heather. Unfortunately, Ping, another teammate was too slow and was found by the enemies. We saw him get tied up and dragged away. Hopefully he would not give us away and get us caught as WELL. Now, only Chan and I were left.

A while later, I heard the footsteps again. Chan had enough sense to keep quiet. I strained to hear what the enemies were saying. "Psst...that Zheng He...he probably has a lot of treasure from China in his fleet...the cave in that lagoon-island..." A chill went down my spine. I quickly whispered what I heard to Chan. He gasped. "We must go to that lagoon-island NOW! I'm sure Zheng He is tied up there and possibly Ping!" he exclaimed. I nodded. The problem was, we had no idea where the lagoon-island was.

There were so many islands, and with those huge, pointy rocks around them, it was impossible to find the lagoon.

When we told Mr Co-Captain our story, he suggested us to get on a cliff and see if we could spot the lagoon. "What a good idea!" I thought. "That way I can get a bird-eye view of the islands!"

The next morning, we set off again. I hiked up the cliff and squinted at every detail of all the islands. "There it is!" I shouted to Chan in excitement, pointing to one of the islands. I took out my compass and saw that the lagoon-island was in the North. We went back to the channel to get a boat. We started rowing as fast as we could to the lagoon-island. When we reached there, we were exhausted. We decided to sleep in a hidden cave near the shore. No one would know we were there.

I was the first to wake up. The sky was still dark; it must be very early. I woke up Chan and we tiptoed around the island. As we reached the enemy's base, we hid behind the bushes, listening and watching intently. We heard a very, very welcome noise: snoring. Even the guard at the door of the base was having a sweet dream. I peeked through the window. To my relief, I saw Zheng He and Ping tied to a pillar. They noticed me waving at the window. Chan, who was beside me, put a finger to his lips. Zheng He and Ping nodded. I opened the door and went in as quietly as I could. As quick as lightning, Chan untied the ropes on their arms and legs.

I led Zheng He and Ping to our cave. We immediately rowed back to the island where our fleet was waiting. The sailors cheered. They threw their hats in the air and whooped and danced. Zheng He kept us quiet because the enemy might hear us. We sailed away and the journey continued...

# Crypto War – Year 1432

*St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Wai, Hon Hay Evan – 10*

The sky was an expanse of sapphire blue, dotted with silky and fluffy white clouds. The crimson fluorescent sun was shining vividly at the sea like a crystal shining mirror. The cool breeze blew between the refreshing air as a colossal ship emerged from the depths of the glimmering water, eagerly heading towards its kingdom – the Palace of the Emperor of China.

“Ah... Welcome back my fellow comrades. It is an immense pleasure to have you back from your extraordinary endeavor,” the Emperor roared with intense enthusiasm.

“Thank you, your Honour! I have given plentiful amounts of generous gifts to newcomers whom I have found during my voyage,” Zheng He acknowledged proudly.

As the conversation continued, the weather suddenly turned ominous and a towering shadow emerged through the murky fog. A giant ship sailed across the scurrying sea. An invasion was rising and a battle was impending. The alarms blared throughout the city as the kingdom awaited its calamitous doom and peril.

The kingdom had many citizens living there, with many prominent people such as Zheng He, and the renowned and famous Yongle, the Emperor of that dynasty.

Zheng He was a very reliant and respectable follower of Yongle and was the captain of the journeys at sea. Emperor Yongle was powerful and renowned in the nation as he had made many great changes and improvements to the kingdom. The ancient and historical kingdom was vast and flourished as it contained a mysterious gem that was rumored to bring to its owners' good fortune and immortality.

For a long time, there had not been one battle or outbreak, but finally, an enemy blossomed, wanting to capture this treasure, and break the history of its eternal peace. The enemy's name was Captain Crypto, a nefarious man who led a myriad of devious and evil minions named the Cryptonians.

Mammoth-sized ships detailed with royal navy blue colours sailed across the ocean as it moved towards the kingdom with evil intentions. Iron fiery cannon balls catapulted out of the invading ships towards the kingdom. A kaleidoscope of artillery and mayhem whizzed at barreling speed like the piercing wind. The screams of the citizens, the bellowing and clamoring of rage by the soldiers ready to attack and the distraught wails from mothers and children traversed across the kingdom as war loomed over their heads. An alarming attack was on the way and the end of history and peace had arrived.

“Sire! Our kingdom, IT'S COMING TO AN END!! Peace has finally been broken from its chain. Sir, an enemy, something that has not come upon us for over centuries has arrived. We are totally done for!” Zheng He bellowed towards Yongle.

“You have got to be kidding me, Zheng He. This has to be a...a mistake...this can't be! The peace in our kingdom must not end but we have no choice but to...” Yongle stuttered. “Fight!”

“Yes, my lord!” Zheng He replied hastily.

A cacophony of angst and trepidation exponentially spread through the city as the voice of the incoming ships echoed on and on.

Yongle announced, “It's time to fight for our city! We will not stop until we triumph... Summon the army...”

“Assemble the cannons!” Zheng He commanded as the war against Crypto began.

“Yes sir!” the army replied.

“Attack!”

“YES SIR!”

The battle proceeded as the enemy ships landed at the shores. Hordes of ferocious Cryptonians plummeted towards the rumbling sand as rage twirled and danced in the air surfing along the wind.

“Cryptonians, attack and conquer!” Captain Crypto ordered.

The city trembled with fear as the Cryptonians began to gain power of the battle. The Cryptonians were very powerful, slashing and slicing through any obstacle it encountered. Emperor Yongle was in deep trouble now, but he wasn't ready to give up yet. A stampede cascaded into the kingdom, raiding the valuables and searching for the gem.

“Gather the archers and bring death towards the enemy!” Zheng He announced.

An assortment of archers lined up horizontally across the top of the castle wall with burning arrows aiming at the enemy.

“Fire!”

Zooming and lacerating the air, a trail of flames leaped towards the souls of the enemies.

The battle became extremely tense as the Cryptonians receded from the entreating searing arrows and suddenly Captain Crypto took to the stage.

“It is I, the famous Captain Crypto. I have returned to take vengeance upon this city. I have returned to take the powerful, immortal and desirable gem. Yongle, surrender while you can, or meet your and the world's annihilation. Hahaha!” the invincible giant blasted.

“NEVER!”

“Fine then, keep it like that,” Captain Crypto said. “Eradicate the kingdom. Now!” He commanded the Cryptonians.

“Where is this stupid ge...?” Captain Crypto shouted, anxiously looking around him. Before he could finish the sentence, the fearless Zheng He took aim at Captain Crypto's heart, pulled his bow tautly and let go of the arrow with a loud shout. The soaring arrow pierced Captain Crypto's heart and he slumped slowly onto the ground, clutching at the weapon impaled upon him.

“Hurray!” Emperor Yongle victoriously shouted, rushing towards Captain Crypto. “VICTORY is ours!” roared Yongle's army.

Seeing that their captain had been killed, the shattered Cryptonians scrambled towards their ship, trying to escape from their conquerors. But the Emperor's army was too fast for them, and in no time, the Cryptonians were captured and put into the Kingdom's prison.

Peace was once again restored in the kingdom. With the precious gem safely in its possession, Emperor Yongle and the citizens of his kingdom enjoyed peace and prosperity for many years to come.

# The Ming Treasure Adventure

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Aperia, Arianna Kalista – 9*

After a long, tiring day of boring history lessons learning about the Ming Dynasty treasure voyages, I went home to study for the first test about one of the voyages of Zheng He and his men. It was already eleven o'clock and I was trying not to fall asleep as words floated in my mind. *The first voyage... Chinese Emperor... massive ships ...*, suddenly, the room started to change. My bed melted away, the curtains and blankets turned into heaps of soft silk, and the cabinets crumbled to bits of coins and jewelry. The colorful painted walls were disappearing into thin air. All of my books, notebooks, school notices and homework were forming into powerful weapons. That was not all, I was shrinking! I looked into the mirror quickly before it vanished and saw that I was actually a real teeny weeny mouse!!!

It was unclear where I was as the floor beneath me suddenly rocked from side-to-side. There was a round window which looked out to the ocean. It was clear that I was on a boat! I looked up and saw a man next to me. It was fleet admiral Zheng He! It was hard to believe my eyes. A rush of excitement ran all the way down my fur. Zheng He wore drapes of long red silk reaching all the way to his ankle, elaborately embroidered with gold dragons. He was trying to estimate how much further the ship had to sail before reaching land. A while later, from one of the portholes at the lower deck of the ship I recognized the land we were heading for, it was Malacca! I knew that it was Malacca because my family and I visited during the summer holidays.

"We are arriving in Malacca, lower the sails. We have to be very polite to the people there," Zheng He ordered as he got ready to get off the ship. As Zheng He stepped off the ship with me hanging to the back of his shoe, a young prince was already at the pier awaiting the arrival of visitors.

"Welcome. What are you doing here?" the prince asked curiously. He was wearing a gold suit with heavy jewelry around his neck.

"I am Zhang He. I am bearing gifts from the Chinese Emperor. Why aren't there many people here for trading?" Zheng He replied as he looked back at his men.

"There have been too many pirate attacks, very few traders dare to step on our land." The prince said sadly. Then the prince let out a loud scream. I realized I had been spotted. "A mouse, a mouse! Let's catch it. I want a new pet." Men started to chase after me. I scampered away as quickly as I could and slipped into a box of treasures. I stayed as still as a little statue, hoping that they would give up their search. All of a sudden, the box started wobbling. I was being carried away. In the distance, I heard the Prince welcome Zhang He into his palace.

I was relieved that they had given up the search for me, as I heard the men call out to the prince, "We lost it. We lost the mouse. Let us bring the gifts into the palace."

"Gifts? What gifts? Oh No! I am in one of the gift boxes..." I said.

"Did you hear something?" One of the men asked. I held on to my breath for dear life.

"No, I didn't. Stop daydreaming and hurry up. We need to get the gifts into the palace, the prince is waiting." One of the other men replied. I was again, relieved.

Then, the next thing I knew, I was in the palace. Suddenly, they opened the box. I dove deeper into the pearls, gold, and gems. Unfortunately, they gently tipped the box over and I toppled out along with all the colourful trading treasures. From the look on Zhang He's face, I knew he saw me. To my surprise, instead of capturing me, he stepped in front of me to block me from the Prince's view. That was my chance to escape. Bewildered, I scurried off to the next room. As the men were busy admiring and organizing the treasures, I gave myself a tour of the grand palace. CLANK! ... .. The sharp noise of crashing swords pierced my ears.

"What was th...?" I shivered. Before I could even finish my thought, the pictures in the gallery tumbled off the walls, missing me by a whisker. I dashed for the entrance of the palace, dodging a huge stone pillar that crumbled next to me. At the entrance I saw the most terrifying scene, the pirates, they

were there, fighting with the Prince, Zheng He and his men. It was total CHAOS! Left, right, through pirates feet I went as swords clashed and hit together above me. That is, until I tripped on a rock. I couldn't get up, I was stuck. They fought viciously.

'FIGHTING THE PIRATES IS NONE OF MY BUSINESS! THIS ADVENTURE IS FUN BUT ALL I WANT IS TO BE NORMAL AGAIN!' I thought in tears of rage. Then, a pirate's sword slipped out of his hand and came shooting towards me. "AHHHHHHHHH!"

"Kali, are you ready for school yet? The school bus is almost here! Plus you have a test today, are you ready for it?" came mum's voice from the kitchen.

"Uhhhh... Coming... And... I guess?" I shouted back, totally confused. Everything was normal again. 'Maybe it was just a dream!' I thought as I laughed and ran down the stairs. 'What a weird night!'

# Pirate Problems

*St Stephens College Preparatory School, Chan, Otis Chihung James – 11*

It was a dark, gloomy day Zheng He thought as he settled into his usual seat at the bow of the ship. There were good and bad days in sailing, he thought. On the good days, there would be rays of sun reflecting off glittering waves with the pleasant addition of being able to catch fish. Then there would be bad days where it would rain continually, while the clouds hid the sun as if it was playing hide-and-seek.

Suddenly, a lookout yelled something indecipherable. Zheng He immediately snapped awake and sat up straight. His second-in-command relayed what the lookout had said back to the admiral.

“Looks like a whole fleet of pirates, Admiral,” warned the sailor.

“No fear,” he replied. “Alert the warships!”

“Yes, sir!”

As the sailor ran off, Zheng He stood up and took a glance at the pirate fleet. The pirates had a vast number of ships at their disposal, Zheng He thought. He then shook the grain of doubt out of his mind as he looked at his own warships. They were huge affairs made of wood and strips of iron. On them, he knew, were hundreds of prime fighting men, eager to strike a blow for the Emperor. He took one last glance at the pirates and swore in anger and surprise. The pirate ships were hoisting a flag he knew only so well. It was Chen Zuyi! The most feared pirate to ever infest the seas of Southeast Asia. He frowned. He would have to change his tactics, he knew. He called for his messenger.

“Yes, Admiral?”

“Tell all the ships to go to Palembang. We’re going to destroy this damned once and for all. If the ship captains ask who it is, tell them it’s Chen Zuyi. GO!”

As the messenger scurried away, Zhang He closed his eyes and tried to think of a tactic that could help him defeat Zuyi.

“Admiral, we’re here!”

Zheng He’s eyes immediately shot open. He looked around. They had docked at a gigantic wharf with his other 150 ships. The thought for a moment and said, “Unload the soldiers first. Then tell one-eighth of them to stay and guard the treasure ships.”

The messenger nodded and charged off, looking like an enraged bull. Zheng He instinctively stood back and studied the situation. He decided to climb one of the mountains to get a better view of the place. He marshalled all of the soldiers into place and started to march.

After several hours of grueling, backbreaking work, they finally reached the top of the mountain. Zheng He groaned. Chen Zuyi’s whole army was right at the base of the mountain waiting in ambush for them to return. Zheng He debated on sending a hail of arrows down onto them, but quickly discarded the idea as it would reveal their position and incur casualties from returning fire. He finally decided to ask Chen to surrender. If Chen refused, he could overwhelm them with his superior numbers. He roared to the enemy army:

“Chen Zuyi! Surrender now or we will attack!”

Chen’s army turned around and around trying to find the spot where the voice had come from. When they finally identified Zheng He’s position, Chen Zuyi roared back:

“All right! I’ll come personally tomorrow to meet you at the wharf.”

As soon as he had finished speaking, Zheng He knew he was lying. He considered attacking now, but realized that in doing so, they would lose the element of utter surprise. He grinned fiercely and told his army to march back down the mountain.

After a few days, Zheng He started to worry. Chen Zuyi still hadn’t come to meet him, despite his advisor’s constant assurances that he and his army would come. Zheng He’s own army was already in place, ready to fight. Suddenly, he heard the constant drum of horse-hooves beating down on the ground. He looked around the barricade and was surprised to see Chen Zuyi riding towards his camp.

Chen yelled, “Zheng He! I’ve come to surrender. NOT!” The he screamed to the army behind him, “Attack!” and they charged forward, seemingly appear out of thin air.

Zheng quickly yelled orders to his own army, and they streamed out of their tents and formed a shield wall against the charging enemy. The air filled with screams and groans of agony. Zheng He directed his cavalry to attack the left flank. This forced the enemy flank to try to turn and run in a different direction, but they had blocked themselves. As they crashed with an audible clang into each other, Zheng He immediately knew that he had made a good move, and though thousands of soldiers were falling, he had gained the advantage.



Finally, he decided to end this bloody battle and ordered his reserve unit of one thousand men to charge the front. Overwhelmed, the enemy soldiers threw down their weapons and surrender. One fierce-looking soldier came forward and spoke:

“All right. You win,” Chen Zuyi said bitterly. For the first time in what seemed like years, Zheng He allowed his men to see his smile grow broad across his face. He had defeated the strongest pirate in all of Asia. He couldn't wait to get back to China!

# Adventure on the Sea

*St Stephen's College Prep School, Chen, Daniel – 12*

A long time ago, there were lots of vicious pirates, fighting and killing their way for treasures; not stopping until they got gleaming gold and precious jewels. They were ruthless villains, mean and filthy...

In China, the emperor, Huang Jiang Ming Tong, was a bit scared.

"Ooh, I'm scared! Pirates might kill me! "He'd whimper every night to his nanny. Now, Huang Jiang Ming Tong was only eight years old, and of course was scared of everything.

"There, there, kid. Nothing to be afraid of," Nanny would answer, but she herself would be trembling. Whole of China was terrified of the pirates.

Time went by...

Huang Jiang Ming Tong grew up and he wanted to defeat the pirates. He thought and thought and finally came up with an idea! He would beat the pirates at their own game: overseas! He found a very capable admiral in his own navy, his name was Zheng, who quickly gathered support from the people in the country and in a month, the navy had approximately five hundred thousand men! They decided to fight back. They were trained with swords, bows and arrows and shields. Expert sailors manned the ships, and the fleet was ready.

"Take this with you!" shouted the emperor to the admiral. He was holding a heavy box, full of treasures.

"When you go to other countries, go to see the rulers and offer them some of these precious treasures so we can make treaties with them!"

"Your Majesty, your wish is my command," Replied the admiral, who was famous for his bushy moustache and his ingenious strategies which he gets while twisting the ends of his moustache. The whole fleet of navy departed from the royal port in Peking (now Beijing) and set out towards the pirates.

The ships were massive, made of fine wood. There were many gun ports, with cannons ready to fire. The sails flapped in the wind and carved on the bows were ugly mythical faces. The ships were so polished that they gleamed in the sunlight. It was a most astonishing sight.

The "Ming treasure fleet", as they were called, had many dangerous and exciting adventures. Here is one of them ...

One foggy day, the navy was looking for pirates to battle.

"We look smart in our uniforms!" gloated a navy soldier.

"Yes, absolutely, my dear fellow!" another agreed. "I reckon we might wipe out all the pirates from the face of the Earth!" All the soldiers chuckled and giggled. Suddenly it all became quiet. The Admiral was here.

"Attention!" he barked.

"Yes, Sir!" the soldiers replied.

"Now, whose turn is it to go up and look out for danger in the crow's nest?" he said, not so loud now.

"Me, but ...but I've got vertigo," stammered a scared soldier.

"Oh, who's after him?" Admiral Zheng asked.

"I'm next," bellowed a buff man called Ben.

"Okay, see you up there," said the Admiral. A few minutes later, there was a really loud shout!

**"PIRATES ON STARBOARD! PIRATES ON STARBOARD!"** The navy soldier jumped to their feet and swore at the pirates, fired cannons and shouted war cries: the fight was on! Cannonballs flew and zipped everywhere. Swords were drawn and the clang of metal was deafening. Suddenly, there was a big thumping noise! The pirates dropped their weapons and retreated, thinking it was a giant coming to hunt them. It was actually some navy soldiers beating some drums! The soldiers laughed and howled, and they gave chase.

Little did they know, a whole armada of pirate ships were waiting for them. "We've got you now, fools!" said the leader of the pirates. All the pirates pointed their weapons at the naval soldiers and chanted, "Surrender or die! Surrender or die! Surrender or die!"

"Maybe you should surrender instead, pirates!" said the cunning Admiral Zheng while twiddling his moustache. Without the pirates knowing, he sent messenger doves to his backup fleet. Out of the mist, a whole fleet of naval warships appeared and surrounded the pirate ships. From the warships, the beating of drums were heard. They opened fire on the pirate ships, blasting holes everywhere, letting water rush into the hulls. Before the ship sank, some naval soldiers hopped onto the main pirate ship and got all the loot, killing the leading pirate (to prove that they killed him they chopped off his head) and all the pirates standing in their way with their sharp swords. The pirates either died of drowning or got captured by the navy.

After this battle, Admiral Zheng became so famous that his name was known as far as South Africa. Many countries wanted to sign treaties with China because no one wanted to be their enemies! The whole fleet returned to China and showed the head of the leader of the pirates to the emperor (which was already kind of rotting), and gave him all the pirates' treasure. In return, emperor Huang Jiang Ming Tong elevated Zheng's rank to second in command, only under himself.

Of course, there were more adventures, but those are stories for other days. China had relationships with many foreign countries, states and cities, for instance: India, Arabia, East Africa and more! (This was all written in Admiral Zheng's diary and this is only one chapter in it). Here is another story inside Zheng's diary...

"This is our last journey, guys," a navy soldier said. Admiral Zheng said this himself as he was getting old and tired. On their way back from South Africa, they were running out of food supplies and they needed food.

"Land ho!" someone shouted. Everybody looked. An island! But there were people on it! Admiral Zheng was gambling because he didn't know whether the islanders would be friends or foe. . And what a surprise for them! They were extremely friendly and danced for the navy as well as served them drinks and fish. This island would later be known as Hong Kong, but more on that later. The natives sang a song called "I Love Dong Dong" which sounded like "I Love Hong Kong" so maybe that's where the island got its name. Some of the navy stayed and the others went back home. Sadly, on the way, Admiral Zheng died and the whole of China wept and grieved for him. They built a statue and put a brass plaque that read "Zheng was a hero. He lived well."

# Zheng He's Fleet

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Cheung, Jesse – 9*

"Look, Zheng He's Fleet is here!" Chen whispered under his breath, awestruck by the sheer size and grandeur of the ships. Chen had always dreamed of joining Zheng He's valiant and undefeatable crew. Only nineteen years old, he lived in an impoverished and remote village in Nanjing. His childhood had been rough and was a constant fight for survival, in search for food and resources. Orphaned by seven years of age when his parents died in a plague, Chen felt determined to help Emperor Xuande to obtain riches, then spread this wealth with his poor neighbours. Chen practiced his fighting skills and educated himself about gunpowder and cannons to increase his chances of being chosen by Zheng He himself.

The year was 1431 and Zheng He was commencing his seventh expedition from China to Africa to explore and discover foreign territories. The first time Chen met Zheng He, he immediately felt threatened by Zheng He's tall, sturdy build and unique intellect. Chen passed the difficult entry test and gained the highest scores. Zheng He handpicked Chen to be his lieutenant, and outlined all the important rules on their fleet. As the ships were about to set off, Chen waved goodbye sadly to his homeland in Nanjing and returned to his dirty and smelly cabin. Zheng He's ships sailed across China, distributing wealth to poor Chinese people from Liujiagang, Quanzhou and Changle.

One day they set off to Qui Nhon and were confronted by nasty Vietnamese pirates. These gruesome pirates wore eye-patches and had evil grins stretching across their faces. Their pirate ships attacked Zheng He's ships mercilessly by throwing hundreds of grenades. Zheng He ordered Chen and his soldiers to destroy his enemies using their latest invention "Flying-Cloud Thunderclap Cannon"!!! This hollow cast iron shell was packed with deadly, explosive gunpowder. Suddenly, "Boom! Boom!" Some pirate ships exploded! Then, another gigantic, destructive explosion burned down all the Vietnamese pirate ships. There were no survivors on the opposing side and Zheng He's crew were the victors.

Next stop, Zheng He's ships arrived at Malacca where thousands of people were starving and had no access to clean water. With his heart of gold, Zheng He commanded his soldiers to give out juicy pork buns and water to the people. Then, they sailed their ships to the ports of Ayuttnaya, Sunargaon, Pandua, Beruwala and Galle. Chen had never heard of or seen so many exotic islands before. He was amazed by the splendid architecture of the Buddhist monasteries in Ayuttnaya. On the way, Zheng He's crew also dived in the deep seas to discover sunken ships, ancient galleons and rubies .

Halfway towards Quillion, they were suddenly ambushed by cutthroat Indian pirates with a fleet of two hundred ships. "Go and kill those Indians, who have been terrorizing the villagers. Chop their heads off and blow up their ships. We must win! It is a fight for our survival and we must maintain our reputation as the Master of the Seas." yelled Zheng He. He commanded Chen and his thousands of skillful sailors to assume an attack position. His loyal crew loaded their cannons and fired without remorse at the Indians. Sadly, the unbearable fight continued for five months. Zheng He's crew advanced heavily while the Indian pirates lost numerous men, but they were persistent and continued fighting until they had only five ships remaining. The Indians tried to sail away, but Zheng He's crews attacked the enemy ships with their latest weapon – "Multiple Bullets Magazine Erupter". This bronze cannon could fire up to 100 lead balls and Zheng He finally captured the enemy ships. He went so far to prove his point that he commended his soldiers to place the Indian pirates inside the cannon, and blasted them into infinity.

After sailing the rough sea for another month, Zheng He arrived at a place in Somalia called Mogadishu and witnessed hostile terrorists destroying the cities. Zheng He wanted to protect the citizens of Mogadishu from this terror, so he ordered Chen to take the lead and attack. Chen shot them down with his guns and took out his immense sword. He slayed the men swiftly without any injury but

was suddenly pushed aside by the leader of the terrorists. Chen used all his tremendous kicking and punching movements but it was not effective on the strong man. Finally, Chen was able to grab his sword firmly and stabbed him in the heart fiercely. After the leader was defeated, Zheng He directed his ships towards Aden, Lasa and Hormaz. However, the cities were filled with awful men scowling, so Zheng He ordered his sailors to sail back to Nanjing. When the ship arrived at Nanjing after five months, Chen noticed the Emperor and his court awaiting their arrival at the dock. People of Nanjing cheered with joy and threw flower petals in the air to celebrate their return. Chen was proud of their accomplishments and waved at his people excitedly, happy to finally be in the comfort of his hometown.

Emperor Xuande thanked Chen for leading such a fearless crew and exploring many untouched places. He was rewarded with tonnes of gold. Chen had accomplished what he originally intended to do. He had a strong sense of fulfillment and returned to his village to share these riches with his poor neighbours. Now, he also had a heart of gold.

# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*St Stephens College Preparatory School, Chih, Vienna – 9*

I am sure you've heard of those greedy pirates who sail across seas to steal gold, most of them do. But a huge fleet of Chinese ships set sail in the early 1400s, which carried cargoes of gifts instead! More of what I think happened, read carefully and you'll see!

Back in Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle sent Zheng He to sail the oceans to meet emperors and rulers of different kingdoms. There were seven voyages, and people on board had amazing adventures in many places. The Emperor put gold, silk and other precious items onto the ships to give away as wonderful gifts. Zheng He and his crew often met friendly people who were the perfect people to have gifts. They also encountered mean people like the usual pirates or hostile armies who didn't like him. These travelers went to places such as Africa, Vietnam, Thailand, Arabia, Red Sea and more places. Zheng He set sail away from the shore with 62 ships and more than 20,000 men. He was very excited for his first voyage, a mission ordered by Emperor Yongle. After departing from Thailand, the fleet arrived in a place named Malacca. Zheng He came to the elegant palace and traded silk with the Thai king. When Zheng He and his small group of servants left, danger arrived. Some forces against the king attacked him, but Zheng He captured most of them and threw the forces out into the middle of the sea.

If I was on one of Zheng He's ships, I'd be enjoying the cool breeze by the sea. Then I would check the polished gifts before they were given away to someone else. When the ships sail, I would scan the ocean view for seagulls and sunset as a best scene of my life. Likewise, Zheng He would fight the bad pirates or armies who'd attack them. Just like how Zheng He got attacked by Ceylonese king named Alagakkonara, a king who did not think before acting.

During the third voyage, one of the places Zheng He went to was a kingdom named Ceylon. King Alagakkonara was silly, so he thought Zheng He might steal from him or attack Ceylon. He sent most of his soldiers to block Zheng He's way back, but he didn't think Zheng He would be so smart. Zheng He knew his way was blocked soon, and he already had a plan. He would crash through the city walls and would surprise the king with an attack from the ceiling. He would then capture the royal family and bring them back to Ming. Zheng He led some soldiers into the palace and attacked the king very quickly. He captured him and his family and brought them back to Ming Dynasty to see the emperor.

After the sixth voyage, can't there be a tenth voyage? Why does it have to be only seventh voyages, and why did it stop? Did Zheng He die just after the seventh voyage, and when did he die?

Zheng He didn't die afterwards but he died before returning to their country. Emperor Yongle died when Zheng He was on the journey. The ministers knew they wasted a lot of money for the voyages, so they stopped Zheng He from going further. Suddenly, Zheng He felt ill on the ship while going back to Calicut. He died soon on the ship. Everyone was sad. The fleet returned to Ming Dynasty with this bad news. No one ever travelled the seas on the fleet again.

I like the story of Ming Treasure Voyages very much because I am interested in Chinese history. I wish that brave Zheng He hadn't died so soon, so his part in the history would be greater. Sometime maybe, another better person will soon take place in history "ruling the seas"!

# The Journey to the Underworld

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Choy, Lut – 9*

If I had known about the trouble and the dangers I would encounter, I wouldn't have gone on to become a member of this ill-fated voyage. Alas, I was Zheng He's star pupil... so my fate was sealed.

The first voyage had gone smoothly but on our return we went to Sumatra to defeat a pirate uprising. A mysterious foreigner had joined our company and even though Zheng He had organized the journey he was not in our midst. Thus, I was made captain and was left in charge of the ship. As we sailed towards Sumatra a devastating whirlpool appeared and we were stopped dead in our tracks.

A giant, pale figure rose out of the centre of the whirlpool and said, "You have killed my son, the Pirate of Sumatra and now I shall kill you!" She vanished as quickly as she had appeared and only then did I realize the figure was none other than the goddess of the sea, Mazu!

The whirlpool sucked us into the watery depths of the sea and then I lost consciousness...

When I woke up, we were sailing straight towards these enormous, black rusty gates. The water was dark and it ate away at the sides of the ship. Flames were everywhere and the sunlight was long gone. The ship sailed on until we were in front of the black gates of the underworld. Then, the acidic currents swept us through them. I tried to turn the ship around but my body would not obey. I could only watch in horror as the ship continued to drift further on.

Our ship sailed all the way to the throne of the god of death, King Yan. Surrounding him were the Ten Kings of the Underworld. King Yan bellowed to us in a terrible voice, "Who goes there?"

I tried to answer him but then I remembered I couldn't speak, so I motioned to him that my lips were sealed. He snapped his fingers and I could suddenly speak and move again.

I said, "We are the crew of the Ming Treasure Ships. and the wrath of Mazu brought us here."

Then I told him about the whole voyage.

After listening to our strange tale, he took mercy on us and decided to send us back to the surface world. He also gave Mazu the soul of the Pirate of Sumatra to comfort her.

The rest of the voyage went smoothly but I was so shaken by the time I returned that I decided to retire. I went on living to a ripe old age in peace and peril-free on the periphery.

# Zheng He's Adventures

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Ho, Marcus – 10*

Inside a luxurious palace in China lived a very wealthy emperor. He had lots of riches and gold inside the palace that made him feel proud and satisfied.

One day, he was thinking of a plan. He said, "Let's go for an adventure around the world. No one has done it in the past and this could be very exciting and challenging!" The Emperor's assistants agreed but they were wondering who would be in charge of this mission? Where will we explore? Who will be going? Will we give presents to other countries? Suddenly, the Emperor came up with an idea and exclaimed, "I know! Why don't we call Zheng Ha to take the lead, and find some of our army's greatest generals?" Everyone agreed and cheered.

The Emperor's assistants soon got Zheng Ha and sent him to the Emperor's palace. Zheng Ha accepted the great command with honor, and started to prepare for the great voyage.

After a few months of preparations for food, equipment, weapons and training, Zheng Ha and his team were ready for the voyage. The Emperor also gave Zheng Ha some of his treasury including gold, silk and jewelry to give away as gifts in case he made friends with peaceful people.

The Emperor gave a hearty goodbye to Zheng Ha and his team when they set out to ride the raging sea on his humongous boat.

The first day in the sea was calm until suddenly, the sky turned as dark as black and a scary, ruthless band of pirates came to attack the ship. They wanted to rob Zheng Ha's treasury! Luckily, Zheng Ha's ship was equipped with cannons. James, who was in charge of the cannons, started to fire the gigantic cannons towards the pirates. The war was very violent, and few of Zheng Ha's people were injured. When the war ended, they continued their journey.

They spent a few days to arrive their first destination—India. They were very excited because India was a mysterious country to them.

When they arrived India, all the citizens there greeted Zheng Ha and his team. "This is quite a peaceful place." Zheng Ha said.

After they took a break for a few hours, they continued marching forward, helping people who they met in this new city. "It seems like that we are not only exploring the world," Zheng Ha continued, "it also seems like that we are also spreading our friendship to others!"

By dawn, the crew was exhausted. Suddenly, a woman found out about them. She asked, "Are you really tired?"

Zheng Ha replied, "Yes, we all are."

"Would you like to come to my house to take a rest and to refresh yourself?" the woman asked.

"Oh yes, it is very kind of you!" Zheng Ha replied in a warm and happy tone.

"Good!" said the woman, "Come inside, I will fix dinner for all of you." The team went into the woman's house and had dinner. Everyone was amazed as it was the first time they had Indian cuisine and it was exotic! After dinner, they got ready to sleep by putting up their tents. Very soon, everyone was snoring loudly like pigs.

The next day, Zheng Ha and his team woke up early. They cooked breakfast for themselves. The woman was pleased to see the team settle down nicely for themselves. When it was time to go, Zheng Ha thanked the woman.



“Thanks for your hospitality. I want to give you something very valuable as a gift.” Zheng Ha said. He opened a big bag full of precious gold and silk. “These are all for you.” He added.

“Oh! Thank you very much!” the woman exclaimed.

“You are most welcome.” Zheng Ha replied. It was time for them to continue their journey and they headed back to their ship. But when they arrived at the city docks, they found that their ship was gone! “Blimey!” James exclaimed. “Our ship has disappeared!” Everyone gasped in awe!

At this moment everybody panic and felt hopeless except Zheng Ha. “Everyone please calm down and listen to me!” he shouted. Now everyone was as silent as the dead sea. “I’ve got a great idea!” Zheng Ha said, “I know the palace of the Indian king is not that far from here. Maybe we could go there to ask for help!”

They arrived at the grand palace of India. There were guards armed with long guns guarding the enormous gate of the Palace. Zheng Ha told the guards the reason they were here and surprisingly they were allowed to enter the Palace! Zheng Ha bowed down to the King and said, “My mighty King, we come from China. To show our respect to you and your country, we are giving you all this gold and silk for you and for your country. Also, my Honor, our ship at the city dock has disappeared. What should we do?”

The King replied in a mysterious expression. “Well, I do believe your ship will appear very soon and I hereby decree that China and India are now friends forever!” everybody cheered. This was the best news ever!

They left the Palace and headed back to the docks, and found that their ship was back! “This is weird.” Zheng Ha said, “Why is our ship suddenly back?”

“Aw, it doesn’t matter now! The most important is that we have to spread the wonderful news to China now!”

“You’re right James,” Zheng Ha replied, “Let’s go!” Everybody cheered.

The whole voyage was a gigantic success. On this voyage, China not only went to explore India, but also spread their friendship too. This made the whole voyage even more meaningful. Everybody in China was very proud about their success on their very first trip. “Where are we going on the other 6 voyages, Zheng Ha?” James asked.

Zheng Ha replied, “I’m not sure James but I certainly hope that the next country we visit is also a great country.....”

# A Deadly Voyage

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Kwok, Sum Yu – 9*

As the ship departed from the coast of the Southern Sea of China, Young Captain Zhuang knew that he was going to go give away some treasure. He sat down on his chair and thought for a while.

" Actually, should I keep it or should I give it? "

It took him a while to figure out what to do. He always made the right choice.

It was the time where pirates were cruel and evil and mean but he didn't care. As long no one killed him he would be fine. His best sailor, Chen Wen, was looking at him the whole without blinking. Captain Zhuang looked back and saw Chen looking at him. He was surprised that he was interested in him so he told Sailor Chen what was he thinking.

" Aye mate, we know that these times, evil pirates. " Chen Wen replied in a miserable face.

" These times you'll know why. I ain't gotta tell you. "

The ship stopped by a little island on their way to the northern sea. The three little pirates, Meagan, Annabel and Alicia , stood and looked at the island.

"Look! There's some pal over there ! " they exclaimed.

And sure enough when they went on the island they saw two tough and strong men. " Ahoy Matey! I am Captain Zhuang from Beijing. Would ye like to join ! We'll give you enough money and food. " Of course, they joined the gang.

" Avast ye, we're going off to The Canadian Ocean where the treasure fleet is. We pirates will give out money, but we will pass the Northern China Sea, " said Captain Zhaung

"To our new pirates: We're the Ming Treasure team. We serve for pride and I hereby present ye my seadog, the old salt, Chen Wen the sailor. So, what're we waitin' for? Yo Ho Ho! We'll set sail to the northern seas! Somebody raise the Jolly Roger! "

Not far away from the southern sea, the northern sea was ruled by a very famous team of evil pirates: Captain Chua's Pirates. They are known as "The Killer Pirates" as they always kill and there is a theory that no one can ever beat them because their weapons are too strong and powerful. But Captain Zhuang knew that it wasn't real. One day he would beat them.

Many days passed as the sailors, pirates and Captain Zhuang prepared their strong weapons to defeat Captain Chua's Pirates. He was pretty satisfied that he had so many dangerous weapons and his pirates worked hard, except one, Pirate Rong Yang. He always pretended to be nice but he was cruel. He always messed things up and today was his punishment.

"Blow the man down! Let him walk the plank! E's bad, he's a maggot !E's going to feed the fish! E's a landlubber! Me fellow pirates, let this be lesson to you!" shouted Captain Zhaung.

All the other pirates had never seen Captain Zhuang shouting at someone. They were all surprised and fascinated. At last, Rong Yang went on the plank and drowned. That was the end of his journey.

"Chen, I'll talk to you later. The others, go and fetch the monkeys," said Captain Zhuang.

" Aye !" the pirates chanted.

" Chen, come with me. I want to take you to a secret place. It's at the rear of the ship." Captain Zhuang ordered. They went to the back of the ship and there was a secret tunnel leading to a tremendously beautiful room where there was a small table with two seats and some tea.

" Have some tea. " Captain Zhuang said,

" Never tell any pirate about this matey. Now I will tell you how to be a better sailor."

Suddenly, Chen heard thunder and lightning. Thunder roared and he knew if lightning struck the boat would sink. He quickly ran through the secret tunnel and told the pirates about the chance the boat would sink and when they looked down there was a gigantic sperm whale! They were all frightened when this chaos happened. Even worst, they were almost in the Northern sea!

"Thar she blows!" said one of the pirates as they panicked and panicked.

As the storm disappeared, they calmed down, but there was more trouble ahead! Now they were at the Northern seas where Captain Chua's Pirates were waiting for them. The Captain sent the military force to protect them and defeat the pirates.

"Avast ye," said Zhuang, "Chen and ye buccaneer will go on the crow's nest to see what will happen. The rest of ye, get out ye cutlass and the bombs. Man-O-war!"

It was a horrible war that killed lots of people. But the team that had hope defeated the unstoppable pirates and had set sail for a new journey after they visited the Canadian Ocean.

# Zheng He and the Tiger

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Lai, Cheuk Kei Brandon – 10*

In the preparing of a fleet of sixty ships, that would bring the great Chinese explorer Zheng He and his massive crew of thirty thousand men, mostly professional soldiers and about one hundred and eighty doctors on the first of seven amazing journeys, a lot of work had to be done. A gigantic harbor was needed to fit these sixty enormous ships, each four hundred feet long. The loud noise and strange smell from the dirty ships attracted a number of animals to wander around the ships, and some even got on the ships, causing all kinds of trouble.

A long time passed, and the long-awaited day of departure finally arrived. Emperor Yongle himself came to wish the sailors good luck and a safe journey, and of course, ask them to bring a large amount of treasure and gold from other countries home. With a final goodbye, the fleet left the harbor.

The huge ships had more than five hundred cabins for the crew. Zheng He also had his own “first class” cabins on one of the ships. There were also kitchens on all of the ships. The ships were kept in a very good order and the sailors were all in a good mood when they set off.

The fleet travelled peacefully for the first few days of their journey. The crew did as they were told, and they didn't grumble. The only problem was that on the ship that Zheng He was on, some of the food had gone missing, and there were cracks all around the ship and nobody knew why. At night on the third day, Zheng He and the crew said good night as usual and went to sleep.

The next morning at dawn, Zheng He and the crew were woken up by a loud roar, the roar of an animal. Zheng He opened his door and saw a crazy sight. Members of his crew were being chased by a tiger! Panic gripped everyone on board, as they tried to run to safety. The ship rocked left and right, looking as if it might sink into the sea any moment.

Zheng He was in a panic. How could he save the ship when the crew was being chased around it by an angry-looking, large, hungry tiger?

Suddenly, Zheng He got an idea. He shouted to the men on another ship to come over and help. The men grabbed a large net, trapped the tiger, and locked it up.

The men were so relieved to be alive, they thanked the men from the other ship again and again.

After this horrible experience, everyone on board was more eager to get to their destination quickly to avoid anything unexpected again.

Fortunately, the crew spotted land a few weeks later. The ships parked into the bay, and Zheng He and the officials left the ship to meet the king of that land.

The trip to the palace was smooth and easy. The people there seemed nice and polite, and the guards let them into the palace without hesitation.

“Your majesty,” they said to the king of that land, which they found out was Arabia. “We come in peace from the empire of China. We have bought presents to exchange with you.”

“Presents?” the king brightened up, “Interesting. Let me see.” The king snatched the silks that Zheng He had brought. “Thank you.” He said delightfully, “Take these ostriches and join us for lunch.”

They had a very delicious lunch, with all kinds of tasty food from Arabia. Zheng He only refused to eat a kind of meat that he said “didn't look well”. Only one official ate that meat, and he didn't look well!

After lunch, Zheng He said farewell to the king and they continued on the journey. However, as they neared the bay where they left the ships, there was shout, and out jumped an army holding swords, ready for a fight. Right there, the official who ate the meat Zheng He refused to eat, fainted, and died. Zheng He heard the king laugh “hahahaha!”. They've been tricked! The king was trying to trick them into giving them more treasure!

Zheng He shouted to the ship for help. The crew arrived in an instance. Luckily, most of the crew were professional soldiers, and they started to fight. One of the soldiers had a terrific idea. He let the tiger from the ship and led it down to the battlefield. The hungry tiger, which hadn't eaten in days, let out a loud roar, and scared everyone away. The soldier who let it down fed it a lot of meat. He told their crew to calm down, then let them back to their ship.

The crew, horrified by what happened during their first journey at sea, sailed home as quick as they could. However, back at home, they were given a hero's welcome. The Emperor invited them all to the palace for a feast. When he heard about Arabia and the tiger, he gave Zheng He the tiger as a gift. And soon after, they started to plan for the next journey.

# Zheng He's Last Voyage

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Lau, Alessio – 11*

*Cling! Cling! Cling!* I hear the sound of a set of keys through the metal prison door. The keys are attached to the belt of a terrifying giant, a man who I wished I would never lay eyes on again. *Chick, shack!* The lock twists and the door grinds open, a beam of white sunlight stings my eyes. Fresh air rushes into the cell, after days of nothing but the foul pong of damp walls and rotten fish, it is truly divine. Two colossal guards march in, unshackle me, grab my shoulders firmly, and drag me out of my cell. Sliding along the main corridor of the dungeon, the sound of their heavy chests breathing helps me to forget about the searing pain coursing through my body.

They free me from my heavy chains. “Can I go?”

One of the two bear-like guards replies, “The emperor wishes to see you!”

I feel shocked, nervous, and gleeful all at the same time, if I can just explain what happened, he would set me free.

After being escorted through a maze of endless corridors, we finally arrive at the grand hall. Like upright mahjong pieces, the ministers and courtiers are standing to attention. At the very end the Emperor is seated on a golden throne.

Fear strikes me. The Emperor speaks directly to me, “Ahhh, Vice Admiral Cheuk Lang, so nice to finally see you. Where are my captains, sailors and soldiers... WHERE IS ZHEN?”

Stuttering, I reply “Your... Your Ma... Majesty, I... I am... real... really so... sorry... please allow me to explain...”

The Emperor shouts, “SPIT IT OUT MAN! Tell me the truth at once! I won’t feel sorry for you when your head rolls across my courtyard floor!”

I find my voice and begin...

*Our fleet was in the center of the Indian Ocean. We had been at sea for five months, there were only about ten days left before we would approach the shores of the Mughal Empire.*

*Due to the success and near completion of our voyage, Admiral Zhen decided to hold a celebration. Every ship in the fleet was a hub of revelry and joy.*

*One of our captains onboard the lead ship turned to a lieutenant and said merrily, “You know what, the Indian Ocean is well known for its sea monsters, but where are they? Our boats are too mighty!!” The crew erupted into laughter.*

*Zhen shouted with an air of superiority, “There are no such things as Sea Monsters!”*

*During the party, a yeoman began to sing a beautiful ballad, the water was still and it seemed to amplify his voice across the fleet, just as he reached the last verse, it happened.*

*It started with loud splashing noises. Splash! Splash! Then a thousand gallons of water seemed to lift one hundred feet into the air, then came crashing down onto the enormous hulls of our ships. Then it all went still again, like nothing had happened. All of a sudden, the boat started to rock between starboard to port, this was confusing, as the sea was so still it reflected the stars in the sky. The rocking became more and more violent. Panic broke out across the ship. That’s when we first saw it. Something enormous rose up slowly and silently from the water. Myself and Zhen raced to the port side to take a closer look, what we saw boggled our brains, a tentacle, like that of a squid, but the size of about forty fully grown elephants trunk to tail! Zhen was white as a sheet, he turned to me and said, “I met some Arabian sailors many years ago, they told me about a fleet being decimated by a colossal ocean monster, they called it...”*

*“It’s the Kraken!” howled a scout. The war horns blew across the fleet and our defensive forces mustered as fast as they could. We loaded our muskets.*

*“3,2,1, Fire” shouted the captains. Boom! Boom! Boom! There is no sound on earth as awesome as four hundred ships firing full broadsides all at the same time. Nothing could have survived that. Every cannon launched their cannon balls at the same time; on top of that, the archers had shot thousands of fire arrows towards the kraken. We were one hundred percent sure that this beast was dead. The gunpowder smoke began to clear. A giant yellow eye appeared through the fog of war.*

*With the first swing of its tentacle, our best ships were smashed into chopstick-sized pieces of timber. The remaining soldiers screamed for help. I can still hear them today. The evil beast followed us. It was as quick as lightning. Within twenty seconds, we were caught up in one of the kraken’s long tentacles. It lifted the entire treasure ship into the air. The colossus held ships in each one of its eight long limbs, flipping them over and smashing them into each other. It was at that moment, I realized that the brute was not just destroying the fleet but it was looking for something.*

*The kraken was stuffing its beak with all of the gold and silk we had brought to trade with the Mughal Empire!*

*Crack! Crack! Crack! All the other ships were effortlessly smashed. Finally, the kraken focused its huge eye on us. I thought to myself, "This is the end, I could take my chances in the water but I'm vice admiral!" Before I could make a decision, a huge tentacle silently rose up through the clouds above. Then like a meteorite, it screamed down crashing directly through the hull. The powerful strike tossed Zhen and myself in opposite directions. This was the last time I would see the great admiral.*

The Emperor slowly stands up from his throne. He walks towards me with a sad look upon his face, "Argh! This is the most terrifying thing I have ever heard. Vice Admiral Cheuk Lang, forgive me, you are free to go."

# Quantum Quagmire

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Lau, Meagan – 9*

In the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, quantum computing and self-learning A.I. have reshaped mankind, the world seems like a very different place. The air is clean and the skies are crystal clear. Well, as long as you are rich enough to stay inside the walled cities, that is.

Milly and Marc aren't so lucky. They live in one of the super slums that thrive on the rubbish discarded by the wealthy. These places are filthy. Millions of people are crammed in together. Life is hard and short.

"I'm sick of rummaging through these piles of worthless junk, we haven't found anything valuable for days."

"Would you just shut up? You know how this works? One good find will keep us full for weeks."

Just as Milly was deciding which side of Marc's face she was going to slap, she saw a curious box hidden under some old computer parts, "Hey, Marc, take a look at this."

Marc paid no attention, he was busy trying to pull an old iPad 68 out of a broken desk drawer. Milly pulled out the box and read the official-looking writing on the top. "Property of the U.S.W. Government, Top Secret," she muttered. Without thinking, she smashed the two huge padlocks and opened the box. Inside it was a curious, small pyramid.

Milly removed it from its protective case and held it in her hands. It was sleek and shiny, smooth as glass. Examining it closely, she flipped it upside down to inspect its base. It was covered in small, round, grey buttons — twenty or so. She started pressing random buttons, but nothing happened. She flipped it upright and discovered that the tip of the pyramid was now pulsing electric blue. After a few more pulses, the light turned red and a blinding white flash consumed the whole area! Milly and Marc were both dazed by the sudden flash. Suddenly, they were stirred by the sounds of seagulls and people speaking Chinese. After a few minutes, their vision slowly returned. Milly and Marc saw a huge, red, wooden ship right in front of them. They knew they were now in China, but everyone was dressed in old-fashioned clothes. Then, Marc saw the black, shiny pyramid Milly was holding. He gasped, "That's an X15D, top-secret tech! Where did you get it?"

A man dressed in military uniform walked past and spoke, "Excuse me, I am Admiral Lee, who are you?"

Milly replied calmly, "Oh! My name is Milly."

"How about the man over there?" pressed Admiral Lee.

"Marc? Oh, he is my husband and we have come from the future using this pyramid, I believe."

"Can I borrow this pyramid for a second?" asked the admiral. Milly passed the X15D to Admiral Lee.

Suddenly, Marc rushed back to them, "Eh, excuse me, Admiral. May I ask, that ship, what is it for?"

"Ha! That ship is a treasure ship. We're on a mission to find treasure on different islands."

"Wow!" cried Milly and Marc.

"If you want to join us, come! We can all find treasure together," added Admiral Lee.

"Thanks Admiral Lee!" Milly and Marc bowed down to thank the kind admiral.

The treasure ship started to set sail on the enormous waves rolling on the vast sea. As Milly, Marc and Admiral Lee were chatting enthusiastically, they heard a screech coming from outside.

"Arghh! Help me!" cried a crewmember.

"Hey! What's up?" asked Admiral Lee.

The crewman stuttered, "A...a...a...a Admiral, there is a beast, it...it has caught one of our men and it is still there!"

Then, the poor crewman burst into tears. Milly could tell that he was frightened and in a state of shock.

The three of them ran with urgency to the side of the vessel. Out of the deep blue sea, the beast rose. It was a giant, with a horn protruding from its head, lifeless black eyes and rows of razor-sharp teeth. The beast was covered in thick red scales that oozed with poisonous slime; it was terrifying! The admiral took out his gun and shot the beast, it let out a deafening roar. The beast used its horn to defend itself, and then it rose out of the inky sea and bit the admiral's arm. Enraged, Milly grabbed a bow, locked in on the beast and fired a silver, pointed arrow directly into the creature's eye.

The beast was blinded, but it could still hear, feel and smell. With the huge sea creature left vulnerable, Marc found a stick of dynamite. He lit it and threw it up into the gaping mouth of the monster. An explosion engulfed the evil creature and destroyed it.

Marc, Milly and Admiral Lee lay on the ruined deck looking up at the sun. Relieved to have survived the encounter, they caught their breath. Milly spotted a small, shiny object out of the corner of her eye. She grabbed it, looking at it closely. It was a small piece of jade shaped into a cone. “Admiral Lee, can you pass me the X15D pyramid, please?” said Milly. Admiral Lee passed her the piece of top-secret tech. Milly observed the base and found that there was a missing piece shaped exactly like the piece of jade she had just found. Like a puzzle solver finding the final answer, she placed the jade cone into the pyramid with glee. With that, a vivid stream of white light shone out of the pyramid and ripped up the sky. There was silence.

Milly and Marc began to hear the sound of industry, crunching cogs and metal machinery. The smell of rubbish drifted across their nostrils. They were back in the walled city.

“What...was...that?” exclaimed Marc.

“That was incredible!” Milly replied. “We have the missing piece of the time machine and that means we can use it whenever we like. We can escape the walled city!”

Elated, both Marc and Milly strolled back to their slum hand in hand, ready to plot their escape.



# The First Voyage

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Lee, Jazzelle – 11*

“Tianfei! Tianfei! bless us from the depths of the sea, for we, shall make China wealthy and strong, ensure us a safe journey, our fine sea goddess!” Zheng He prayed. He took a deep breath, it was July 11th already, and it was time for the royal banquet before the voyage to where treasure and fate awaited...

Sitting down to a table full of royal delicacies, all the uniformed officers nervously sat down on the gold and red leather chairs. They appeared to be composed, but in reality, they had butterflies in their stomachs. No officer or commander ate anything, for they were too anxious. After the quiet meal, the whole ship crew received numerous gifts, however, everyone's minds were on the voyage that was ahead. Finally, as the dinner ended, Zheng He and the fleet boarded the ship and waved their farewells to their family and friends. Finally, they set sail and started to row in the direction of their first destination, Liujiagang, where they would organize the fleet and pray to Tianfei again for good luck.

Once the ship's crew was on deck and ready to go, they sailed to Fujian and awaited the Northeast monsoon. Zheng He relaxed, this was his break and he wanted to utilize his time wisely. Shortly after what seemed to Zheng He and his crew less than a minute, the weather changed and the wind blew past his face, “Ahh— let's go crew, let's go!” Zheng He called, still enjoying the cool wind. They departed via Wuhumen. The crew went to Lambri, where they sliced through the Indian Ocean in a straight line, instead of following the time-consuming route they had been given. “Haste, men, HASTE! We shall not waste our time, time—is MONEY!” Zheng He hollered.

Finally after the tiring journey of eight days, the crew woke up to the sailor yelling, “LAAAAANNNNND HOOOOOO! CEYLON COMING UP!”

“About time, matie,” Zheng He said in a sarcastic voice. Zheng He wanted to sound enthusiastic, but an eight day journey of waiting patiently on the deck and bed really drained his batteries. However, when Zheng He set foot on land, he suddenly felt quite energized. But then, when he met the Alagakkonara family, he was rudely treated and stormed off onto his ship again. “What a disgrace to Asia!” Zheng He scolded, making sure that everyone in the Alagakkonara family heard it. After they quickly rushed to leave the land, they decided to sail back home, but when they reached Palembang, they were blocked by a ship, it had elegant gold statues on the wooden ship, and a painting of a skull with a scar on the flags.

“Hello! Fellow ‘maties’, I, am Chen Zuyi! I have come to rule the world!!!” the man in the front of the deck called, with an evil smile playing on his lips.

“Never!” Zheng He hollered, determined to take down Chen Zuyi. He grabbed a rope on his ship, and with all his might, ran and leapt from the handlebar on the deck on his ship. “Arghh!” he called, as he landed on Chen Zuyi's deck. He grunted as he drew his sword out, “Come, my crew, help me defeat these pirates, we shall not allow them to pass our territory!” All of the fleet swung on board and started to fight the pirate crew, swords sliced and shields collided, grunts arose from both the enemy and the Chinese people. Suddenly, horror dawned upon everyone as they heard the crackle of fire. Officers panicked and swung back to their ships. Some pirates jumped onto their backup ships sailing through just in the nick of time, some pirates were trapped and incinerated in the roasting fire. Thankfully, none of the Chinese got trapped. After what seemed like an eternity, the ‘war’ finally ended. Zheng He was exhausted, he had killed almost a thousand people at least! Altogether with his allies’, they had slayed almost five thousand pirates! Zheng He thought, ‘What a shame they didn't become friendly and surrendered, I wouldn't have killed them if they did!’ In the meantime, Chen Zuyi was being locked up in a cage to be brought to China. The sailor hoisted up the ship's anchor and sailed away back to China.

“Oh, finally! Back to China!” Zheng He sighed, it was October 2nd, 1407, Zheng He and his crew hobbled off the ship and four strong men lifted Chen Zuyi and his cage back into the court.

“Greetings! Zheng He, what have you found?” the Yongle Emperor questioned as Zheng He entered.

“Your highness,” Zheng He grinned, “we—have SOMEONE in store for you!” Zheng He curtsied fancily and waved his hands in the direction of Chen Zuyi and his cage, still carried by four strong men. “This— is Chen Zuyi, a pirate who attempted to disrupt our territory—which I must say, is a far too ambitious goal— but obviously,” Zheng He emphasized, “Failed.”

The Yongle Emperor was speechless, he then snapped out of it and hollered, “Take this pirate, and execute him! A man such as him shall not be permitted in China—or this WORLD!”

After all of that, there was nothing left to do, all of the treasure fleet had already received their rewards for battling Chen Zuyi and his pirate crew. ‘I might be crazy, but I desperately want to go on an adventure again, but that will never happen again...’Zheng He thought. However, little did he know, he would be called in for 6 other missions on sea...

# The Saviours

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Lee, Kelly – 9*

## **Beginning:**

A long time ago, a pirate crew called “The Saviours ” accidentally saved a person from Coral Reef. As a thank you present, he gave 2 maps of the Coral Reef to the pirates. The second map pointed out some spots for hiding gold and treasure. However, the facilities were not advanced enough for them to find the position of Coral Reef, hence they couldn't get the gold and treasure. They passed these maps down from generation to generation, but nobody ever found the riches. One day, a pirate crew member was reminded of the story and decided to start a journey to Coral Reef. Different from the other pirate crews, “The Saviours” was a team of pirates that donated their valuable treasures to poor people who were in need of help, and they could make friends along their journeys.

## **During the journey:**

They kept doing what they usually did, going island by island, giving help to poor people. Along the way, they saw other pirate crews who wanted to steal all the valuable treasures for themselves. “The Saviours” had no choice but to defend. Fortunately, they won the war and the journey continued.

Eventually, bad weather arrived. Fortunately, the pirates were very experienced with tackling extreme weather and the passengers were well-protected.

The next day, they arrived at the Coral Reef. When they landed, they saw tall trees and lots of sand. First, “The Saviours” went to the closest cove and started searching for treasure. They found another clue. The clue said that if they passed all the challenges then they would find the most valuable treasure there is. Next, “The Saviours” went to a big cove. It was very dark and they couldn't see a thing, suddenly, they saw something coming down from the ceiling, it was another clue. It said that they had to go straight ahead to the next cove and “The Saviours” would have to find the golden key to unlock the secret door to get the most valuable treasure from the biggest cove called “The Enchanted Cove”. So off they went to “The Enchanted Cove”. Inside, there were thousands of shimmering jewels and other valuables. When they went inside they started searching for the golden key to unlock the secret door to the most valuable treasure. It took them an entire day just trying to find the golden key, but “The Saviours” couldn't find it. One of the crew members found something that was the most shiny treasure he had ever seen in his life. When he reached it, he noticed that it was golden and it was a key. “The Saviours” had finally found the golden key. The next day, “The Saviours” found a cove called “The Enchanted Island”. It was enormous! When they went inside, they found many types of treasure, such as gold, silver, jewels and other valuable treasure. “The Saviours” were overjoyed. They were so relieved they didn't get trapped in anything or have to have another war with other pirate crews. “The Saviours” were very glad that they could help the poor people. The poor people were also very happy to be helped. Everyone happily boarded the ship and set sail back home. They started to find the other poor people and loaded the valuable treasure aboard at every island that they passed by and gave every poor person ten big bags of gold, silver, shiny jewels and more, to celebrate they all drank wine and danced.

## **Farewell:**

Passengers were getting on the ship through the extended deck one by one.

Their family members were crying with smiling faces. They all felt honored and joyful for them and showed that by waving hands and hats to say goodbye.

The passengers also felt excited about the potential unknown adventure.

## **The decoration of the small boats:**

The small boats were 10 meters long and 5 meters tall. They were a brownish red, with one underground floor. On the deck, there was a control centre which had the steering wheel and instrument panels in the stern of the boats. Some anchors were attached at the stem of the boats. What's more, there was a guardian angel with a mermaid look with curly long hair at the front of each small boat. Her hands were attached to the boats and her chest is facing upwards.

The lower ground had 2 bunk-beds, and several survival supplies such as food, sails, bows, arrows, and signal detonators. Each small boat had 4 guards to ensure the safety of the big ship by keeping track around the ocean. When it was time to look out for the big ship, there would be 2 guards for each turn, one in charge of controlling the wheel, and the other responsible for the long-distance viewing binoculars to observe if there were any dangers near them.

**The decoration of the ship:**

The deck was for detecting dangers, and the control centre was also at the stern of the ship. As with the small boats, the guardian angel was also attached at the stem of the ship. Anchors were hanging on the guardrail around the ship.

The middle floor was where the passengers and the guards rested at night. There were 20 bunk-beds and some entertaining facilities on this floor. The interior decorations were not luxurious but was decent enough to sleep in for the whole journey.

The lowest ground was a storage room. It was filled with many goods such as flour, salts, and also some kinds of protective weapons. There were also some extra clothes and blankets in case of war.

**Closing statement:**

The pirate crew was very glad they could help poor people and again set sailed to start a new adventure.

# A Quest For The Treasure

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Li, James – 11*

I, Javk, Captain of the Eagle Queen of the Eagle Fleet, was sent on an important mission commanded by Emperor Zhu Yuan Zhang. The mission was a second voyage of the kind. However, the mission this time was to send a picture of Emperor Yongle along with several ass-loads full of jewels and gold to his ally Guang Jiang.

We packed our supplies and stashed the gifts in a strong and secure place for the long journey ahead of us and then stepped onto the lead boat. Our fleet had seven ships in a perfect arrow formation, with the lead vessel positioned at the front. This formation was strategic. In case we were ambushed by pirates, burglars or other enemy fleets, our fleet had the top-of-the-line arrangement to counter-attack. We had a dozen long ranged weapons on each deck, so I was pretty confident about this voyage.

I stood on the main deck breathing into the cool and refreshing sea air as the salty breeze was swept over my face. I watched thousands of fish darting through the water in a synchronous manner. I gazed at the ocean, wondering how immeasurable and boundless the ocean was, when a giant shark started bumping against our ship. And now, it was bumping curiously at the lead ship, shaking it, and disrupting our formation. "Kill it!" "Kill it!" The guards said, their swords and harpoons pointing at it. However, they did not advance further and were looking expectantly at me. I realized that they were waiting for my command. We fired our cannons at it and it fled. We were still six days away from our destination, so we had to keep our eyes open and energy up. I decided to sleep till tomorrow morning and after thirty minutes of staring at the ceiling, I finally dozed off.

CRACK! BOOM! A sudden sound startled me. I woke up, grabbed my sword, and rushed out of my cabin. Torrential rain fell around me, dark clouds enveloped the sky, lightning struck the water. Suddenly, something slammed into our ship. And the next thing I knew, it was boarding our ship. As they boarded I could not distinguish them as enemies or allies. They wore black clothes and had a *kopesh* hanging from their belt. I fought desperately, but the blackies (my nickname for them) soon overran us. Finally we were all tied up, with the rain still pouring onto my face, the leader of the blackies put his kopesh to one of my soldiers throats and demanded, "Who is your leader?" I stood up, "Me." I replied curtly, not submissive nor aggressive. "I'm just going to take a stroll through your fleet and see what valuables I can take.", he laughed to himself, and then he walked away.

Suddenly, I heard arrows being fired, and the blackies' ship sank. It turned out to be my friend Jwak.

The next thing I knew, our whole legion was in Jwak's fleet and had our ships towed behind us. "Why aren't we on our own ship again?" I asked. "Your rudder was damaged." He explained I also learned he was admiral. "Great! We're at one of our closest camps." I followed Jwak off the ship with my legion following me, I saw a temporary camp, and our damaged rudder was already being worked on.

At dinner, Jwak and I found out it was missing. "It had to be stolen by the people that attacked us" I said, worried. I described the blackies to Jwak and his face paled. "They are the Zerons, they love treasure, fortunately, I know where their stronghold is...".

An hour later, Jwak, a few handful of soldiers and I were at the island of the Zerons. Jwak and I had worked on a plan on the way here. A few soldiers would sneak off and create a diversion, while Jwak, I and a handful of soldiers would go to the treasury. Jwak, I and the soldiers were waiting behind a sand dune when suddenly, something exploded. "That is the diversion!" I whispered. The soldiers grabbed their weapons. As we sneaked in, we only encountered a few guards, apparently, our diversion worked. Finally, we reached the treasury, not surprisingly, it was locked, we barged against it until we realized it would not work. Suddenly, a guard charged at us with a mace. Suddenly, I got an idea, I pushed him back into the corridor and provoked him, I backed up against the door as he charged at me. At the last second, I dodged, just in time for me to avoid being a whack-a-mole victim. The mace shattered the door, and the door crumbled on him. I ran into the room, spotted the gifts, grabbed them, and hauled him out of the stronghold just as the last of the diversion ended and the explosives detonated. Half hopping and half hauling, I carried the gifts and Jwak out of the stronghold just as flames engulfed the hold. I glanced back, hoping to see the soldiers climb out of the wreckage. Feeling guilty, I wanted to stay for a while to grieve but I knew the Zerons would overcome their shock soon and come for me. Luckily, Jwak woke up on the way back to the ship and we half dragged, half carried each other to the boat. We immediately got into a boat and sailed away.

We arrived at Guang Jiang's palace, we gave him the gifts, sent Zhu Yuan Zhang's greetings and entertained him. After a while, we were allowed to leave, we got off at Jwak's camp first and we parted. We boarded our lead ship (now fixed) and left the remaining five to Jwak as a gift. Zhu Yuan Zhang praised me for my actions and conviction and honored the ones that had died during the journey. As for this journey, The Second Voyage, had came to an end. Now, I am 700 years old.

# The Royal Dragon's Adventures

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Ng, Rachel – 9*

I, Ng Pak Yan, am the captain of the ship named the Royal Dragon and we are on an exploratory journey to undiscovered lands around the world. Loaded on the boat are, rifles, bows and arrows, cannons, and gun powder – these are to protect the ship's treasures from pirates who want to steal our goods. We have riches from the Chinese Emperor, things like silk, rice, jade, jewellery, gold earrings, necklaces, and china. The emperor wants us to seek out new countries, where we can meet different groups of people and share our wealth and knowledge. We hope to trade our goods and show off our power to the world.

But our journey up till now has been very difficult – two nights ago, a fight broke out when a pirate ship attacked us and tried to steal our gold. They were armed with long swords. They killed some of our comrades, my friends who I had chosen to join my quest had died. I felt extremely upset because they were the people who had helped me a lot since the start of the journey.

I will never forget the time we landed in Arabia. This journey was particularly difficult for us because we had to travel through desert land for weeks before we met the royal kings of Arabia. We had never experienced anything like it before. We almost used up all of our food and water making our way through the sand blazing desert. Many times, we wanted to give up and turn back. When we finally arrived at the palace of the Arabian kings, we saw a huge palace made out of white stone and decorated with golden statues. Gardens of lush trees were all over the palace grounds. Steps led up to the main entrance. As we entered the hallway exhausted and famished from the trek, we were greeted by their prince and welcomed into their palace to rest. We traded lots of our treasure for theirs. Our bags were filled with Arabian dresses and robes. We spent two months learning from their scholars and teachers, trading knowledge of math and science, while we taught them what we knew of sailing and the seas. We even spent some time learning the language. They treated us like guests and at one point, I didn't want to leave. But I knew we had to move on to the other places and seek more. The prince gave us wonderful things to take home. He gave us these sweet fruits that they had grown on bushes. They called them grapes and the meat of the fruit was delicious and like nothing else we had tasted before. The prince said goodbye and we went back past the desert and back to our ship. But when we got there, we saw a group of pirates trying to steal our treasures. They were holding a bomb and threw it to the bottom of the ship, taking our treasure with them. My friends ran and carried the bomb to the top of the ship. We threw the bomb onto the other pirate's ship, then hastily began our travel back to China to show the Emperor our gifts from the kings and princes of Arabia. We found out that we were lucky one of our friends had set a trap for them and they took our fake treasure. We cried for joy when we saw that the bomb was exactly next to the captain of the pirate's ship. But we knew our mission wasn't complete yet. We quickly sailed away as we watched the bomb explode in the distance.

Now we are on another mission. We are heading towards a new place called Africa. It feels very wild and we are looking for a famous treasure. We had a treasure map, but unfortunately, while we were sailing in the middle of the sea, there was a sudden thunderstorm and lightening. The sea was very unstable and there was nothing that we could do. One of our friends fell into the sea because he slipped and the ship almost flipped. We called everyone to our protective area, where we would be safe there for a while. No one could sleep, and our map unluckily got lost. Fortunately, I had memorised the location of the riches and intend to finally discover them. It has already been a while now, about four months, since my friends died. I know I am the captain of this ship and I have to lead my team. One group of followers will stay on the ship, just in case any other pirates come and attack us. Another two groups will follow me, and we will be digging for the treasure. We want to get this treasure because it is really important to us and we have to give some treasure to the people that helped us, as a gift. Lastly, the two groups left will wait for us to return, then help us carry the precious cargo. I decided that we were going to take the treasure today. Our plan did not fail, and we went back to the ship. I guess we were the first to land on Africa.

When we return, the emperor will be delighted with our achievements. They will give us a place in history as some of the first great explorers on planet Earth, reaching Africa and Arabia. I think we have had lots of good adventures even though it has been very tough and we have to worry about lots of things. I love the time my friends and I spent when we didn't have much to do; we would sit down on the third floor's floor, looking at the beautiful sights through the large window, talking about our happy memories and adventures. I will never ever forget any part of this adventure. I promise I won't.

# Wong's Ming Treasure Adventures

*St Stephens College Preparatory School, Poon, Wilson – 9*

I, Wong Kit, was the watchman of several of the Ming Treasure voyages commissioned by Admiral Zheng He in 1400's. Having the honour to scout for the voyages through long telescopes, I had first-hand information on what our leading ship would expect and encounter. People called me the "Eye" of the fleet. Even though some of my reported intelligence might neither be pleasant nor recorded in details by historians, I still would like to share with you some of these memorable stories, whether you considered them to be fairy tales or not.

Having dreamed of fighting against wrongdoers since childhood, I prayed for the opportunities to punish them in our voyages. In the returning trip of our first voyage, our fleet of more than 60 large treasure ships and 28,000 men encountered a large gang of 5,000 pirates led by Chen Zuyi at Palembang. Through the telescope, these pirates were strong, weaponized and ready to claim the treasures from our fleet. Meanwhile, Chen surrendered but secretly planned for a surprise ambush. Fortunately, a local informant tipped Admiral Zheng off and our fleet was prepared to shed blood on foreign soil with no mercy. With adequate preparation, our state-of-the art cannons drew first blood and struck lethally at the pirates and their fleet. Although the band of pirates and their fleet had already been covered in smoke, we fired our cannons as accurately and frequently as possible to prevent them from having time to counter-attack. As barbaric and determined as the pirates were, they fought hard in the fierce battle. Bombs, swords, arrows, body parts and blood were flying all over the various parts of our and their fleets. Putting it simply, each of the fleets attacked its enemy for survival and until the opposition lost its last breath.

Our Ming armada won the battle after killing all of the 5,000 pirates and destroyed their fleet. When I returned home to Nanjing, I was relieved but my heart was empty at the same time. Gradually, I suffered traumatic symptoms and kept questioning why our inhuman massacre of the pirates was necessary. Nevertheless, I wished that casualties could be controlled to a minimum in future voyages.

On our fourth voyage to the Persian Gulf, I spotted a herd of big sea creatures dividing its feast of fish in the deep blue sea. The circle of blood grew larger as these creatures enjoyed their meal ravenously. Without delay, I reported that they had sharp teeth and swam with their black fins on the surface of the sea. With little hesitation, the generals of the fleet suggested that the fleet should either capture or kill such creatures since we had more manpower and firepower than those of the prior voyages. When the scientists were debating what creatures they were, Admiral Zheng yelled "Sharks"! As the leader of the troops, Zheng explained that sharks could be extremely dangerous when they sensed threats or smelled blood. Instead of igniting a new battle, Zheng tactfully commanded the fleet of ships to change its course and keep enough distance from these vicious animals. When we were sailing away from these sharks, I could not forget how terrifying they looked when staring furiously at our fleet underneath the water.

From this adventure, I learned and appreciated that Admiral Zheng was a wise and decisive leader. More importantly, he would not use military forces lightly to solve problems when there were better solutions.

In the seventh and final voyage, there were more than 100 ships and over 27,000 men. We managed to visit all the important ports in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. At that time, I was no longer the young watchman with sharp eyes but served humbly as a butler of Admiral Zheng. During our leisure time, Zheng and I discussed the important diplomatic and commercial aspects of the past voyages. Zheng said "The voyages were all about demonstrating the Ming supremacy to other countries, broadening the horizons of the Chinese people and fostering trades among countries. They were not meant to be military exercises to conquer foreign land and expand the boundary of our country."

Shortly after becoming a close friend to Admiral Zheng, it was difficult for me to accept that he died in the return trip in 1433. I could barely hold back my tears during his burial even though the sea should be the most suited chamber for our god of exploration and navigation. "Farewell and rest in peace, our dear friend and great diplomat, Zheng He!"



# A Voyage of Discovery

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Tam, Anabelle Sophia – 9*

One afternoon in Grade 4 Chinese history class, Layla was perplexed about China ruling the seas a long time ago. So Layla decided to go investigate with her robot dog, cute little Doggyboggy and use his gadgets to go back in time and see for herself what happened back then.

After school, Layla went home and asked Doggyboggy to come too, they went to the time machine and Magical Anywhere Door to ask Zheng He the captain what had happened. They suddenly arrived on the ship with one hundred and ninety-nine other pirates, the ship was as big as a giant. The people on the ship planted a huge amount of food, there were also black and white cows, fat and pink pigs, strange and tiny chickens .....

When Zheng He first saw Doggyboggy, he thought Doggyboggy was a dog, he wanted to eat him. He shouted "lai la, lai la", in Putonghua. Layla ran to Zheng He. She threw a tiny bit of translating Chewing Language Gum to Zheng He's mouth so that she could understand what he was saying. He shouted "not you big fish lips".

Layla's face was turning as red as a tomato, she was very angry. And thought maybe they want to eat Doggyboggy, she suddenly remembered once her Chinese history teacher told her Chinese people eat dogs but Doggyboggy wasn't a real dog. Sure, he looked like real dog, with fluffy fur and cute dog eyes but he was made of machinery inside. She shouted angrily "he isn't a dog, if you don't eat him, we will tell you about the future." Doggyboggy nodded in agreement. "Well, if you will tell us about the future of course I will not eat your friend, now talk about the future," replied Zheng He.

Layla cleared her throat and started to talk about the future, people will study you and you will be in history books. People will write stories about you guys. It is very cool to be famous, and almost all of the temples would change into buildings, ..." she still hadn't finish her sentence, when Zheng He interrupted her and asked "what are buildings?".

Layla took the Picture of Describing from Doggyboggy's 5D pocket and pressed the huge ENTER WORD button, she texted "buildings" into the code, suddenly, Burj Khalifa the world's tallest building appeared on the screen and a robot voice started talking, "THIS IS A BUILDING, PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK IN THEM."

"That wasn't very useful, now I'm going to continue," said Layla. "Stop we are passing by India, let's give out some gold to the king and poor families." When they arrived to India, the rich people who live there said "what are you doing here, odd person?"

"I, Zheng He am here to give out precious gold and soft silk, we are here to make friends!" "War! You're lying mean enemies!" said one of the Indians.

Doggyboggy and Layla ran to the ship as if a lion was chasing them. Then took their weapons to fight them, but the rich Indians were too strong, even one hundred soldiers couldn't defend one of them. Doggyboggy had only one idea, use the War Bomb.

Doggyboggy put the War Bomb on the floor and shouted out loud so even a person over a hundred miles could hear him shouting. Run away from the War Bomb, it's very dangerous, said Doggyboggy. Three, two, one, KAPOW.

After the big kapow, Doggyboggy led us to where the king lives, using the Magical Anywhere Door and the Historian Map to search the place. When the king was there, Zheng He told him that we were there to give out gold and not get into mischief. After giving the lovely silk to the king, the nice king said, "In return, I'm going to teach you how to make curry." After the king taught them how to make curry, Zheng He thought up a great idea. He wrote a letter to Zhu Di about curry.

They went back to the ship, and they saw pirates. Without a second thought, Zheng He shouted “Charge!” The soldiers charged and the pirates who were very bad at protection, lost and got kicked off their ship. The Chinese won and continued travelling to Africa.

On the ship they fished for fishes, they even made curry that the king of India had taught. Indeed it was cool for Layla to go back in time. Being on a ship doing nothing was very boring, but she was very excited to go to Africa where she had never been there and also listening to Zheng He’s funny stories about travelling in the seas.

In Africa they saw elephants, different animals and the wildlife they had never seen before, “Cool animals, they are so cute and special,” said Layla. The African king was the best king of the history in Africa. The king invited Zheng He, Layla, Doggyboggy and the sailors to join the king in celebrating other countries.

After a while, the king asked nervously “would you like to have a look at the “okapi” (forest giraffe), if you like them I can give one as a gift or whatever you want here.” Zheng He wanted to bring a new animal to China, so they all went with the king of Africa to look at the “okapi”.

The “okapi” was very tall and behaved nicely, with brown spots all over its body and it was bright yellow. “It’s cute and beautiful, also it eats leaves!” Layla exclaimed. Zheng He liked the “okapi” and decided to take the okapi back to China. Suddenly Doggyboggy told Zheng He and Layla that Layla needs to go home to have her dinner, they said bye and went home using the time machine.

When they were home, Layla told her mum about going back in time and the amazing adventures they had. “Isn’t it fun to go back in time and learn about China ruling the seas!”

# On the Sea

*St Stephen's College Prep School, Tam, Manson – 11*

“Silly, come here right now.” I rushed to the voice with the mop.

Captain Zheng, the most experienced captain in Ming emperor who was yelled to me. “Did you see beer on the ground? Clean it off right now!”

I am Li Sze, 14 years old, handsome and smart but everyone calls me Sze Li, Silly. I am sure that even might be calling me silly, I am the most hard working crew on the board. I am one of the three hundred crews on the Ming’s ship and I am also the youngest one. Therefore I have to do all the cleaning work including kitchen, cabin, bedroom and definitely toilet.

I stayed on the Ming’s ship around two years. I missed my mom, my family. However I want to live my dream as a helmsman for Captain Zheng who was the greatest captain of the world. We were heading to India for trading the treasure to their King.

Let me show you how important I was. We all know that crews are always drunk. Everytime they drink, everything went messy. Everyday it was repeated. I was not sure when my dream would come true..

Chan Chan my best friend was the cook and we shared a room. His snore was like earthquake. So I build up a habit that I would go to the deck to sleep secretly. I went to the deck as usual but there was something different that night. The water was extremely quiet. Suddenly a lot of fish jumped towards our ship. I looked up the sky and saw a huge water tornado like a dragon flew the sky. Behind the tornado there was the largest thunderstorm that I ever seen. I would remember this scene forever. Death god was coming.

“ Wake up Chan, wake up, Call Captain Zheng Hurry, Help! Help!”

All the crews woke up and light up the fire immediately. When they saw the weather, everyone was overwhelmed. All the ship started to shake like a toy on the water. Captain Zheng instructed helmsman to change the voyage to escape. However the luck was not on our side. Helmsman fell down and broke his arm badly. The rudder lost control and the ship hit the huge wave. I ran to grab the rudder without hesitation and kept turning to ride on the wave. Captain Zheng taught me how to control the ship and made it stable. He organized the other crews to control the sail, some holding the rope, some holding the paddles. Finally we got away from the Tornado under the great teamwork.

“ We are alive!” All of us burst out loud.

We celebrated whole night. Captain Zheng came towards me and tapped on my shoulder.

“ Come with me.” Captain said.

I followed him to the captain’s room.

“ What brought you on board?” He spoke to me drinking his wine.

“ I love ocean. I love the sea. It makes me feel comfortable” I replied nervously.

“ Even after what just we have been through? He asked curiously.

“ I think so because it shows the power of nature” I said.

“ Who do you learn from the control of the rudder?” Captain Zheng asked.

“ My father. He was a fisherman. He taught me how to see the wave, feel the wind. He always emphasized we should respect the mother nature. He died two years ago. That’s why I started my journey by following you, Captain.” I said

“ I need a new helmsman. Can I count on you?” He asked

“ Sure, sure, sure! It is my dream. Although I am not smart, I am hardworking.” I replied excitedly

“ Good, start it tomorrow. I will assign Helmsman Tim to teach you. Are you ready?”

“ Yes, thanks captain” I said gratefully.

Tim taught me patiently. Every time i made the mistake, Tim used his finger to knock my head and said, ‘ Hey dude, don’t be silly’. I practiced very hard every day and night. More I learnt about being a helmsman, more I missed my father. He was like always with me.

After a year, I became a qualified helmsman of ship. We were in Indian Ocean now and were suppose to arrive at the destination after one month.

“Captain, there are twenty boats surrounding us from different directions.” A sailor reported urgently.

“ Dawn, they are pirates.” Captain said angrily.

Captain Zheng ordered the military of the fleet to prepare the weapons to protect our treasure on the main ship. The pirate wore the elephant mask and held knives and guns. Pirates boats were coming closer and closer. They flew the rope with hook and tried to get on our board. Our soliders pulled of the knives and cut the rope. Some pirates fell into the water. Our cannon took two shots at the pirate boats and they sank right away. However the leader of the pirate still climbed on our ship. He was six feet tall strong man. He put along with two long knives and went towards Captain Zheng fiercely. Although the solider tried the best to protect captain Zheng, the leader of pirate was too strong. Solider were all defeated. At that moment, Chan Chan came out with two pans of hot oil. He spilled the oil to the pirates and hurt him seriously. The pirate leader ordered the others to retreat instantly.

“Victory!” We all acclaimed.

In the end, we met the emperor of India. They welcomed us with a great party, Indian food, drink,dance and music. At the same time, our crew unloaded our treasure and goods including gold, ceramics and fabrics. In return the emperor of India gave us lot of herbs,ivory, silk and luxury accessories. We stayed India for ten days and restarted the next Journey again.

# New Tales For The Ming Treasure Voyages

*St Stephen's College Prep School, Tong, Loius – 11*

During the Ming Dynasty (1400–1600), The Ming ships sent to trade gifts with other countries like India, Australia, Philippines..... were always in chaos. Sea monsters, pirates and dangerous rocks were everywhere! It looked impossible to trade.

One day, a man named Zheng approached the Emperor, Zhu YuanZhang. He asked, “Your Majesty, I am Zheng He, an experienced sailor. I have been through many adventures, through monsters and even the Bermuda triangle. Can I have a fleet of ten galleons and a crew of five hundred to help me in my voyage to trade gifts with other countries? You have wanted to do so, but all your fleets were sank.” “Sure, wish you luck, experienced sailor! I will give you a mountain of treasure to trade, do not fail me!” replied the Emperor.

So Zheng went to his ten galleons whose names were Pearl, Revolver, Justice, Striker, Empress, Beijing, Tin, Dutchman, Jesus and King. Zheng took Pearl as his flagship and the crew which were later sent by the Emperor and some who volunteered to go readied the ships with supplies and treasure. They set sail immediately.

As Zheng’s fleet entered the South China Sea, they spotted a fleet of 5 pirate ships sailing by. The pirates started firing cannons at Zheng’s fleet, the first volley of cannonballs missed, Zheng immediately told his crew, “Come on, my brave lads, we give no quarter!”

As they readied the cannons, a cannonball fired from the pirates whizzed through the air and crashed onto the Dutchman, wounding two men and blew a huge hole in the ship, treasure started to spill out! Zheng immediately gave the order, “FIRE the broadside\*!” (\*cannons)

Cannons were all booming instantly and cannonballs rained down on the enemy, ripping huge gashes in the hulls of the pirate ships. Then, there came a huge explosion! The cannonballs must have hit the powder magazines\*\* (\*\*TNT store) of the pirate ships. This was the first victory!

As they then reached India, where the great mogul (who was basically King of India) traded Chinese silk for gems and diamonds. The King heard Zheng’s story and agreed for friendship, he also gave Zheng two more ships, filled with a thousand Indian people who wanted to visit China.

As they waved goodbye to India, yet, another danger came. This danger was a monster and was the last of its kind. It had tentacles which were big enough to crush a ship and suckers large enough to rip flesh of a man’s face. It was the Kraken, a giant squid! The monster first attacked the Striker, one of the Zheng’s galleons, and used its tentacles to crack the ship. The huge galleon began to sink at once with treasure and men pouring out! It then started attacking Tin, another one of Zheng’s galleons. Tin fired its cannons at the tentacles, but then, the Kraken grew angry and tentacles started smashing the cannons and decks started to splinter. Enraged Zheng then immediately gave the order, “Fire cannons into the water!” There was then a large boom and a bunch of tentacles sunk back into the water. A second victory! Zheng told the crew, “we now sail south to Australia.”

Couple weeks later, after setting a blaze pirate ships throughout the Indian ocean, they arrived at Australia, where the exchanged gold and silver for salt crystals and wooden figures. The Australians also heard Zheng’s story and agreed to be friends. They gave Zheng more materials including real kangaroos, an Australian animal to bring back to China for memory. Zheng then set sail again.

This time, they were attacked by a huge serpent, with length as long as five ships combined. It first snapped Tin into two and crushed Justice and Revolver with its tail. Zheng was so fed up that he ordered to fire at the creature with everything they got. Cannon and musket fire then came blazing from Zheng’s ships and knives and spears splashed into the water. The sea serpent was peppered with cannon fire and stabbed with knives and spears. It then was defeated by the blows and sank back to Davy Jones’ Locker, a place for the dead. The crew then celebrated and cheered as this horrible beast was defeated.

Zheng's fleet then reached Indonesia and Philippines, which exchanged magma rocks and exotic medicines for silk and paper. The Indonesians also took a shrink ray gun and zapped a temple for Zheng to bring back to China so that their Gods can also bless China.

As they thought there was no more danger and sailed back to Beijing, they were caught up in the Titan, Atlas' daughter, Calypso's maelstrom, the biggest whirlpool in the world! The whirlpool also sucked five pirate ships in, which Zheng gave the order, "Fire!" again. A titanic battle was started! The ships pounded each other with cannonballs as muskets were fired, cutlasses slashing and cannons firing, it looked like the battle would never end, until the "Pearl" fired a cannonball which hit a pirate ship's powder magazine and exploded. Turns out that it was the flagship and the pirate leaders were blown out of the water. As the pirates were leaderless, Zheng took all of the pirates as prisoners and took them back to China.

Upon return, Zheng immediately presented all the traded items and shared the adventure stories with the Emperor. The Emperor was very impressed and pleased by Zheng, so he made Zheng an admiral. The kangaroos, Indians and shrunk temple were all given a new home in China.

After many years, the Ming Dynasty was overthrown by peasants and Zheng was executed for trying to defend the empire with his missiles. His last word was, "Freedom!"

This is the story of Zheng He. Zheng is now known to us as "Odysseus of the East", since he is so feared among the South China Sea. Zheng has many more other stories, but that will be a tale for another day.

# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyages

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Wong, Audrey – 11*

After the last adventure, the Ming Treasure Fleet was ready for an eighth adventure around Asia, this time led by Yong-yi Lui, a scholar who was at a tender age of 18, and who was also proficient in the famous five martial arts: Baguazhang, Kung Fu, Shuai Jiao, Tai Chi and Wushu.

The fleets set off from the dock early in the morning on the 15th March 1440. Yong-yi stood on the deck, admiring the vast sea in front of him. A sailor ran up to him and said, "Sir, it is nearly noon now. Would you like to eat your meal up here or at your private cabin?"

Yong-yi replied, "Just bring it up here, and tell the cook my thanks to him for cooking my meal." The sailor was so surprised that his mouth was wide open for a moment. He had never expected such words would come out of a young boy's mouth! The sailor quickly nodded his head and ran back to the kitchen to report everything he had heard to his fellow shipmates. Everyone was astounded by the event, but more surprises were to be revealed to these sailors.

By the tenth day, the crew had already landed in several countries and had paid respects and made alliances with the reigning monarchs. The monarchs were amazed by the Ming dynasty's enormous wealth and fortune! Yong-yi was very satisfied with the progress with the alliances and let the crew rest at a country—Arleguern—for two days before the fleets continued their journey around Asia, but what Yong-yi didn't know was that an evil force was slowly creeping its way into his life and would soon endanger the lives of the entire fleet.

After resting at Arleguern, the Ming Treasure Fleet raised the sails once again and recommenced their journey. Yong-yi was in his cabin reading a book when a sailor frantically knocked on the cabin door while gasping for breath, "Sir, sir! A ship has been seen sailing towards us! The watchman guesses that it is a pirate ship coming for our gold! Sir, what should we do, what should we do?"

"Prepare the cannons and the guns! I will be there in a minute. Spread the word that a pirate ship is coming and everyone should be ready with their weapons, whether it is swords, spears, bow and arrows..." Yong-yi calmly replied.

"Yes!" And with that, the sailor nodded and swiftly rushed out of the room to spread the word. Yong-yi's eyes instantly turned frosty and flashed a murderous glint, as though he had some grudge against pirates. He fixed his clothes and strolled out of his cabin. Yong-yi arrived at the deck only to see a ship with a skull painted on its mast and flag sailing speedily towards their fleets. His eyes somehow turned even icier. The pirate ship stopped parallel to Yong-yi's fleet and a pirate with a black beard and a patch over his left eye stepped out.

"Ah, brother, we meet again after so many years. It's been so long since I've seen you last, 4 years, am I correct? Anyway, I need to introduce myself once again for those of you who don't know me. I am Lui Lei-yong, the famed pirate and your commander's blood-brother." Lui Lei-yong took the initiative to speak up.

"I have never considered you as my brother since you killed our whole family, even your own parents, and left the household burning to the ground when I came home from class." An arctic voice came echoing back to Lei-yong's ears.

"Oh! You still bear a grudge against that? Well, let me let you in to a little secret: They were never our real parents, little brother. They picked us up from the streets and raised us up, making us believe they were our biological parents." Lui Lei-yong bitterly laughed.

"Well, then there's all the more reason to be grateful to them, isn't there?" Yong-yi's voice was seeping with bitterness and anger.

"Stop being so emotional, little brother! Anyhow, I am still here to steal all of your treasures and food or you can all die while defending, your choice." Lui Lei-yong roared hysterically.

"Sailors and fellow shipmates, we must not easily surrender all of our dynasty's precious treasures to filthy pirates, should we?" Every shipmate shook their head. "Well then, fellow shipmates, if we die today defending our dynasty's reputation and treasures, it'll still be worth it! Charge!"

This was the start of a bloody battle. The pirates jumped onto the Ming Treasure Fleet and every shipmate fought bravely and struck down countless followers of Lui Lei-yong. Lui Yong-yi used all his knowledge in the well-known five martial arts to defend against the hoard of pirates that seemed to be endless, but the tides were changing. Soon, the hoard of pirates was reduced from crowds, to hundreds,

to dozens, and at last, only few pirates remained fighting while the rest were either dead or heavily wounded and bleeding. Lui Lei-yong saw that even he would be struck down if he didn't retreat at once, so he ordered, "Fellow pirates, today we have been reduced to a small crowd, but someday we will rise again! Lui Yong-yi, today you have won, but you will never win forever! I will one day beat you! Retreat, fellow pirates!"

The few pirates left their dead and heavily wounded friends to the Ming fleet to handle and dejectedly hopped back onto their ship and sailed back to their base. The shipmates shouted and rejoiced in their victory. "Shipmates, today we have won, but my brother may rise again. But for now, let us head back to our homeland and rejoice!" Lui Yong-yi said.

The Ming Treasure Fleet sailed back to China and brought many adventures they had encountered to report to the king. The king was overjoyed to hear their stories and heavily rewarded each and every one of the shipmates who sailed with Lui Yong-yi.



# The Rulers of the Seas

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Wu, Timothy – 12*

In the early 1400s, these pirates were legends. A fleet of ships sail from China, the seven voyages by the Ming Treasure fleet, they carried cargoes of gold, silk and other precious items for the staff on the ship to give away. The people they meet were always unexpected, they have met peaceful people and have also fought with hostile armies, or deal with nasty pirates or more, they gave away some and kept some when they needed to use the military forces and weapons to fight the horrific ones. They have gained themselves a name in history and China truly "ruled the seas".

I was apart of that legendary ship once, I will never forget that time when we battled the army of France. I still remember it like it was yesterday, it was midnight, and the rain was pouring down as hard rock falling from the sky aiming for the ship the hardest it can. I was petrified as it was only my second adventure with the ship and I am still getting used to it. We quickly sailed at the closest land possible and an army of French soldiers met us there. I was young and I had loads of energy so the ship captain set me as the frontline and we charged against them easily defeating them and soon we were expecting to see more. I was filled with excitement after seeing what we were capable of. It was so dry cause it was September at the time, the leaves on the yellow trees were falling on us as we were trying to find a shelter to hide in. We hear the France army chattering and the leaves on the ground shivering super loudly. We were only one voyage of the Ming Treasure Fleet so we could call for backup but it was impossible because we were only in a small little shack and we could not locate to map to find where they are now. I wasn't capable of controlling my temper so did some of my shipmates. I was only scared cause I was one of the youngest ones of the voyage. The France army finally looked inside the shack and we started attacking, it was a massacre, blood was splattering everywhere and all I did was sitting there and firing, not worrying about anything, just firing. At that point I have realized what I have gotten myself into, my heart was beating as fast as it can go, but as this point we have finally defeated the French army. It was over, we left and never got back.

But there were times where we could've done things way easier, we were sailing to the dock of Japan, the weather was gloomy and so we quickly docked and the boarder control there was so much nicer, they welcomed us with warm hands as a translator steps up. "We are here to give you guys some gifts, we do no harm it is from the emperor of these voyages, we are only pirates, the most humble of the pirates," our leader quickly said. They told us to enter and we started to scatter the floor with gold and emerald and a lot others. Their king came out and thanked us personally by gifting us the finest Japanese silk jacket. We set back off in the sea after eating supper and that day was unforgettable as we could see the different cultures of the world.

I soon retired after 15 years with the ship, but this was the most remarkable experience for me and I will never forget it.

# Santa East

*St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Yaury, Megan – 9*

Once upon a time, there was a man called Santa East in a beautiful country called East Pole. He wanted to make friends in different countries. Therefore, he decided to form a huge crew and start a treasure voyage around the world. Santa East tried very hard to gather a lot of valuable gifts such as jades, jewels, silk, medicine, tea leaves, porcelain and technologies so that he could give them to the emperors of different nations as a friendly gesture. He also wanted to bring home some new products and technologies to help make East Pole a better country.

From his past experience, Santa East knew that there were many pirates on the sea wanting to rob him of the treasures on his ship. To prevent this from happening, he travelled to the hidden woods to invite Kung Fu Panda to come and join his crew. He wanted him to teach the crew various Kung Fu skills. Originally, the crew did not know anything about fighting or Kung Fu. Therefore, Kung Fu Panda had to start teaching them the basics. Since the crew was smart, they were able to master the necessary skills within two days. They kept practicing very hard until they had learnt all the techniques. After a month, they were finally ready to start the journey.

The voyage turned out to be a huge success. Santa East had made friends in different countries in South East Asia, India and Africa. Once, the crew travelled to Kenya in Africa. They were amazed by how different the life of the Africans was compared to theirs. They got to meet with the Kenyan King later on. The King welcomed them and treated them very nicely. Both sides got to exchange their cultural products and experiences. Santa East gave the people in Kenya a lot of precious products from East Pole, such as tealeaves and medicines. The King was very glad and decided to give Santa East a giraffe in return to show his gratitude. The crew had never seen any creatures like that and was amazed. They could not wait to show the giraffe to the people in East Pole.

After travelling to Africa, Santa East went to meet the Royal Family in India. At first, the Indians were not friendly to them and were even ready to fight them as they thought they were there to take over their country. But after some explanation, the Indians realized that was not true. Instead, Santa East and their crew were just there to make friends. After that, they were happy to offer them treasure and gifts such as Indian tealeaves, spices and curry. They even put a traditional red dot on their foreheads and drew henna art on their arms. Santa East and the Indians became very good friends in the end and everyone was happy.

More and more people came to know of them, including the pirates. There was a group of pirates called the Undefeated. They were very greedy and were jealous of the jewels on Santa East's ship. They were determined to rob their ship. Kung Fu Panda was very brave and fought the pirates. The fight was very scary. Unfortunately, the pirates' guns and weapons were too powerful and the panda got hurt. However, since the crew had already learnt a lot of Kung Fu techniques from Kung Fu Panda, they were able to stand up against the pirates and defeat them. They defeated the Undefeatable! Starting from that win, Santa East got an even better nickname: "Kung Fu Santa".

The pirates were not the only difficulty they had to overcome. Sailing on sea was never easy. Not long after they had dealt with the pirates, the sea became very unsettling and unstable. The waves were big and angry, which made the ship move vigorously. Later on, there was even a furious storm and the strong wind had caused the ship to steer from its original track. Soon, Santa East discovered that they were lost. The crew was in a panic. Thanks to his years of knowledge of the sea, he immediately took out a compass to figure out which direction they should go. He successfully led the crew back on the right course. Finally, they were heading home after the long journey!

On this voyage, Santa East and his crew had made friends from all over the world, such as Kenya, India and Indonesia. They were very excited to share their experiences with the people back home. This voyage had been a successful one! They had left a very good impression on the other countries and they made East Pole famous among different continents. The Emperor of East Pole was very happy and impressed. He warmly welcomed Santa East back and eventually made him the Prime Minister of the country as a reward.

# The Sea and the Sky

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Yuan, Grace – 10*

It was an extraordinary day in the 1400s. On a bright and warm winter morning, the sun was shimmering in the blue sky, the sea was peaceful and glistened like a huge blue crystal, and several seagulls were gliding around, enjoying the nice breeze. In the Bay of China South East Sea, forty-five humongous ships were anchored, which carried cargoes of gold, silks, Chinese tea. Their brand new white sails were raised ready to set out. The Emperor of China of the Ming dynasty had decided to send those treasures to India, Africa and Arabia to build up good relationships.

In my ship, Captain Butch, a motley crew of sailors, soldiers, fortune seekers and I were excited to set sail on this voyage. Captain Butch was a strong old man with white hair and black eyes. He was a brave and experienced sailor! My name was Grace, a 10 year old girl from a poor family. Captain Butch chose me as his servant for this voyage. He treated me so well, just like my father. I was so proud to be working in this great fleet. Right before sailing, I prayed to the Lord of the Sky for a safe and lucky adventure.

A few days had passed, nothing really happened and we enjoyed the warm sunshine and the relaxing sounds of the ocean in the ship. However, one night, a huge storm came!

That night, the sky turned dark and the moon and stars all disappeared. Big waves hit our ship and the ship deck was full of water. Suddenly a huge underwater monster appeared in front of us! It was about fifty feet tall and about twenty feet wide. It had an eagle's head and a lion's body. Beside the underwater monster was a ship with fearsome looking pirates, who had raised the monster and commanded it to kill all people in our ship and help them steal our treasures!

The underwater monster jumped onto our ship. Captain Butch ordered our military forces to fight against it. However, with its magic powers, the monster was too strong, and the soldiers began dying one by one. Captain Butch waved his long sword and fought back against the monster. His sword chopped off the monster's arm. However, he was struck by the monster close to his heart. I ran to the Captain and saw the blood running out of his mouth. Captain Butch looked at me, and with a weak voice, he said, "kid, be brave, fight and protect our people until you die!" He put his sword into my hand.

"Captain! Captain!" I cried.

"Now you are." Captain Butch smiled at me and closed his eyes for the last time.

I looked at the huge ship deck, on which near half of our military forces were lying down covered in blood. I raised the sword in the air and shouted to the sky, " Lord of the Sky, where are you? Can you protect us?" A strip of light split the dark sky and I heard a voice saying, "Pray with your heart and your blood, kid!"

I scratched my hand with the sword, and put my hands together over my heart and prayed, "Lord of the Sky, please protect our people and help us kill the monster."

After my prayer, I saw a big golden dragon jumped out from the clouds and fly towards me. I jumped onto his neck and rode the dragon towards the underwater monster. The monster looked scared and started to back away. The dragon breathed fire on the monster, struck its head and broke its neck with his sharp talons. The monster sank into the deep water. Our surviving military forces saw what was happening and were filled with hope. They managed to force the pirates back and killed many of them as they tried to return to their ship.

The next morning, the sun rose and the storm stopped. The ocean became peaceful again and a rainbow came out in the sky. Another bright and beautiful day had arrived! The dragon dropped me onto the ship and flew away into the clouds. The remaining military forces cheered loudly, and raised me into the air three times. I became the hero and the new captain. We had lost close friends and our ships were damaged, but we still felt a joy at being alive, so when we had repaired our ships, we set sail again to continue our journey!

# The Voyage of the Ming Treasure Fleet

*St Stephen's College Prep School, Yuan, Stephanie – 11*

In the early 1400s, a fleet of ships from China set sail to Agra, India to sell valuable silk and gold to the people.

The admiral, Zheng He, fifty-one sailors, the military forces and cooks went on the ship and set sail to India. During the journey, they had parties and celebrations from every 100 kilometers they had sailed safely. When they were having a gigantic party at night, Zheng He was looking at the extraordinary view at the edge of the ships. There was the glowing moon, lots of tall trees that grew in a plain area. Little bushes with berries and small rocks. Something was strange, there was a gigantic rock that sticks out in the middle of the small rocks. Then the rock was moving! It was moving towards the ships! Zheng He was worried and told the military forces to check it out. The sailors stopped the ships and some people of the military forces went to check it out in small wooden boats. They rowed the boats and surrounded the giant rock. The rock expanded and rose above the big blue's surface. It was spiky and big! It wasn't a rock, it was a sea monster! It had ten enormous tentacles, three scary eyes, eight nostrils and two large mouths. It uses its tentacles to slam the wooden boats into pieces and used its mouths to eat the people.

"Quick! Sail the ship away from it!" shouted Zheng He to the sailors as loud as he can.

Unfortunately, that sea monster swam like a flash of lightning and grabbed Zheng He tightly! It threw him miles and miles away. A light bulb suddenly appeared brightly in a cook's mind. He quickly grabbed a slice of strawberry and blueberry cake and threw it far away into the ocean. The sea monster followed the cake and swam under the ocean. A sailor sailed the ship away and continued the journey.

They sailed along until they arrived at Agra. They sold all the silk and gold and earned a fortune.

When they finished, they went on the ship and set sail back to China. Maybe, they will meet the sea monster again!

# Pirate Jack

*Taoist Ching Chung Primary School (Wu King Estate), Chan, Isaac – 9*

My new neighbour Jack is a strange man with a strange smell. My dad is a friend of his, I visit Jack's home when Dad goes to work. He tells me stories about people while I'm there. However, I wasn't interested in him until he revealed to me about his old days.

I first thought he spent his life as a farmer since he was tall, my mind was soon to change. He had eight people in his family and was the smallest, giving him a feeling that he would be unlucky in life. Since his parents treated gambling as a hobby, they could hardly educate their children. They were bankrupt by the time Jack was in primary four

The worst time of his childhood was still to come during secondary school. His parents decided to take Jack out of school and make him beg on the streets for money. He got enough to support his brothers and sisters. After five years, everybody was working. How about poor Jack? It was time for him to find work too, but most companies did not hire him. When he was fifteen a farming company wanted him, but a mighty crew of pirates kidnapped him on the streets when it was dark. They brought him to a boat and made him part of their crew.

He met his captain and was frightened when he saw him. He was a cruel man, he had fed a lot of humans to the sharks. He was greedy, there was no hope of getting a dollar after finding a big treasure chest, maybe just ten cents. Also, he was very strict, if you didn't do as you were told, expect your life to end in a shark's tummy. Therefore, it was the Lord's first command to follow him. Since he was so horrid, Jack decided to give him a nickname – "World's Most Horrid Champion".

The "Horrid Champion" asked Jack to be the Treasure Hunter. Not only did it just mean running on the Islands to search for treasure, this duty needed the hunter to attack other boats for their treasure also! The captain would ask Jack to bomb the boats, if he refused the captain would send him straight to the shark's tummy. If he did do what was asked, he may go to jail for bombing ships. Keeping the stolen goods was not an easy job too. If a battle was lost, they'd ask you to give them money. If you refused, they'd kill you immediately.

He was very tired those days. Although he only went to a few islands and there weren't any boats, he was still tired since there was a big food shortage too. The food was given to all others before they gave it to Jack. Therefore, Jack ate only a little, and found some food in the ocean to survive.

Arriving at a new island was always tiring, the size of the island was always different too. Jack would look for ages and if lucky would find a small treasure box. Repeat this process a thousand times. Jack became smellier day by day, and never had a bath. The captain always said, "We don't have enough water for your bath!" Jack's job needed luck, thanks to the lord Jack got some of that. The captain gave him some money. Jack was glad that he could finally get some save something for himself. He thanked the captain for it.

Those days Jack was happy. However, it ended when Jack was twenty-five and the captain wanted to upgrade him to cannon fire duty.

This was very scary, and a battle happened by surprise during a storm. After ten minutes Jack was running out of ammunition. However, the other pirates seemed to have plenty left. Jack's boat had a hole in it and water was gushing in. He was trapped, they shouted "Give us something worth or time and we'll let you pass!". Jack had no choice, so he had to give them a chest of treasure. The enemy was still not satisfied "More, more, more, this is not enough!". Jack accepted and gave into their demands.

Jack's captain was furious "You need to keep the treasure, otherwise we will be bankrupt, why didn't you listen to me? You disobeyed my rules so it is to the sharks you will go!" Jack didn't want to die so he asked his friends onboard to help him persuade the captain not to kill him.

In the following days Jack's friends would always be near the captain saying things like "Jack is good, don't kill him". The captain thought again and decided to downgrade Jack to a dishwasher instead of killing him. Jack celebrated and thanked his friends.

He celebrated too early. Jack's job was worse than death. He had to eat leftovers as punishment, he was hungry every day. Also, he couldn't have a bath, the tank was always full. Once, his shipmates caught a big, yummy fish, everybody except Jack could share it. They said to him, "Sorry, none for you! The fish is too small. Better luck next time, you filthy, smelly, dishwashing, cleaning machine!" Jack knew the reason wasn't that. He saw half of the fish was uneaten, sitting right on the table! The real reason was that they were biased against him. He was angry but didn't dare show it. The nightmare lasted for fifteen years and ended because the man who replaced Jack's old job had retired, by now Jack was forty. Jack was glad because he could go back to his old, respected job.

Five years later, his ship suddenly sank, and Jack was the sole survivor, he decided to return home. The company that wanted to hire him when he was younger did so after they knew Jack was back. He got more money and could finally buy a house for himself. Therefore, he decided to retire and enjoy the rest of his life alone.

# The Kidnapped Pirates

*Taoist Ching Chung Primary School (Wu King Estate), Xiao, Remy – 10*

I have had neighbour for ten years now. He used to be a dishwasher in a ship's crew. His name is Fred. Fred had told me stories about the seas, which I found rather interesting.

One day, I was waiting for the train and someone shouted my name, but nobody seemed to realise this. Then, a strong arm viciously pulled me all the way down the street, straight towards a horse carriage.

A figure emerged from behind a statue of a lion. It was the fit body of Fred, who tried to pull me from the man's grip. But it made things worse. The man had clubbed Fred with both hands, I fainted. When I became regained consciousness, I smelt the ocean's salty air. I was laying on a plank in a dark room. There was a food tray on the floor beside Fred who was still unconscious, lying beside a locked door. There's only a small piece of fish and a tiny amount of water in the tray. After what seemed like days, Fred awoke.

He seemed to be crazy when he saw the tray, he drank and at until nothing was left. On what seemed like the second day, the lock on the door was almost remove from its hinges when it lunged open. It revealed and extremely fat man with a scar o his face. Fred shouted "Where are we? What's going on? Answer, you great lump of flesh!" I roared.

The man said in an incredibly low voice "I'm Captain Dodds of 'The Golden Coin' If you were to ask where we are, I would say we are someone in the middle of the Pacific Ocean!". "Dinn, or Donns, whatever, don't try to fool us, we're..." I was quickly interrupted with a frightening "It's Captain Dodds!". "Okay Dodds, so why did you kidnap us, walk pranks?" I grunted

Dodds replied "I am going to..." clearing his throat "Make you two the ship-fixers of The Golden Coin!" It was the loudest silence I had ever heard in my life, thunder was

shaking the ship violently. Fred broke the silence “So what, ship fixers?” We however, had to keep the promise.

For eight years; we ate raisins for every breakfast, dried meat for lunch and dinner. We slept in hammocks and fixed the damage as fast as we could. But Dodds never ever helped. His office was like an extra-big landfill, stinky and untidy. The thing however, that I feared most was the battles against other pirates. Once, there was a gigantic hole made by a cannon blast on the deck and it took me and Fred six months to repair it.

On my last battle, I was seriously injured in the leg, so I needed to be sent home with Fred, who is also seriously injured in the arm. Those ten years were more exciting than I expected. Now, Fred and I are waiting for our wounds to heal so we may join The Golden Coin again...



# The Chinese Boomerang: The Untold Story of Zheng He's 8th Voyage

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Kuaila, Annabella – 8*

“All right!” I yelled. I was playing my new video game, ‘The Seven Voyages of Zheng He’, fighting pirates with Zheng He’s fleet. Just as I reached level 5, WHOOSH! I got sucked into the game!

I found myself on an ancient wooden ship, and there stood Zheng He. I knew an adventure was lying before me. “How...where...what's the purpose for me being here?” I asked. “Hello! You came to help me with my mission,” he replied. “If I am here to help with the mission,” I said, “it might help if I know where the fleet is going, where it has been, and what your mission is.” “Certainly,” Zheng He answered, “My mission is to bring foreign goods to sell in China, and to bring foreign people back to buy Chinese goods so the world will see that China is a great and powerful country.”

One morning, as I slept on the ship – BAM – I heard a loud noise and was thrown out of bed. “Ow!” I yelled, sitting up from the floor. Unhappy, I walked outside my cabin to see what was happening. “The Sea-Monster has returned!” screamed one of Zheng He’s men. “Take cover indoors!” boomed Zheng He.

A giant sperm whale had rammed the ship. “Sea-monster!” called another of Zheng He’s men. I realized what was happening. There was not much science in those days, I thought, so...Zheng He and his men figured this giant sperm whale was a sea-monster! I was so amused that I began grinning like a Cheshire cat. “Don't just stand there smiling”, said Zheng He, “take cover!” “Chill, dude,” I replied, “I know this is a sperm whale, not a sea-monster.” In fact, I spilled all the information I knew about sperm whales. “So, you see,” I finished, “he is probably just trying to swim with his pod to migrate,” I said. “We’re in his way, so the rest of his pod is in front of us. So, now, he is trying to ram past us. Also, he is a calf, you know, so, without his mom around him, without her milk, he could die. Calves are weak. Perhaps we had better move out of its way.” I suggested. There were hundreds of mouths curling into perfect letter ‘O’s. “Reverse the sails!” called Zheng He, and we were off again!

Zheng He couldn't recognize a whale, but he was rather an excellent sailor. How could he be famous if he wasn't at all good at sailing, right!? History is proof of his greatness. He commanded seven expeditions that expanded trade to 37 countries and carried books to show China's intellectual accomplishments. It was the porcelain, brocade and silks that had foreign countries wanted most. He also captured evil pirate scoundrels that sailed Chinese waters. He even captured the most feared Chinese pirate ever – Chen Zuyi himself. Unfortunately, no one is perfect, and he had troubles too. Some of his ships leaked, many of his sailors got scurvy, and it was difficult to plan the movements of a large fleet like his. Still, there was no greater sea explorer than Zheng He.

During the seventh voyage Zheng He really suffered and became very sick. Just when he was about to die, he told me he had a ‘secret’ map to an unknown country. We call it Australia today. He said his mission would be completed if I would bring back a sample boomerang for the emperor to reproduce as weapons for China’s army, and for goods to sell to tourists. I accepted the task.

The next morning, I set off ...and met a tsunami. Oh, come on! Having just died, Zheng He missed out on the action and I was alone! Typical, I thought, just when I needed an ace sailor it was up to me. I was a complete duffer at sailing, so I just dropped the anchor and waited for my doom. Just then, when it was curtains for me, I took a moment to think. What could I do? The idea literally took me three minutes, then...TA-DA! What if I took our sails down and wrapped them around the ship to make it float like a ball? With air trapped inside them, it might float! Balls float, don't they?! I wrapped all our sails around the ship, and it worked! I floated away.

When I was out of dangerous waters, I put the sails back where they belonged, and finally reached Australia in 30 hours’ time in calm waters. I was an absolute mess when I arrived, so I made a bed onshore from hundreds of cut leaves. I slept there for a night and felt right as rain in the morning.

When I awoke, I went to find some Aboriginal Australian people, as I knew they used boomerangs to knock birds out of the sky for food. When I found some, I asked them if I might have a boomerang. “Alright”, said the chief of the tribe, “we have more than enough, anyway.” Mission accomplished!

I left Australia feeling very happy. I sailed back to Nanjing, and then...yet again – WHOOSH – I was back home. I wondered if I had dreamed it all. It seemed real, but it couldn't have been.

Static from the TV caught my eye. An image of Zheng He popped up on the video game screen. That wasn't part of the game! Yet, there he was. He said, "Your mission is complete, dude, and now that boomerangs are in the shops of Nanjing, mine is too. Thanks, man!" (Okay, yes, I taught him some modern words). I shook my head and said "Wow!". Zheng He smiled back at me and said, "Cool, right? Goodbye for now!" Then, POOF! Zheng He vanished. That had just proved that it wasn't a dream. I had finished my adventure, and it had been a most marvelous one!

Wait, did he just say, "for now"?!?

# Fairytale Land

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Leung, Annabel – 8*

On a late Saturday afternoon, General Zheng He and his soldiers were sailing back to China to the Yongle Emperor when they saw a weird glass door floating in the midair. Zheng He was stunned.

He shouted to his two hundred soldiers, “Let’s go inside!”

“But General,” said his advisor, “It might be dangerous!”

“Who cares?” roared Zheng He, “Let’s be brave and find out.”

“Yes sir!” said his advisor, trembling.

The fleet of ships rushed forward in single file. Once they were in, they gazed around in wonder. A new land.

“Everybody, turn the ships into land transportation!” Zheng He ordered.

“Yes sir!” All the soldiers answered in unison.

Almost at once, all the ships turned into trucks, buses, and vans. Then, all the soldiers drove the transportation forward. When they passed a castle, a little girl opened a window and peeked out of it. She screamed.

“Who are you?” She asked nervously.

“Now, now. There’s no need to worry.” Zheng He said gently. “My name’s Zheng He, what’s yours?”

Now that the little girl knew that Zheng He was not going to hurt her, she relaxed.

“Hello! My name is Hope. It’s nice to meet you, Zheng He” she said.

“May I ask you a question?” Zheng He said.

“Sure!” Hope answered cheerfully. “What?”

Zheng He asked, “Where am I?”

“You’re in Charming Kingdom. My parents are Queen Cinderella and King Chance Charming.” Hope replied.

“Hope, what is The Charming Kingdom?” Zheng He questioned.

“The Charming Kingdom is one of the kingdoms on Fairytale Land. There are six kingdoms, one territory, and one empire. The six kingdoms are The Upper Kingdom, The Center Kingdom, The Charming Kingdom, The Western Kingdom, The Magic Kingdom, and The Sleeping Kingdom. The territory is Trolblin Territory, and the empire is Elf Empire.” Hope said, surprised he did not know.

Zheng He was starting to get worried. “Hope, what is this strange place?” Zheng He asked frantically, “Is it different from my home?” He was starting to realize this place was different from his home.

Hope was confused, “I suggest you go to meet Fairy Godmother. She makes all the Laws. She has the real control over Fairytale Land.” Hope said. “Take this map and it will guide you to The Magic Kingdom. It is where she lives. The rest of the information about Fairytale Land is on the other side of the page.”

“Thank you so much, Hope!” Zheng He cried.

“Good Luck” Hope said with a wink.

Zheng He set off at once. “Let’s Go!” Zheng He bellowed to his men.

Once they reached The Magic Kingdom, they marched into the castle.

“Where is Fairy Godmother?” He asked.

“Hello,” said a soft voice behind him, “What do you want?”

Zheng He turned to see a beautiful young woman looking at him. The minute Zheng He saw her, he fell in love with her, but first, he had to ask his question.

“My dear lady,” Zheng He said, “Where is the Fairy Godmother?”

The woman laughed, “*I* am the Fairy Godmother!” She said. “Would you like to stay in the palace since you don’t have a cottage or house?”

“Of course!” Zheng He answered, “Thank you.”

After a year in Fairy Kingdom. “Fairy Godmother, will you marry me?” Zheng He asked.

“Yes!” Fairy Godmother answered with a smile.

They had been secretly dating over the year, so they already knew each other well. And so, Fairy Godmother and Zheng He got married the next day. One year after their wedding, Fairy Godmother had a baby daughter, Zheng He was overjoyed, and they named her Holly.

One day, Fairy Godmother woke to hear the sound of war. “What is going on?” she wondered.

Zheng He, who had also woken up at that moment, was also as confused as Fairy Godmother. When they looked at the window, they discovered that an army of nine thousand men had attacked The Magic Kingdom earlier this morning and all the fairies were trying to fight them off.

In a flash, Zheng He gathered his men and Fairy Godmother summoned all the armies of Fairytale Land. Together, they all charged towards the army and fought them.

Fairy Godmother quietly went to check on Holly, but to her horror, she was not in her room! Suddenly, a horned witch appeared in front of her, and tossed Holly out of the window to the forest.

She cackled, “You will never see Holly again!” she cried evilly.

“GIVE HER BACK NOW, MORINA!” Fairy Godmother yelled as loud as she could, “NOW!!!”

But Morina just laughed and said, “Just go get her yourself then.” Then, she disappeared in a flash.

Thankfully, Fairy Godmother did not have to. A minute later, another witch appeared with baby Holly in her arms.

“Thank you so, so, so, much, Hagetta!” Fairy Godmother said gratefully to the witch, “What can I do for you?”

Hagetta smiled and replied, "All I want is Holly to be safe with you forever. Goodbye!"

Then, Zheng He came in with some great news, "My dear wife, the army was defeated! Even better, they agreed to become new soldiers of Fairytale Land!"

Fairy Godmother smiled. "That's great!", "how about we have a celebration party to celebrate defeating the army?"

"Okay," Zheng He said, "Sounds good!"

And they all celebrated until the next day.

# New Ming Treasure Voyage

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Zhang, Emmanuel – 9*

The time machine was ready, and Keith and the time-travellers would go back in Ming dynasty to trade for ancient treasure that long disappeared and was lost. So, with one press of the button, they went back in time. When they arrived the time-machine landed right in front of the emperor. The emperor was shocked but kept calm and said, "Whom would that be?"

"We are the time travellers here to investigate the ancient world, and here to give you some good advice," they replied.

The emperor smiled and said, "Well we could give you some valuables for your investigate in return for giving China some good advice."

In the Forbidden City, everything was so different and unique, the city walls were made with brown clay bricks, so sombre and stately. Keith brought gifts of future to the villagers when suddenly, not far from the castle walls, a big army of soldiers rode on horses kept firing arrows tipped with poison. The leader of the army kept waving swords and throwing fire sticks at the village and the emperor's palace.

"Oh! No! The bandits are back!" cried the emperor but the villagers were ready. They've been already taught to fight with guns (Of course by Keith) and knew the best way to finish off a big army of soldiers, that's what was exactly happening now. The villagers rushed out with cars with strong armour and kept firing machine guns. Things were really going well with them. On the other hand, the bandits were losing war. The arrows were no match with guns and stabbing cars with swords were no use.

After five minutes clearing off the bandits, the emperor turned to Keith and the others smiling and said, "You had saved my life and trained the villagers to be fine soldiers with incredible weapons. You deserve to have everything you need to study the ancient world!"

So the travellers, took what they needed and said: "Thanks for all these precious items and the help you gave us! War is never the eternal theme, the real power to develop is science and technique."

The time traveller bowed down and took out some money and showed him how they buy things in the future and how the whole world works in the future, Keith took out cars and showed the emperors how to drive them. The things explained were piled up and given to the emperor as a gift.

The emperor can't believe how many things that the warm-hearted travellers gave him, how many ways to make peace in the Forbidden City everything was so different and unique from the future, China in the emperor's heart felt as if it could be fixed forever with only these things." Bring me," the emperor pleaded "To your world, to the future!"

The travellers agreed taking him and also promised him that he could live there. So, with the finger on the button, they went into the future. The traveller selected the location to land which he chose Beijing. Whoosh! The machine landed on the ground softly and out came the emperor, everyone around the machine stopped dead in its tracks, looking at the emperor.

Then out of nowhere, someone shouted, "The time travellers had returned with the emperor! Hooray!" Everyone wanted to rush forwards but one of the travellers stepped up and in a warningly voice said "Stop!", everybody bowed down for a few seconds then stood up, letting a way for the emperor to walk.

The emperor went around the city and showed no sign of being more important than the other people." Do not treat me better than others, I am just a normal person, I am not an emperor in your world."

After saying that, the traveller's tummy rumbled so they stopped for lunch in a spicy noodle shop, they ate some noodles and left, then all of a sudden, the traveller cried "How about the rest of The Forbidden City?

There is no one there to lead them and they'll be in a mess!" Oh! No! I completely forgot! What a bad emperor am I!"

So, they hurried of to find the machine. One click of the button they were back again, but the traveller was greeted by the angry faces of the rest of the time traveller clan." Hey Dave! You forgot about us! We were having big trouble calming the people of the Forbidden city, and we don't blame you your majesty." said one of them called Bruce."

But the good thing is that we improved the buildings and the food they serve! We even gave them better medicine, medical equipment and built a parking lot! "Oh, thank you how could I thank you ever more?" You need to give us nothing! Because you already gave us joy!"

So, with that they returned to the time machine and went away.

## Sunset from Cochin

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Zhang, Miya – 11*

Lian stared ahead at the golden sunset as the waves cracked against the helms of China's treasure ships. She looked to the distant horizon and made the promises she owed to her friend, and to the world. She made vows, and thought back, to that soul whose fire rivaled that of the sun's.

Lian thought back to the time she'd had with Anala in Cochin. The day she met her friend had been when the sunset was at its full, glorious climax. The sky was swathed with vibrant ribbons of light in purple, ruby and gold. The healer had leapt off the treasure ship, "neglecting" her duties as her father would later say. She raced through the streets of Cochin, gliding past silk-clad bodies speaking in a language like the gentle currents of a river, or like gusts of wind rolling off the tongue in soft, melodic trails. She inhaled the sweet aroma of steamed seafood as it drifted through the air and admired the sky's brilliance. Lian had skidded to a stop only when she'd heard cries of pain from inside a cottage. That was when she'd spotted the other girl lying on the floor, trying to shield the gaping wound on her forearm. Silently, the healer had lowered herself so she was face to face with the other girl. Anala, who couldn't have been much older than Lian herself, had sun-kissed skin the rich color of star anise. But her eyes – they were ablaze with a flame-like quality. She had a fierceness that seemed to rival even the flames of the sun. It was these flames in the girl's eyes that encouraged Lian to reach into her sleeves and produce the bundles of healing herbs.

Absent mindedly, Lian spoke in a soothing tone as she tended to Anala's wound, describing her first few days at sea with China's fleet. How she'd had the good fortune of being chosen to accompany the imperial eunuch Zheng He on his voyage for the Yongle Emperor. When Lian was finished, Anala had spoken in uneven Chinese to tell Lian her name. Anala had gone on to discuss Zheng He's voyages with Lian during their many conversations. Though the girls had both known how their friendship was to end, they still had felt crushed when Zheng He's fleet's time in Cochin was announced to have expired.

So, the girls had prepared themselves for their last night together. Lian had sat with her head on Anala's shoulder. "Do you suppose what Zheng He is doing is noble?"

Anala had contemplated her question, her soft smile flickering like a flame. "I do in fact. He came to give. To provide. So many people come to Cochin because they want to take back a part of its luxury. It's spices or whatever else they find valuable. I think it's noble that the Yongle Emperor sent him here to give to the Calicut Kingdom instead. Perhaps it's a fool's way of thinking, but I can admire that. Maybe what China is doing now, what you're contributing to, is helping the world. Maybe. I'm hoping that this act of selfless goodness will bring our worlds back to the light."

Then, Lian had laughed, for she did not understand. As laughter-like beams of sunlight hit the sails of China's fleet, she exclaimed, "Anala! This began as a voyage to obtain pepper!"

Anala smiled a little wider. "Hope, Lian. Hope that we will be brought back into the light."

Lian and Anala had talked that night away. In the few moments Lian had with Anala before boarding the treasure ships, Anala had leaned in and said to her words that were to be more cherished than even the precious pepper aboard the treasure ships. Words murmured beneath a sunset painting their faces, lacing their hair with color. "I wish to know you by the name Kanaka. A piece of Cochin, and of me, to take with you on your voyages." When Lian had given her a perplexed expression, Anala smiled back and spoke in hushed tones.

"Gold, Kanaka. That is the name I have chosen for you. Gold. Remember me when you see the sun, or embers rising up from flames. Remember me, and hope, for that is what you gave me when I was wounded and lost. Gold, Lian. Gold, for what you gave when I had nothing. Gold, for the glory that will befall China. For the hope, you will bring as Kanaka, or Lian, or whatever you wish to call yourself.

This memory of Anala was what kept Kanaka going. Somedays, Kanaka could still feel the warmth of Anala's breath beside her ear. This friendship helped her fulfill her silent promise on the deck of Zheng He's fleet.

*"I promise to spread that hope and to give until my very being is shriveled up and crumbling. If only to honor my homeland and the fire of the friend I shall never see again."*

# The Defeat of Chen Zuyi

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Zhang, Steven – 11*

A brilliant flash of light appeared near the horizon, and the water instantly became sapphire. The calm waves rolled on and on, casually moving boats out of the way. The sun raised like a fiery ball of molten fire. Tiny islands can be seen near the horizon. On the main ship, a man named Zheng He woke up.

Zheng He walked up the stairs to the platform and took out a small, white object and a map. He muttered something and looked more closely at the object. It was, in fact, a fish compass.

“Chin Hong, are we in direction?” Zheng He questioned. Then a young man wearing a white robe and a sword at his belt walked up and answered his question.

“Yes, sir. We are heading west with pinpoint accuracy. At this rate, we will be back within 2 weeks, even with some ships damaged from the first attack of the pirates.”

A sudden flash of this horrible memory came into mind. Hundreds of men dying, the ocean soaked with blood, platforms littered with dead bodies, and ships filled with holes. Even though they won these battles, the casualties were high and the fleet was extremely damaged.

“Sir, are you okay?”

“What? Oh, yeah, I’m okay. Just wondering if I should put those islands on the map. Meanwhile, Chen Zuyi still didn’t come yet for his surrendering contract.”

“Sir... those are not islands. Those are the pirate ships, and they are coming back.”

One hour later, the whole crew among the ships woke up and armed for battle. But the ships in the distance was not a battle fleet. It was simply just a cruiser ship

“All troops, hold your fire! He is only here for negotiation!” commanded Zheng he as the ship made its way to the commanding ship.

The ship was a masterpiece. Holly wood lined the hull, with sanded poles and gold linings here and there. A broad grey sail could be seen on the junk with decorative carvings depicting victories and legendary battles. If there were no pirates on board then it will be impossible to recognize it as an enemy ship. A bridge lowered and Chen Zuyi stepped out.

Chen Zuyi was about 50 years old. He wore glistening bronze armor that shined brightly in the sun. He had a small beard and sharp, piercing eyes. He was only by himself and showed no means of threat.

“ So, it looks like you received my message. I am demanding surrender from you. Here is the contract. Surrender and leave the bay of Palembang and the East, or we will use force.”

Chen Zuyi’s grey eyes glinted under the sunlight. “I agree to... surrender. I will leave Palembang immediately. Without military force. Farewell, then.” He said and then left.

All the soldiers and crewmen sighed contently, feeling safe after the surrender. But Zheng He had the tiniest bit of suspicion left in him, so he soon hatched a plan.

That very night, Zheng He sent his fellow navigator Chin Hong on a mission. He fears that Chen Zuyi’s attack could be coming any moment, so Chin Hong will be spending the whole night tailing the pirate boats. He looked at Chin Hong leave on the small boat until he disappeared. Then, Zheng He went to bed.



BAM! BAM! Zheng He woke up to a strange noise. It was still night, the sky as dark as obsidian. Zheng He opened the door of his cabin and saw a wet, panting crewman. In fact, it was Chin Hong.

“Sir... Sir... the pirates... coming...so much.....” and then he collapsed on the floor, panting and unable to move. It was no doubt that the pirates were coming, so Zheng He gathered up all the troops and prepared them for an attack. But he had a trick up his sleeve...

KABOOM! That was the first sound of battle. Fire and lanterns were equipped on the pirate ships, making it look like a dragon. The sound of cannons pierced through the air, and smoke was steaming everywhere. Finally, Chen Zuyi came on aboard.

“Ha Ha! I fooled you, Zheng He! Now China will bow to the pirates! We will own the best ships in the world! No bow for mercy or be killed!” he teased as almost 20 huge pirate ships confronted Zheng He’s Commanding Junk and Treasure Ships.

But Zheng He showed no sign of surrender because this was his plan. A sudden blast shook everyone’s ears. Chen Zuyi looked around and saw hundreds of boats. Most of them were cruisers, but there was a handful of huge junks and battleships. The royal red mast was on every single ship, the commanding one with a golden phoenix emblem on it.

The pirates were outnumbered, but they kept on fighting, so Zheng He fought back. He was a blur of silver, he leaped like a leopard, it was like he was invincible. The pirates were brave, but they were no match for Zheng He.

Zheng He was getting braver and braver. He expanded his forces into a semicircle, surrounding the pirates. Now his ships and the reinforcements had cornered Chen Zuyi.

Suddenly something struck Zheng He’s forehead. Everything went black as he fell down to the ocean.

“Hello? Wake up, wake up!” a voice said. He saw a pirate in a cage. Some of the crewmen fixing the poles. A crewman tap-dancing with a pirate. Hmm... perhaps he had just imagined the last one.

Then, someone pulled on his hair and yanked him back to life.

“ Huzzah?” mumbled Zheng He. “ Wait... is Chen Zuyi captured? We had specific orders to!”

“ Yes, yes, he is captured, and all is well.” assured Chin Hong.

A wave of relief spread over Zheng He. We walked to the deck, feeling the cool, sea breeze. The aquamarine water glistened under the setting sun. Near the horizon, he saw a line and a dot, and he swore it was China.

# What an Adventure Means

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Bolchover, Isadora – 9*

The Ming Fleet set off on their mission to India with one of their finest captains and one of their greatest fighters in the land: Zheng He and Ying Yen. But something was suspicious about the captain, Ying Yen, and Zheng He knew it, even though he couldn't put his finger on what it was. As they set off, the crowd on the docks cheered them on, shouting encouragement and comforting words. The ship finally sailed out into the dark blue ocean on its way to India with no idea what adventures were in store.

Ying Yen rushed into the only bathroom they had on the ship and pulled her helmet off. Thank goodness! She thought. Maybe Zheng He would have found out she was in disguise as a man! Hopefully he didn't suspect her! She had successfully cut her hair off and snuck onto the ship, but she was sure that her perfect features would be a bit too much, so that the men would become suspicious. Wait a minute. Was that shouting she heard? She quickly pulled her helmet back on and hurried up to the deck.

As she reached the deck, she looked into her telescope and saw the dreaded white flag with a dragon's dripping fangs staring back at her. She told her crew: "Weapons ready! We've got an evil pirate trying to kill us!" Alas, her words were true. A pirate named Chen Zuyi was on their tail right now and he was one of the most feared pirates with one of the most gruesome crews in all history. Just to list a few of his most evil deeds, he had: killed loads of people, stolen a ships' goods and sold children to slavery. This was bad – VERY bad. Ying Yen caught Chen Zuyi looking at her with his one eye (he has an eye patch.). He sneered, and she rolled her eyes.

Ying Yen shouted: "Attack!" Both crews roared. Over the noise of killing, shouting and massacre, Ying Yen shouted: "I'm going for gold!", which meant, "I'm going to fight Chen Zuyi myself! No one try to help me!"

Ying Yen ran towards Chen Zuyi dodging every obstacle in her path. Finally, she made it to Chen Zuyi. As she ran and swung her sword, the blowing wind made her helmet slip off and her short, but beautiful black locks were revealed to the world! (well actually just the Ming dynasty and the bad guys not the whole world) As the Ming dynasty and the pirates gasped in amazement, frustrated whispers went around the crowd: "a woman?" "Who let HER in?"

Ying Yen shouted back "What is SO wrong with a woman being on the ship? Can we just get on with the battle already?" The men grumbled but they kept on slashing each other and yelling insults so Ying Yen figured everything was fine.

As Ying Yen swung her sword at Chen Zuyi, he blocked her easily and said: "Not so fast little girl! No one is going past me!"

"Okay," Ying Yen growled, "One, no one calls me little girl, and two: I am getting past you." Again, she ran and swung her sword, and Chen Zuyi closed his eye and expected the blow, but nothing came. He opened his eye and looked around him. As he looked behind him, he caught Ying Yen grinning at him. "I thought you said NOTHING was going to get past you." she said, and then everything went black for Chen Zuyi.

Chen Zuyi woke up. His head throbbed. He looked down and saw that he was tied to the mast along with many of his crew. Ying Yen said "I told you I was going to get past you! Women can do great things, Chen Zuyi. It's just that some people don't believe it. When Zheng He takes you and your wicked crew to my father's dungeon, I hope you'll understand that you're a horrid person and that you should try and do something good for a change." She walked away, her dagger swinging at her hip.

That night, Zheng He called a meeting with all the crew except Ying Yen. He banged the hammer on the table. "We are here to discuss the matter of a woman on the ship and what we should do with her. Any suggestions?"

"Toss her over board! It's a disgrace having her on this ship!" That was one idea. Here comes another one! "Keep her! We can use her as our captain and finest warrior!" "Use her as a slave!" Then came the cries of "KEEP HER!" or "TOSS HER". Over and over until Zheng He was sure he couldn't stand it anymore.

"Silence! I have decided that we should keep her! She has proved herself! And to this day, woman will be allowed to fight and with everyone else!" Everyone cheered.

The next day, Zheng He broke the news to Ying Yen. She jumped for joy. “We have also decided to let all woman join the Ming fleet!” Ying Yen grinned. “Great! Do I still get to go to India?” She asked. “You bet!” Zheng He said.

After weeks of sea scurvy and other horrible diseases, the watch girl finally yelled “Land ho!!!” They had arrived in India!

As they walked through the exotic architecture, Ying Yen gazed in wonder. They arrived at a palace of solid marble. As they walked in, they saw a giant throne carved with strange animals. A regal, tall, handsome man sat on the throne accompanied by a beautiful woman. As they approached and knelt, the Maharajah said: “Rise, my friends.”

“We have come for trading.” Ying Yen announced. “We have Chinese silks, jewels, ceramics and artwork.”

“Intriguing.” The Maharajah said. “This will be interesting.”

As the Ming fleet finally made their way back to the ship, Ying Yen realised what an adventure actually means: the journey, the experiences, and most of all, proving yourself. And that is what an adventure means.

# Ming Treasure Voyages: Always Be Laughing

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Chan, Joshua – 9*

As we were about to set sail from this beautiful island of snakes and men wearing turbans riding elephants called India, I felt a pang of sadness leaving our newly-made friends, but also comforted by the fact that we were to embark on a new adventure with my companions that have accompanied me to many distant lands. We were given many soft fabrics to bring home, and brown beans which when crushed led to a distinct aroma. Some of the men added water to it which when drunk helped the men to stay awake whilst they were on watch at night.

My best friend, Ching, was the cook and he served the best Chinese dim sum on board. He was a plump little boy who was much more mature than he looked and he had a heart of gold. The many times he had saved me from pirates, I have only him to thank for saving my life. The other close friend of mine was Captain Fu, who I am also indebted to for taking me on board as an orphan after my parents both died when I was a toddler. I am thankful to him as he gave me food and taught me how to look after myself whilst guiding me along the many voyages. Captain Fu was kind and often made me laugh as we sailed on our adventures in seek of new things, new cultures, new lands around the world on The Golden Phoenix.

The Golden Phoenix could carry a crew of over 15 strong men and often we had to stop at new islands for supplies of food and water. We were due to stop soon as it had been over a month since our last stop, and the food was starting to smell. From a distance we could see a mass of land approaching. It looked like many strange animals we had never seen before with lots of tall grass and trees surrounding the waters. I could see some horse-like animals with black and white stripes and millions of brown ones too that looked like a larger dog. I had heard about a faraway land, where many animals roamed freely, and as we approached land there was an amazing sightseeing these new creatures interacting with each other. I was so excited that we had come across this new place. Some of the crew were muttering that they had heard of this place before, a place that people called Africa.

The Captain decided to dock in a cove to see if we could find any treasures but it was full of crocodile. No doubt, we had to explore this mysterious cave but first we had to fight off the crocodiles now moving towards the entrance. Out came the swords as the men fought at the front of the deck. I used this new invention called gunpowder which combined with fire would cause a loud noise. I hoped this would scare away the crocodiles and luckily this worked, as the snapping beasts soon retreated and disappeared into the depths of the waters.

The Captain ordered the men to dock the ship. The men were scared of what may be in the cave, so I plucked up the courage and volunteered to go first. I was trembling with sweat pouring down my face as I slowly climbed down from the boat to step into the swampy mud. I splashed my way into the cave with my sword and as I was about to enter the dark cave, an echo of a cavernous, roaring sound came from the back. Before I knew it, a ferocious group of hyenas ran out laughing. Surprisingly, these cat-like animals were gentle and kind, not at all what I had expected. I immediately waved to my crew to hold off as I attempted to make friends with them. They slowly crept up to me as I stroked their heads and let them do the same to me. They welcomed all of us, visitors to their home where they offered us food and water.

Inside the main part of the cave was dark and damp but what I saw was an Aladdin's cave filled with priceless treasures that one could never imagine. There were glowing turquoise emeralds, blood-red rubies, ocean blue sapphires, buckets of gold and glittering diamonds that filled the whole cave with colours. The men were whooping as they gaped at the mouth-watering find and they started to plan how to divert the hyenas to steal their treasures. As the crewmembers plotted, I realised that this was not the way to treat our new friends who had just been kind in offering us food and shelter. I was not suffering from the same amount of greed as my colleagues. I know times were tough back at home, where if we came back with lavish treasures we could live like kings, but deep down I could not do it and it did not seem right.

I had to think of a plan which would help my new friends. I used stale bread to lure the crocodiles out of the murky waters, and they soon surrounded my sailor-companions, scaring them out of their minds. Ching screamed so loudly that he caused more animals to appear – more animals I had not seen before – tall ones, fat ones, and large ones with big manes of hair. They all looked very scary which led the crew retreating back to the boat. There were mutterings that I was the traitor but I think this was the right thing to do: leaving the treasures in this magical land.

The hyenas thanked me with a large bag of jewels, which was more than enough to pay for a lifetime of voyages on The Golden Phoenix. These expeditions led us to even more interesting places, but the land of Africa will always be remembered by me where the friendliness and warm laughter of the hyenas can still be heard.

# The Cursed Chest

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Cheung, Vanessa – 9*

“Land ho!” somebody on the deck yelled. Zheng He groggily opened his eyes. He got out of his luxurious sheepskin four-poster bed. He brushed his teeth with his horsehair toothbrush and put on his best robe. Zheng He turned to the rest of his gigantic fleet. He grabbed a large wooden megaphone, and said, “Okay, half of you down to the island! Other half, prepare breakfast.” With that, the general jumped onto the dangling rope ladder and headed down the ship. Half of his giant fleet followed him. They marched behind Zheng He in two perfect lines, walking towards the heart of the island.

At the center of the island, there was a stone pyramid that was larger than the others. Zheng He and his men entered the pyramid. They crossed a long wooden bridge. They found a bronze chest in the midst of the large stone pyramid.

The chest was rusted and old, but still glinted in the sunlight. Zheng He tried to force the chest open, assuming it was locked. But it swung open effortlessly. The half of Zheng He’s humongous fleet gasped. Inside was exactly 882 gold coins. Zheng He’s men divided the coins among themselves and carried them back to the fleet. Zheng He didn’t bother to touch a single coin. He was already wealthy, and that wealth satisfied him. Why did he need more money?

The next day, Zheng He was bored. But the fleet seemed much more empty. So he just wandered around the library, checking out different books. Suddenly, he gasped. He had spotted a bronze-coloured book. On the front cover of the book was a *very* familiar symbol. It was the same symbol on the chest in that stone pyramid.

That same withered skull with the pointed circles and wiggly lines. Out of curiosity, Zheng He pulled the book from one of the library’s wooden bookshelves. The title was, ‘The Curse of the Aztec Gold’. Then, Zheng He started reading from a random chapter, which amazingly was the exact chapter that he needed:

“The Curse of the Aztec Gold is a very dangerous but not well-known curse. It was put on the chest the Aztecs gave to a power-crazy Spanish conqueror named Cortes. Aided with his magic sword, Cortes and his army conquered anything in their path. The Aztecs had given it to him because they hoped that if they offered it to Cortes, he would stop his conquer of their country. But that only made him greedier.

That made the heathen gods so angry they cursed the chest: Whoever took gold out of the chest had to return all the coins they took and sprinkle some of the blood of the child of any person they had ever murdered in order to stop the curse. The curse was: Those who took coins from the chest shall turn into walking skeletons when in the beam of the moonlight.

“So now you get it,” Zheng He said through a wooden megaphone. His voice was hoarse from all that talking, and his mind was still swimming. He had been explaining to the fleet about the information he’d read. “Now, all generals of the fleet, listen to me.” Zheng He told the captains of the ships his plan. Three captains and the remaining half of their men would search the island at midnight until they found the undead skeletons. When they *did* find them, those captains would sound a conch horn.

While they were searching, six generals and *their* remaining crewmembers would build a large, strong cage made of the strongest material on the ship that could host more than a thousand skeletons. When they heard the conch horn, they would join those three captains and get ready for the fight. The rest of the fleet also needed to battle if they heard the conch horn’s cry. Suddenly, the fleet’s large bronze bell rang. All of the sailors knew what that meant. *Midnight.*

“Okay, everybody.” Zheng He tried not to sound too afraid. “Operation Skeleton starts *now!*”

All of the half of the fleet got to work. With so many sailors, the job was quickly done. *Honk! HONK! HONK!* “The conch horn,” Zheng He whispered to himself. “EVERYONE, GET TO THE ISLAND!” The admiral shouted much louder to the remaining part of the fleet. The skeletons were indeed a gruesome

sight. Their robes had turned into rags and their pants had been ripped. Most of their ribs were showing, and their bones were pearly white.

A lot of them were missing some teeth, and those that remained were the most disgusting yellowish colour. Some of their limbs were gone, and their eye sockets were showing. “*Yuck*,” somebody in Zheng He’s half of the crew muttered.

“*ATTACK!*” Zheng He shouted in his bravest, most formal voice. Zheng He’s part of the sailors had the upper hand since they had the ship’s resources and weapons.

“Great job, men,” Zheng He congratulated his part of the crew. They had won and stuffed the skeletons into the cage the six generals and their remaining crew—members had built. “So now, who would volunteer to send the dreaded cursed Aztec chest far away? And not to mention by himself.” A brave sailor named Xiang Gang volunteered for the daring mission. He had a good heart and a smart mind. And he was also very courageous.

While Xiang Gang was making his long journey with only the cursed chest, stacks of bronze cups of tea, and a leather bag stuffed with packs of dried fish meat, Zheng He’s half of the fleet hauled the cageful of skeletons into the Mediterranean Sea. “Come on, men!” Zheng He encouraged the brave sailors.

You might be wondering if Xiang Gang made it. Yes, he did. And where did he send that cursed chest? He placed it safely into a hidden island called the Isla de Muerta. Zheng He’s half of the fleet hoped that it might never be found again.

# All because of Pie

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Chiang, Kyle – 9*

Everything crazy all started at the Ming Treasure ship.

The baseball bat was ready to swing the target. “Are you sure about this, captain?” “It’s all worth it, Sailor Bob,” says the Captain. Then he swings the bat with all his power. Candy pours out the piñata. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CAPTAIN!” The crew all shouted. The captain was super excited for his 100,000th birthday. Then the crew worked together to put 100,000 candles on the birthday pie, which they failed 10 seconds later.

Suddenly, the pie started rumbling. A giant snout as big as a pirate popped out. The terrified pirates screamed as if someone was spanking them. Then the whole body of the great PIE RAT came crashing out. The pie rat crew had all sorts of electronic devices and just texted each other instead of squeaking, which they thought was too old school.

The pirates knew very little about technology at that time, they were simple and just all sang in harmony, “ya want some pieeeee?” The pie rats stared at them in confusion. They thought the pirates were offering a war, so they bit all the pirates into shreds, leaving the pirates at a critical state. The message soon floated to the nice emperor of China. When he found out the pirates were hurt, he was so worried that he healed the pirates with his very own magical machine. Now, the newly-recovered pirates were super nice and grateful. Instead of snatching, they gave out precious stuff like gold and silver to other people, so they were always welcomed in villages. But then something happened. The world will be changed after this.

One day, the Ming treasure ship suddenly started to rock back and forth, followed by a loud BANG. It was the black destroyer squad pirates, the meanest pirates on land. The black destroyer squad saw the Ming Treasure pirates playing happy slappy. Like any other pirates, they are greedy and violent. So they used their NUKES to nuke the ships.

Luckily, the happy slapping pirates saw the nuke, and they fired at the gigantic bomb. Of course, the bomb exploded, but in the air. Then the Ming Treasure pirates explained to the black destroyer squads that peace was all they need and gave them a chance to flee. After that, With peace in their hearts, the Ming treasure pirates continue their nice act. They went to every pirate ship in the universe and gave them each a chest full of gold and silk. So, they basically just ended pirate torture in about 5 seconds. Now, even the villages had tons of precious materials.

The Ming treasure pirates soon were floating across countries to play and give away stuff. They floated to Japan and had sushi. They sailed to the UK to meet the king. They even went to Florence and helped Leonardo da Vinci paint the Mona Lisa! They thought it would be nice to go back to China and report their nice acts to the emperor, so they did, but unfortunately, they ran into the black destroyer squad. AGAIN. The black destroyer tricked them by pretending to be nice Last time they met. But they are actually evil. They started a battle again, and the black destroyer squad actually won this time. They tied up the nice pirates and threatened to slice them up with blades and swords. The Ming treasure pirates were terrified, and they quickly tried to scoot away in the rope, but the black destroyer squad leader spotted them, so he sliced the head off one of the nice pirates just to show he wasn’t joking. The Ming treasure pirates were now determined to avenge their friend. They used all their might to slip through the ropes to shoot the black destroyer squad with their guns. But the emperor was mad. He did not like to kill. So the emperor demanded the pirates to leave China forever.

The pirate who got his head sliced off at the black destroyer squad was actually a fake, he was actually captured by the black destroyer squad. He was getting restructured with bionic parts and being reprogrammed with an evil mind. The evil squad was planning to use this half robot half pirate to get control of the Ming treasure pirates and get all, yes, ALL of their loot. The Ming treasure pirates were still playing around at England and didn’t notice a sword behind their filthy heads.



One by one, the robot pirate (let's just call him Bill for now) got all the pirate's head implanted with an evil chip, all except the leader. The leader was very mad, he tried very hard to deactivate the chips. Unfortunately, The Ming Treasure pirate leader never went to pirate's I.T. class, so he knew nothing on tech, and he failed. These new reprogrammed red-eyed pirates decided to rebel and make Bill their new leader.

Bill was a nice person at first, the nicest of all, you could say. But after he was painfully rebuilt, he was the most ruthless and merciless pirate on land. Also, he friended the black destroyer squad and often went on sleepovers on each of their ships. They soon retrieved all the loot from the villages that the nice Ming treasure pirates gave them before. All the treasures were then presented to the Ming emperor, who was very impressed. He shook Bill's hand and kept praising him. But what the emperor didn't know was that his life would be never the same soon.

One day like no other, the emperor was calling all the pirates for a promotion. One by one, the pirates got their prize, and when it was Bill's turn, he shook the emperor's hand, but this time, he got an implant chip, a specially programmed one which is more nasty than Bill gave to his team, in his palm. The emperor felt a second of dizziness and after that, his eyes turned red.

# The Sacrifice

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Graff, Eric – 10*

Alex the great watched as his crew brought gold, porcelain and silver aboard the ship Scythe. The sea was peaceful and calm, the perfect day to sail. Alex had installed giant engines that would lift the boat into the sky so they would be safe from the dangers of the ocean. Alex's destination was East Africa, when they arrived there they would trade for goods, but that wasn't the whole story. He had also heard of a rumour saying that treasure was to be found in one of the caves located on a mountain called Mount Kilimanjaro. He noticed an old woman by the harbour whose clothes looked like that they were made out of dirt and clay. Her eyes were constantly shifting from brown to black. Alex didn't really think much about it because he thought he was hallucinating since he hadn't slept much the night before. When all of the trading currency had been transported safely, he turned on the engines and they lifted off into the sky. There was one thing Alex didn't notice as the ship sailed into the sky, the old woman by the harbour had turned into a dragon and was flying towards the ship. The dragon hid in the clouds so the ship couldn't see it. The skin turned into the exact colour as the sky making it invisible.

The ship kept sailing through the sky. The ship was now flying over the ocean when suddenly another ship passed below them. The ship saw them and started following them. The crew was puzzled why the other ship was following them. Little did the crew know that it was the ship of the white walkers, a group of dead pirates that sailed the Pacific Ocean, destroying any ship they came upon. The Scythe had never heard about them before, because no one had seen them and come back alive to tell the tale. The ship then realised that they must be pirates but laughed because the pirates couldn't reach them, but little did they know the pirates were always prepared. The white walkers summoned a group of 50 seagulls and the white walkers grabbed on the legs of the seagulls and commanded the seagulls to fly up to the ship. The Scythe crew was completely stupefied. The seagulls flew up to the boat and then they dropped on the deck and they started attacking the crew. The crew immediately started fighting the pirates with swords. One of the crew men ran up the mast of the ship and then jumped off it and squashed 3 of the pirates. One of the crew lured the pirates in to one line and then stabbed his sword through 5 of the pirates. The pirates were running around and stabbing everything. They decapitated most of the crew because you could see several heads rolling across the deck. One of the crew threw a pirate overboard and watched as it hit the ocean. A pirate came out of nowhere and flung his sword at Alex. He ducked just in time to see it miss his head by millimetres. After they destroyed all of the pirates the deck was covered with blood and lose body parts and dead carcasses from both pirates and crew men. Alex immediately commanded the ship to fly away and head towards their destination with the dragon still pursuing them.

The ship had taken a lot of damage so it was forced to land on the sea, so they could repair the engines. The dragon mumbled get ready for the plan under his breath as if it was talking to someone. The Scythe continued on. It began to turn dark, so the crew went to bed with some of the crew still awake keeping watch. Suddenly one of the watchers saw something green. He immediately spoke into his microphone and broadcast the message to the whole ship. They had reached India. When they arrived at shore they were treated well and they traded for spice and food and furniture. They bought beautiful pots that would definitely make the crew's wives swoon. They also fixed the ship and they lifted up into the sky to continue their journey to East Africa. The crew reached Africa the next day and were overjoyed. The crew landed at Somalia and they were treated as kings. They traded and became friends with the locals. One night when they were eating dinner Alex asked the locals about the treasure on Mount Kilimanjaro. The locals told the crew about what they knew about it. They said there was a terrible monster that guarded it but people said it had flown away. Alex decided they would search for the treasure in the morning. The next morning the crew got in the Scythe and they flew towards the mountain. They spotted several caves but none of them looked right. Then round about noon Alex spotted a cave that was humongous and had coins and jewels at the entrance. The ship landed and they climbed down a ladder to the cave entrance. Alex and 5 others stood at the entrance while the rest of the crew stayed on the ship. Then suddenly the mountain exploded and then something emerged out of the ground, it was the dragon that had followed the ship. It flew straight through the ship. The dragon hit the engine and then exploded. The ship blew up and bits of flaming debris landed all over the mountain. Alex and the rest of the crew ran straight for the monster. The monster torched one of the crew mates while the rest ran forward and stabbed the monster. The dragon swallowed two more crew men. Alex and the last crew man went to the boats debris and found a ballista that somehow

had not been damaged and fired straight at the monster the monster got hit and flew backwards. They charged straight for the monster, but the crew man got torched. Alex pulled out his two flintlocks punching holes in the hide of the dragon and causing it to bleed. The monster lunged at Alex and Alex jumped but the monster swallowed him whole. Alex was inside the monster's mouth. He was going to be digested but he couldn't let this monster harm any more people. He stabbed straight up and pulled out a stick of giant dynamite and lit it. After about 5 seconds the mountain exploded and obliterated everything in the mountain and everything on it. Alex had sacrificed himself for a greater cause. He had saved lives and put his duty first, even at the cost of his own life.

One day, I was playing football and my friend kicked it into a storage room. He asked me to get it. After that I found something glorious and mysterious, glowing in the dark. I didn't want to touch it but I touched it accidentally. All of a sudden, it sent me right back to 1405s.

I felt dizzy and seasick until I could stand properly. Then I realized I was stuck on a ship that is full of people. It was when I saw a man with a weird hat and a cape on him, in ancient Chinese clothing. He introduced himself to me as Zheng He. Then I realized I was on his voyage ship. To my surprise, he asked me if I want to go on an adventure with him and I agreed. All of a sudden, a storm was coming to us, bringing dark clouds and heavy rains over straight to us. Zheng He called his crew to get the ship covered and put down the anchor to stable the ship. After having a war with the storm for a few days, we were still alive! Unfortunately, some crew members got flushed away by the storm so we only got 20 members left on the ship...

We continued our adventure on hunting treasures all around the world. Not after long, we rested on a quiet island and discovered an abandoned cave in a mountain. There was an old and locked treasure chest inside! However, as it was locked, we have to find the key for it... While we are still figuring out how to find it, someone saw a carved map showing the location of the key on top of the treasure chest. "Hurray!" I cried. It was also inside the cave as well. Few hours later, Zheng He finally came across with the key, which was buried under some mud. We opened it and see... A huge glowing ship model with a crown on it! We also shared the gold found inside the chest.

Few years later, I said goodbye to him and his crew and started to seek my way back home. On my way, I once encountered the glowing and mysterious thing I touched at the beginning. Then I touched it... "Boom!" I was sent into a bright swirl and went back to the normal world. Everything seemed like a dream to me. My friends are happy to see me again!

# Zheng He

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Kong, Matthew – 9*

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# Yao Ming's Adventures on The Ming Treasure Voyages

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lam, Darren – 11*

Ten-year old Yao Ming somersaulted across the deck, dodging a pistol's shot while waving his gleaming cutlass at the pirates. "You'll never take me alive!" he yelled, throwing ropes at the pirates. The pirates yelled, the ropes binding them, and Yao Ming was being lifted onto the cheering crew's shoulders. He felt legendary ... .. except that he was daydreaming on the loo once again. He quickly grabbed the plumbing stick and started cleaning the toilet, before he was spotted by the captain slacking again. Yao Ming was on a ship that was part of the Ming Treasure Voyages, and he was headed to India, which would have been an exciting trip ... if he hadn't been a servant.

Despite this, he still looked forward to India, where he might get a break on a beach. The miles melted by, and Yao Ming's life continued. Everything was great ... or at least until the night of the storm, where everything changed.

That night, waves battered the ship. Rain lashed the sails, and lightning flashed through the sky. The ship lurched and wobbled in the thunderstorm, with the deck crammed with sailors, lookouts, guards and servants. However, Yao Ming was in his tattered, flea-infested, half-rotten bunk which was littered with buckets in an effort to hold out the rain, where Yao Ming was daydreaming again. On the deck, there were grunts and cries, and a vague shout of "help!", but Yao Ming was oblivious to everything. He was dreaming of a kung-fu kick when the door swung open, and there stood a pirate! Yao Ming did not spot him, but kicked him in the face, and the pirate collapsed. Yao Ming awoke abruptly, saw the unconscious pirate and hurried out to help, closing the door behind him. In his haste, he didn't quite close the door.

Yao Ming raced up the deck. He dodged fighters, weaved through supplies and managed to get to the side of the ship. He peered down at the choppy sea and felt a lurch of seasickness overcome him. He headed back to his bunk, where he might feel better when he spotted several pirates were being battered by his swinging door. Yao Ming tried to provide assistance, but suddenly the rusty door fell off its hinges, and sent them all tumbling into the sea!

The cold water rushed up to meet Yao Ming, and the impact stung his entire body. He felt himself sinking to the bottom, when he collided into several pieces of coral, which floated into a strange pile that looked like a pillar and shifting an ancient lever, which seemed to adjust a bit of the seabed, but Yao Ming convinced himself it was nothing. He pushed himself desperately back up, and barely reached the ship when suddenly there was a roar ...

A monstrous creature loomed out of the water, clearly relishing the effect of it. It had great black spots with eyes embedded in them all around eight slimy, long, sinister tentacles that were absolutely hideous. Its body was larger than a giant squid, dwarfing the ship and it gave an ear-splitting roar that sent the soldiers and sailors scrambling around the deck. Pirates yelled, dropped their weapons, banged into each other which provoked screams, yells and bangs, which startled the creature. However, it was not an achievement as the creature got mad and threw its slimy tentacles onto the ship.

The pirates screamed, the sailors ran for cover and the captains of both forces yelled at their men to stop acting like babies. Yao Ming was one of the few reasonable men left, and he suggested the idea of working together to the two leaders. "Why don't we combine forces to fight this monster?" he requested, gesturing at the chaos ensuring behind him. The leaders glanced at each other, considering the offer. It was a tempting one if they were to survive.

"Yes!" they agreed. They retrieved their men, and the sailors readied the cannons, soldiers sharpened their weapons and pirates prepared the sails, when suddenly, the monster struck, sending two nearby soldiers flying, and a huge crack appeared on the hull of the ship. Immediately, Yao Ming was dispatched to mend the crack, while the fighting raged above. Quickly finishing his mission, Yao Ming returned to the deck where cannons were banging, and silver blurs were flying all over the place, trying to find their target. The serpent slapped the ship again, and it rocked dangerously. The pirates ran about, yelling, and Yao Ming

encouraged them to keep it up. However, many men were disarmed, and the ship's stock of gunpowder was slowly running out. Yao Ming, desperate to do something, grabbed a nearby fallen sword and charged the mighty monster himself. "NO!" yelled the captain. The monster's tentacles engulfed Yao Ming, and he fought them off and reached the monster's body. The monster roared as its defences were penetrated as its tentacles were severed, and whacked Yao Ming hard in the face. Yao Ming felt his nose crack, blood spread across his face and he fell into the water below...

Yao Ming's lifeless body sunk deeper and deeper into the dark, misty sea. He was close to unconsciousness, when suddenly, he hit something soft. The coral he had unwittingly turned into a pillar was saving him now! He swam for the surface and burst out full of confidence. The monster was caught off guard, and suffered a fatal blow, and its life ebbed away. Triumphant, Yao Ming lifted his sword as the crew celebrated, joyfully hugging him. Smiling, Yao Ming only requested one thing: for all the pirates to join the sailors, and sail together representing China. His request was happily met, and the men made him commander. The ship then sailed once again, and soon became famous for its heroic deeds. And so, to this day, it is known as the mighty king of the sea.

# A Race Against Time

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lam, Isabella – 10*

I sighed as I sat on the deck of my boat. Don't get me wrong, I love the sea! But charting whale activity and other boring stuff was not how I planned to spend my break. As the boat moved across the silent night sea, I stared out at the distance, wishing I was home. Suddenly, the boat lurched, and I was almost thrown overboard. The other crew members ran out in their pyjamas, confused. One of my men ran to the prow screaming, "What on earth is that!?" Following his gaze, I looked, and what I saw chilled my bones. We were being lured farther and farther into a swirling vortex of water. "Whirlpool!" someone shouted, but I could barely hear them over the ear-splitting sound of water. This was our end.

Praying to god, I quickly gathered everyone and told them all to go below decks. No one was going to be left outside to the ocean's wrath. We swayed from side to side and crashed into countless objects as well as each other. There was broken glass everywhere and just as I was thinking of what to do, I heard the sound of shattering of glass yet again. Many of our crew were hurt, I knew we couldn't hold much longer. Then suddenly, as quickly as it had started, it all stopped. The boat stopped swaying, the sound of crashing waves died. Suddenly, it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Carefully, I stood up and brushing past the broken glass, I walked up to the deck.

For a second, I stood dazed staring at the strange sight. A group of men were standing on the deck. No way, I told all my crew members to go downstairs and we didn't have nearly as many people. As my eyes got used to the darkness, I saw the figures of strongly built men, holding wicked sharp swords that glittered in the dark black night.

Instinctively, my hand moved towards the door handle behind my back. But suddenly, there was a flurry of movement and before I could speak, a sword pressed against my neck.

"Who are you?" I demanded. "What are you doing on our ship?"

"Actually," replied a voice from the pitch black, "Who are you and what are YOU doing on our ship?"

"What do you mean?" I said confused, "This is my ship, not yours."

"Stop joking around," he said. "We are the Ming treasure fleet and though we are famed for giving valuables away, we also keep military forces and we do NOT like thieves on our ship."

I was bewildered.

"Hold up." I said. We are not thieves, we got sucked into a whirlpool and landed here".

"The blue flurry!" They exclaimed

"The what?" I said.

"It is a special hurricane that appears once a century and sucks ships from their time to any time in the past." The captain explained.

"So what year is it?" I asked

"1423."

Time seemed to slow down. My heart stopped. If they were being honest, then that meant over 20 young men and I were currently stuck 596 years back from the current time.

"No, it can't be!" I exclaimed.

"It's happening," they replied.

“Isn’t there any way to go back?” I asked desperately.

“Well…… there is one way” they said slowly “but it’s so difficult that no one has ever made it back.”

“How?” I asked.

“You have to find the blue flurry again and go through it before the second sunset from when you arrived here.”

“I have to try,” I said.

“Okay. We’ll help you.”

“We must go to the mountain of truth and find the man of wisdom,” Someone said.

“Yes! He has the map of the flurry, meaning he can track the blue flurry no matter where it goes.”

“We have to hurry!” I exclaimed.

“Very well, we will change course towards the mountain of truth.” The pirates said.

“Ok,” I replied.

I gathered my crew and we went back above deck to await our arrival at the mountain of truth.

After hours of sailing, we finally reached the mountain of truth. We hiked up the rocky path and when we finally reached the cave of the man of wisdom, the sun had set. We were exhausted.

“Only one can enter,” said one pirate.

“I will go,” I said.

“Very well,” they said. “But be careful.”

I nodded and stepped into the dingy, moist cave.

I walked for about ten minutes and found myself in a circular clearing. There was a glowing orb and an old man sitting next to it on a cushion.

“Are you the man of wisdom?” I asked tentatively.

“Yes. I have been expecting you,” he says.

“Um…… OK?” I replied unsure of what else to say.

“Tell the pirates that the blue flurry is currently located near the port of old Chinatown.” He says.

“Thank you,” I say gratefully.

“You’re welcome, I wish you luck.”

And with that, he vanished.

I rushed out of the cave.

“He said the blue flurry is located near the port of old Chinatown!” I panted.

“Let’s go!” they said.



Once again we boarded the ship. I was so tired that I lay on the bunks and soon I was sound asleep.....

When I came to, we had arrived, and the pirates had found the blue flurry.

“Well, here we are.” The captain says.

“Thank you for all your help.” I said.

“You’re welcome. You better hurry though, the sun is about to set!”

“Bye!”

And with that, the hurricane sucked us up and all I saw was black.....

I landed with a thump on the deck of my ship. We were back! I screamed with joy and relief. I hugged my crew and we celebrated all night. This may not have been the most fun break, but it certainly was the most interesting. I’m sure, I’ll never forget this adventure.

# Admiral Zheng

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lam, Julian – 10*

Admiral Zheng He and his fleet of ships just left China, and are about to go to their first stop, Vietnam. There were 16 ships and he was going to hand out gifts in the form of gold, because the Yongle Emperor of China wanted to build good relations with other countries. Everyone was excited and happy for the journey. Everyone on board was eating their breakfast of mantou and drinking oolong tea, and they were extremely hungry. They were close to China but not close enough to see China, even though it was a bright, clear and sunny day.

Suddenly, there was fog everywhere. Zheng He was feeling uncomfortable because he couldn't see his ships. He didn't want anything bad to happen, like a pirate attack and stolen treasure. Zheng heard his men bumping into each other and shouting at each other.

Ho Wong, the captain of the ship, Phoenix, signalled to his crew to row to a place where pirates lived. "Where are we going? The other ships are going the other way!" a member of the crew questioned him. "Be quiet! I am the captain of this ship! How dare you question me!" The crew started moving the ship to a land of troubles.

Pirates suddenly jumped aboard The Phoenix and attacked the crew with swords. Some of the crew, scared, ran around the ship and accidentally fell in the sea. Some hid aboard the ship but some brave soldiers fought back with spears, swords and also bow and arrows. While they were fighting, some pirates accidentally knocked down some torches and lit up the ship with fire. There were sounds of weapons clanging with each other, shouting and screaming. The pirates and the soldiers had to avoid the flames on the bloody deck which had dead bodies laying on it. There were more dead bodies from the crew than the pirates. Some of the soldiers caught on fire as they were forced into the flames. People were fighting everywhere. While they were fighting, arrows were being shot from the pirates's ship, flying through the air and injuring the enemies.

"Go, get the treasure!" yelled Chen Zuyi, the leader of the pirates. Ho, who had since joined the pirates on their ship, directed a few of them back to his own ship, The Phoenix, on small wooden sailboats to steal the precious treasure on the lower deck. The pirates climbed into the lower deck and started to load the treasure onto the sailboats. "Go, quicker!" barked Ho.

Chang, a captain of a ship called Firefly, saw flames across the sea, He heard shouting and smelled the smoke. "Tell Admiral He!" he shouted. Chang waited for Zheng He's instructions, then lead his ship to the flames.

As he moved to the flames, he wondered what was going on. Suddenly, he saw the name of the ship through his telescope and realised it was one of their own fleet, He was shocked to see that Captain Ho was helping Chen Zuyi, the most feared pirate of the Asian seas, to kill his crew and steal the Emperor's treasure. "Fire archers! Aim at the pirate's ship then fire!" commanded Chang.

The pirates ran around the deck of their ship frantically trying to avoid the arrows. Chen Zuyi feared that he was going to lose his ship and his men. Pirates were shot on the body but some wanted to take cover so they wouldn't die, so they decided to hide behind barrels or even dead bodies.

Chen was forced to jump into the freezing sea because his ship was in flames. Chen swam up the water and was unexpectedly hit by a bunch of wood planks. Chen furiously screamed while swallowing salty water, "How dare you, Chang you filthy sailor!" Chen swam as he tried to get to the sailboat Ho was in with the treasure, while also avoiding dead bodies floating in the sea and arrows being shot at him.

The crew aboard The Firefly jumped onto sailboats and made their way to the strong pirates and the magnificent treasure. Along the way were sailors, bad and good, grabbing on to the boats, trying not to drown. But those on the sailboats shoved them off rudely because they had to quickly save the Emperor's treasure before it sank into the sea. They saw tattooed pirates with scars on their faces on the boat filled with treasure. The pirates were still loading up the treasure onto their boats. The crew crept quietly onto The Phoenix to defend the treasure while some of the soldiers attacked the bandits with all they had. The pirates surrendered since they were outnumbered by the aiding crew. Four soldiers rushed towards Ho, then put a smelly fishing net to capture him. Ho tried to get out of the net but got stuck with some silverfish slapping him with their tails! Suddenly, Chen dashed to Ho with a dagger to slash open the net to free him. Ho jumped out of the net and took a fallen broken sword from the dirty ground and slashed all four soldiers. Chang commanded his soldiers, "get them!" The soldiers surrounded Ho and Chen, leaving them with no escape route. Ho and Chen gave up feeling defeated and outraged. But they spared Ho and Chen Zuyi to be taken as prisoners

After the fight was over, the soldiers of Zheng He proudly took the prisoners to their master. Then they enjoyed their trip to foreign countries.

## New Adventures

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Li, Xinyun – 9*

One sailor came running towards captain Daniel with something round and circle in his fist. Daniel asked, “You look very worried and scared. What happened, Bob?” Bob answered, “Read this scroll then you will understand what had happened. You have to help! We will have to go on another adventure soon...” Daniel took the scroll gently from Bob’s hand and opened the scroll to read “Dear Daniel, please can you help me with one problem? There is a SHIP of pirates who have stolen treasure from an island, and now that island’s people are very sad, so please can you help with your amazing pirate team? Please??? Your friend from the lookout Charlie. Ps: please write back if you can or cannot.” “Bob, go and get me some paper and pen and all the other sailors.” Bob came back with a large group of sailors and a piece of paper. Daniel read out the message aloud, so all the sailors could hear what the letter was about. All the sailors listened carefully and chanted together after Daniel finished reading, “Ok we are ready to go!” The sailors went home to pack and they met near the Ming Treasure Fleet. Daniel told one sailor to deliver the letter that said “ok!” on it. Then they set off to go on another mysterious adventure.

They sailed for a while until they heard some singing. Daniel thought that the singing came from an island nearby. But he couldn’t see any island. So they kept on sailing happily until they saw a big ship. On top of it there was a black flag with a skull and a crossbones and also some scary shadows. That ship was called “Black Shadow.” Daniel couldn’t believe the singing was coming from the Black Shadow ship. Their fleet was endangered. All the sailors stood there in horror, they didn’t know what to do. Just then as the Ming Treasure Fleet drifted on the bright blue sea, their fleet suddenly crashed into the Black Shadow. CRASH! Then it suddenly felt like the Ming Treasure Fleet’s sailors had suddenly woken up from a sleep. The Black Shadow ship’s captain hadn’t noticed the Ming Treasure Fleet but now he felt the crash, so he turned around and saw the Ming Treasure Fleet sailing towards them. He shouted “FIGHT!” There was no movement but the sound of making arms. He looked around and saw no sailors on the boat to listen to his slogans. When he turned to face the Ming Treasure Fleet, he saw huge amounts of arms facing him. He felt so scared that he nearly fell overboard. He turned and was ready to run away, just then all heard a “PONG” and he fell to the ground with a heavy “THUMP.” The Ming Treasure Fleet’s sailors were so happy, but soon they heard clinking and crashing, and they looked on their fleet speechlessly. IT WAS THE BLACK SHADOW SHIP’S SAILORS!!! Daniel and his sailors were ready to battle, and then they started the battle with a “CRASH.” Someone in the Black Shadow ship had fallen over their captain then all the other sailors fell on top of him. Daniel and his sailors took their chance, they shot at all the sailors on their fleet until they were dead and couldn’t move. Then they climbed on the Black Shadow ship and searched for a long time, finally they found something special. All the sailors’ eyes shone with sparkles.

They slowly opened the treasure chest, inside were shimmering gold coins, glimmering jewellery and shiny diamonds. They took all the treasure and gathered it onto the Ming Treasure Fleet. They had done their job! They were very happy to help the poor people who had lost their treasure.

They sailed for a while until they reached an island with lots of people crying. Daniel returned all the treasure to the island people. They were very happy to have their treasure back and thanked Daniel over and over again. Then Daniel said goodbye and left the island with his team and sailed back home. When they finally arrived home, huge amounts of people were onshore cheering. Just then Daniel spotted Charlie in the middle of the crowd. Charlie said “Congratulations! You managed to make it. For your hard work I am going to give you a prize. It is a pet parrot! Usually all pirates have a parrot. The parrot can look out for danger. But this parrot is special, it can also talk to you and understand you.” “Thank you!” Daniel said happily and took the parrot gently from Charlie’s hand.

Until another adventure started...

# The Adventure of a Lifetime

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lo, Maxine – 9*

Ashlyn banged her head. She had to do a project on the Qing dynasty, which she had to hand in tomorrow, and she just started thinking about it! Since she always does her work after she finishes playing, she always does homework in a rush! But the bigger problem was... the wi-fi was broken! "Aha!" she said to herself. Even though it was a crazy idea, she was always wondering if that object could be invented...

She worked on her idea for hours and hours, until she made a...TIME MACHINE! Ashlyn had a brave and curious personality, so she didn't mind if she got lost in any puzzle or maze. She was sweaty and exhausted, but it was worth it. She took a proud look at the smooth time machine, as she went in it. She was too proud that she forgot to set the time period to the Qing dynasty!

After the sound stopped, she stepped out and found herself on a ship, and as dizzy as a moth that flutters around the flame. She checked the controller... "No, No, No! This is not right! This is the Ming dynasty! Ok, what should I do?" She tried to put it back to Qing dynasty, but the time machine was broken down and rusty. Ashlyn grabbed the heavy time machine in her hands and threw it in the ocean as hard as she could.

The people around her looked dirty, as if they haven't taken a bath for months. She looked over all the heads, and saw someone dressed differently from all the other crew mates. He was somewhere about seven feet tall, and was perfectly clean. Ashlyn zoomed through her brain, trying to figure out who he was. After a while, she realized it was Zheng He, the captain in the Ming dynasty who led the Ming Treasure Voyages!

She was so ecstatic to meet the legendary Zheng He! Suddenly, she saw Zheng He approach closer...closer... and closer. Ashlyn was really nervous. "Now, please, do your job! Ok?" She had no idea what her job was. So Ashlyn just picked up a random mop and swepted the floor.

After a hard day's work, while everyone was sleeping, a crew member shouted "PIRATE ATTACK! PIRATE ATTACK!" Zheng He quickly commanded the military to attack the pirates "Admiral Zheng here, a pirate attack is currently launched by the pirates!" Zheng He told the whole crew to hide in his room, because the security guards were guarding his room. They could hear heavy footsteps heading their way. The loud SWOOSH sounds of the sword fight could be heard through the door. Screams of agonizing pain followed. The sword sounds came closer... Suddenly, a sword poked through the door. It started sawing a circular opening. Ash widened her eyes and grabbed her bag, ready to hit one of the pirates if they came in.

Suddenly, the pirates rushed in and giggled "Our captain would be impressed if we take the silk and treasure... but for people, we're gonna get you guys! You people have been causing so much trouble for us pirates! You will be our slaves, cleaning our ships every day! MWAHAHAHA!" The pirates were about to put a hypnotizing poison on Zheng He, but Ashlyn started turning her head to the pirates, and hit the pirates with her heavy and torn-down bag. The last of the pirates fainted heavily on the floor, while Zheng He took out his sword, breathing heavily. "Thanks for the help. You seem to have good instincts. Why don't you help me navigate to Africa?"

The fleet continued along the route, and it had been many days since they last saw land. Finally, the fleet nearly reached a man on the plank. The man waved at them from a close distance. The man had much darker skin than anyone on the ship. It was obvious that they were in foreign lands. Zheng He exchanged gifts with the man. He offered trunks of astonishing silk and gold, reflecting the sunlight. In return, Zheng received all sorts of exotic animals like camels, zebras and ostriches.

Ash was still thinking about having a new adventure, but she remembered: SHE HAD TO RETURN TO THE PRESENT! To distract him, she asked Zheng He to go to sleep. Zheng He raised an eyebrow but agreed anyway. Ashlyn ran to the shore like a wildfire. Ashlyn walked around the shore to see if there were any scraps she could use. She saw a time machine. Wait, was it the one she built?

Ashlyn worked on fixing the time machine for hours... until she made it back to how it was supposed to be. She inserted new-looking metal parts in there. She turned the controller to the present and activated it. The sound was like a truck. VROOOOOM....

In a blink, she was back home, lying in her bed, breathing hard. Was this just a dream? Ashlyn's hair was as messy as a mop. The time machine glowed then disappeared, glowed then disappeared... Then it disappeared for real. The alarm clock rang and Ash banged on it. The alarm fell to the floor in a crash, and a small piece of glass fell off it. Her mom rushed in and asked "C'mon, wake up!! You're gonna be late for school!" Did the time machine have some magic, or was it just a dream? Ashlyn ate her breakfast and saw the time machine flashing around again. Mom shouted "What are you looking at! Eat your breakfast! The school bus is almost here!" Couldn't mom see the time machine? Ashlyn thought "If mom wasn't going to find out, I guess this means more adventures await!".

The best is yet to come, but Ashlyn would have to be patient!

# The Exploits of the Mighty Sea

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Shaw, Micah – 10*

“Dad, can you tell me a story before I go to bed?,” asked Kent, a 6-year-old boy to his father. “Kent, it is getting late, you should go to bed now”, replied his father. “Please?”, begged Kent, eager to hear a story. “Well, there is one story that I can tell you before bed” answered his father. “Yay!”, screamed Kent, jumping with excitement.

More than 1000 years ago in the deep Pacific Ocean, the brave and mighty captain, Zheng He, set sail for the long journey around the coast of Java. “I see land about 3 kilometers away!”, screamed the lookout officer. “Everyone, all weapons ready!”, replied Zheng He loudly through the speakers. Then, Zheng He caught sight of the colossal country Java. He was ready to start trading treasures for the Yongle Emperor, defeat enemies of the Ming Dynasty, and most importantly, explore Java’s natural wonder.

A few more minutes later after arriving and now circling the coast of Java stealthily, Zheng He called out “All clear so far, I don’t see any enemies in our way...yet”. As the powerful fleet continued sailing, Zheng He started feeling his stomach rumbling. Zheng He glanced at his shining watch. “I think we should stop at Calcutta and eat at the Inn” suggested Zheng He. The others agreed with Zheng He for they were also starving. Very soon, the mighty fleet arrived at Calcutta.

Before the pirates arrived at the inn, Calcutta’s ruler stopped Zheng He and his pirates. “Hi, Mighty Zheng He”, he greeted. Zheng He replied, “Hi, may we eat at the inn?”. “Sure”, said Calcutta’s ruler. Then, Zheng He marched into the inn with his crew and they all stuffed their faces.

As they were walking out, the local ruler stopped him. “Hi, Zheng He. Would you like to trade us your silk for our matchlock guns?”, asked the local ruler. Zheng He replied, “Yes, quickly because I think it’s time to leave.”. After trading, Zheng He ran to the ship in fear of enemies coming.

At the ship Zheng He asked, “Hey Ma Huan, do you see any enemies coming our way?”. “Let me check sir, let me check”, replied the captain “Uh sir...”. “What?” asked Zheng He bothered. “Sir, I see a fleet of ships with green sails incoming less than a mile away, you should be able to see it now without a scope,” warned Ma Huan. “I see it...” Zheng He paused, mouth dropped open. “Everyone all weapons in position! We’ve got incoming forces!” screamed Zheng He as he readied himself.

Very soon, the silent, wide stretch of water became a loud boiling volcano full of explosions. Hand cannons were breaking through parts of ships, leading to massive explosions all around the ships. Pirates were diving into the ocean trying to escape, and the commanders were barking out commands all over the place. The unknown opposition fleet was soon screaming in fear from Zheng He’s leading fleet. Zheng He knew the victory would be his. The captain was the only one left standing. “Arrest him!” Zheng He commanded. Five of the best pirates took hold of the evil captain and locked him with unbreakable chains. Then they made the pirate walk the plank and sold their ships for spices and silks.

The pirates soon sailed off for their next stop— Ceylon (Sri Lanka) which was only 2.1 miles away. They could already feel the wide, weedy land ahead of them. “Land Ahoy!” shouted the chief. The large, green plains in Ceylon amazed Zheng He, but what caught most of his attention was the huts made of stone, grass, palm leaves, and branches. A man walked slowly out of a hut, noticing the army of pirates approaching. The man screamed, “A FLEET OF SHIPS ARE INCOMING!!!!”. The man hurried back in the hut and came out again with his matchlock gun. Other farmers also spotted the approaching fleet. Zheng He announced through the speakers “Stop! We mean no harm” he continued “We only wish to refill our bunker fuel”. “Hold fire,” the first man said, “Follow me”. Zheng He signaled the pirates to follow the man. The man showed him into the fuel dock. When they were finished, it was already night.

Zheng He got into his ship and made his way back to Mainland China. Zheng He heard a scream from behind. He spun around. A ship sank into the water with a huge splash. Then, two ships broke in half, spinning Zheng He’s ship in the center. He knew something wasn’t right. It wasn’t a storm and it wasn’t just misfortune. Zheng He felt goosebumps shivering inside him. His beating heart trembled with fear.

Then a disaster struck. A humongous green, scaly sea spirit towered above them. Zheng He jumped back. Shocked. "This is it", thought Zheng He. "This is where it all ends". He closed his eyes, waiting for certain death. Suddenly, his Nephew, Zheng Enlai leaped out of nowhere to the beast and with his sword and sliced it in half. Zheng He opened his eyes finding the monster killed. It was a miracle. It was just like a dream. He was saved.

"Was Zheng He's nephew in the ship the whole time?" asked Kent, excitedly. "Did the sea spirit have muscles?". Dad checked the clock, "It's late enough, go to bed Kent". "Fine," said Kent excited to hear more next time. Just before Kent walked into his room, dad called, "Wait, I'll tell you a little more. I have a secret you should know... ", dad said mysteriously, "We are the blood of Zheng He!"



# Adventures of China's Ming Treasure Fleet

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wong, Hang – 9*

More than six hundred years ago, there was an adventurous man called Zheng He. He wanted to explore some unknown lands by ship and take the riches and treasures to give them to the emperor of his country, China.

Zheng He asked shipmakers, carvers, painters to help build three huge ships. He also gathered a crew of more than eight hundred men to go with him on the journey. After careful planning, the fleet set sail from the port of Beijing, with lots of food, clothing, as well as maps, leaving all the villagers waving goodbye from the mainland.

At first, the crew sailed to a tiny island and saw an old man sitting on a rock. "I have lived on the island for 40 years already, and I sensed some little earthquakes on the island in the past few days.", he said. "There must be something lurking below the waves. Be careful on your journey and good luck." He said to Zheng He. After thanking the old man, the three ships sailed away from that tiny island.

Suddenly the wind started to get a bit strong. They thought of the old man's advice: There was something lurking below the waves. The crew still bravely sailed on. They sailed to an island called Anuta Island. "Hi!" Zheng He smiled. The people there were really friendly. They decorated the ships with long leaves and paint them in all sorts of colours and welcomed them by dancing around the ships. The people told them that there were small earthquakes on the island in the past few days. "Some of the houses lost its roof or door, or that the whole house had crumbled down." The leader of the people said. "We also had small tsunamis earlier this month. We believe the cause was a monster in the sea, like a giant underwater dragon or a enormous squid." "Maybe you are right." said Zheng He as many of the crew trembled with fear.

Then, one of the lookouts of a ship spotted something far away: A pirate ship! The good thing was the ship was far away. The bad thing was the ship was getting closer. Strangely enough, after a few seconds, one of the pirates on the pirate ship shouted some things. "It must be the captain," Zheng He thought. But then, the ship turned away and headed another way, this time further away from their ship. It must be a sign that something was wrong.

On that night, all was calm. "That was weird." Zheng He thought. The sea had very little waves, even though the ships were sailing, cutting through the waves. But then, the sea began to get choppy, giant waves came, the wind blew like a hurricane, and a giant squid rose up from the waves.

The island people were right. The giant squid was huge! It was about the size of two school buses, and its eyes big as basketballs. It attacked the ships with tremendous force, and many of the crew were thrown overboard because of each of the squid's ten giant arms! Zheng He killed the squid with a sword, the ink squirting out of the squid and wetting the whole ship with black ink! After that, Zheng He asked the crew to cook the squid for their dinner. The squid was so large that it provided food for them for another month! Then they continued on to somewhere that they had never seen before.

After weeks of tiring sailing, they came to the place that they had wished they had come to: India! "We come from China." Zheng He said as he bowed gently to the king of India. The Indians were very friendly and gave them lots of gifts from their king, like rubies and emeralds. They guided the sailors around their country, visiting sites like the Taj Mahal. "We have lots of cool animals here." the king said. "The King cobra is one of the most iconic. One bite from its venomous fangs could kill an elephant." "Cool!" Zheng He replied. The king offered them some delicious curry and roti, also sometimes called Indian pizza. "There is also another country that has many wonders you will like and has lots of treasures that they can give to you." said the king. "That country is Africa."

The sailors arrived at Africa. They heard drums beating and people singing. They were there! All of them were dressed in traditional African clothing. They were wearing hats made out of feathers, clothing made out of lion skin and fabrics, and some wore wristbands made from leaves. "Hello!" said the king of Africa in African. Like the Indians, they were very friendly and gave them gifts like drums and bells. When they guided the sailors around Africa, the sailors saw many animals they had never seen before, such as the African elephant, hyenas, and hippos! The animals were all quite noisy. The lion roared, the hyenas laughed, and the hippos, well, um, they continued fighting for a female hippo! The sailors gave the Africans silk, which was precious to China, and the Africans also exchanged them with a giraffe as tall as a house!

Finally, they returned to China. The people were all waiting for the sailors to unload the ships and see the treasures inside. All the people were awestruck with the treasures and the animals they brought back. Some of the squid meat was even still there on the ships! When they went into the palace and saw the emperor, Zheng He bowed to him. He had not only done his mission, but he had also experienced different cultures from other countries, and most importantly, made friendship with them. That changed China forever.

# The Assassination of the Ming

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wong, Matthew – 10*

The sky was as pink as a blushing beetroot, as chaotic as a ruined empire, and the sea as dark as the endless depth of an eternal abyss. The ships were coming, crammed with shimmering iron. In the ship were a thousand snores, and the joyous shore of India grows ever so closer.

The sky melts away. A peaceful blue drives the chaos away. Suddenly a shriek of fear pierced the air. The ships have come, casting a long, thick shadow on the earth. The mast was painted with a golden dragon, which looked as though it was frozen in melted gold.

The shore was suddenly overwhelmed with soldiers, and the general screamed out “Zheng He arrives! By the order of the heavenly emperor, we bring you these valuable treasures. Let our empires coexist in prosperity and happiness. We shall flourish in this trading route. Now, we shall depart after three days time. I this time you will pay respect for the heavenly emperor, and we shall be in peace.”

The people covered as the ships sailed away, but nobody noticed the raft that followed the vast vessels...

“Ahh!!” a scream of terror slashed through the air as the shimmering blade shot through the kitchen. The intruder leapt on board, and silenced the cook.

The figure crept up the stairs silently, and she strained her eyes to find the man he had to kill. She needed a distraction to lure him in her trap; she had been unwise to silence the cook; he was a essential distraction. She had no choice but to venture deeper in the kitchen. Before long, a soldier arrived. She had acquired the distraction she had wanted.

“Freeze!” shouted the soldier, but was silenced as the assassin flicked a poison dart at him. “Stop!” cried another soldier, but he was beaten unconscious by a well aimed stab of a chopstick. She was yet again stopped by a soldier, who tried to pin her to the ground. Yet she kept calm, and shoved a spitting cobra at her opponent’s face, who viciously bit the soldier’s face. The soldier collapsed, and the snake slithered away, while the assassin waited to kill the man who had to die.

“Bang!” a loud noise rang through the kitchen. “It’s probably nothing,” mumbled Zheng He, the admiral of the fleet. Thud. A scream rang through the vessel. “Bang!” A loud noise rang through the air as though someone was firing a gun.

“Bang!” The sound torn the veil of silence once more. Zheng He decided to investigate. A sliver blade slashed through the corridor. “Finally, you shall die.” whispered Abdula, assassin of India.

Zheng He examined the sword that had been thrown at him. It was curved and carved. Ivory adorned the blade. This was definitely not a Chinese dagger. “This looks almost like the elaborate Indian dagger!” thought the admiral. “Prepare to die, fool.” Zheng He looked up. A short knife was pointing at him.

Zheng He drew his sword. The assassin leapt through the air, slashing at the admiral. However, her opponent dashed away, using a piece of severed wood as a shield. She pulled out a six foot long krait. He pulled out his second sword. The snake darted forward, striking at Zheng He. Zheng He sliced its head off. The assassin knew he was too strong. Suddenly, she jumped off the vessel.

Strange things were happening at the ship. A week after they visited Africa, a barbaric race bombarded the ships. A day later, half of the cooks went missing. Then, the giraffe they captured broke free and wreaked havoc, savaging ten sailors before it was killed. Later, a weird infestation of strange bugs poisoned twelve people. Afterwards, cobras were sighted roaming the ship. Rumours flew around the ship, cold as shadows. Were they cursed?

Nevertheless, they carried on. They fought off the barbarians even in the most dangerous of places. They captured the animals that dared to escape, and tried to exterminate the dangerous bugs. But the snakes were nowhere to be seen...

The men had journeyed from Africa to Arabia, India to the Philippines. The threat of the assassin was long forgotten. Oh, how foolish men can be when faced with merriment! However, Zheng He remained alert. He was shaken by the assassination attempt. As he brooded in his study, he noticed the engravings on the blade he had discovered. There was an abbreviation. A.O.I. He thought for a while, then a wave of realization crashed unto him. "Abdula of India" he muttered. He swept away, calling his troops immediately.

"Ahhhhhh!" A shriek broke of quiet. A big black snake reared onto the foolish nurse. With a single bite, she fainted on the ground. Abdula materialised on the ship. "Finally, I can strike safely again." But she was very wrong indeed.

"Not if a squadron of elite soldiers and their generals are standing in your way, Abdula of India!" Zheng He whispered in disdain.

The peace of the night was broken. Smashed. For the battle had ensured, and will not stop until one of these people are dead: Abdula or Zheng He. The sound of iron rang through the ship. It was time for death.

Then, as quick as lightning, a sword thrust pierced through her waist.

"Ah!" The female of terror fell. Her waist snapped as her legs gave way. Her head crashed through a wall and landed on a steaming pot of soup. Then, a note fell out of her pocket:

*"We cannot bear any further pressure from the chinese any longer, it is ridiculous! We must take action now! Kill Zheng He, for this will make China withdraw from India in shock. Also, kill as many chinese scum as possible.*

*-Sultan"*

"So the Sultan was behind this, was he?" asked a soldier. "Yes." answered Zheng He.

The sky was as pink as blushing beetroot, as chaotic as a ruined empire, and the slight tint of blue reminded the Chinese of better times ahead.

# A Voyage of Gifts

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Yin, Adora – 10*

Zheng He looked up in the sky, it was very foggy but he had to signal the fleet of ships to go right, heading for Africa. He couldn't use the ship's flags so he commanded his servants to get the firecrackers.

Zheng He sees two firecrackers in the air and thinks "Oh! That must mean the direction right!"

The sound reverberated throughout the air, the other ships must have heard it. When the sound of the firecrackers died, the other sailors yelled "Thank goodness! Honestly, I thought that we were lost in the middle of nowhere."

The journey has been about seven thousand and eight hundred kilometres long, some nights on the ship were terrifying with big waves but some days were beautiful and calm at sea. Zheng He remembered that the emperor had sent him to lead the fleet for the fourth time, this time they were headed to Africa to give away gifts to the tribe leader there. Zheng He sailed into new waters, to the Somali coast and down to Kenya. When they reached Africa, many people were looking at them in fear and mesmerisation. "Oh my god, look at this!" "I have never seen this many big ships before, they are practically three hundred feet long each!" "Oh no, what if they are going to take us as slaves!" "This is going to be the end of our lives." The citizens of Africa would whisper to each other. They thought that China was going to invade them and started shouting out things like "Please spare us! Take whatever you want, we immediately surrender!" as they went on their knees to slowly bow down. "Please! We are just innocent people, spare us!" They would dramatically.

Zheng He stepped out of the ship holding the gifts and said loud and clear "I don't plan to do anything to your country and I don't mean any harm. I came to present your tribe leader with gifts from the one and only Yong Le, China's emperor, so please get off your knees. I'm just giving your leader a gift of friendliness."

As the residents slowly went back on their feet, they smiled at each other awkwardly. Africa's tribe leader also arrived in his grand carriage, having a look at why everyone was bowing down. When he stepped out of his carriage, he was astonished at the fleet but still confused why his citizens were acting so weird.

"Good afternoon," Zheng He said as he shook the hand of the emperor, "The emperor of China, the mighty ruler Yong Le, would like to give you some gifts. "

The tribe leader smiled kindly "Thank you very much, but why would you do that?"

"It's just a present from the emperor of China, I hope that you like it. We brought porcelain, tea bags, cosmetics, and silk." Zheng He answered, presenting the items they brought from China.

"Thank you again, but would like anything in return?"

"Well, the mighty ruler Yong Le loves animals dearly. He believes in a mythical animal called Qi Lin that brings luck to people near them, and Qi Lins really looked like giraffes. But of course, you don't have to give anything in return as this is just a kind gift." Zheng, He answered.

The tribe leader of Africa nodded and gave some commands to his assistant in another language that is probably African.

That night Africa's leader invited Zheng He to stay a little longer and have dinner with him. They talked all night, Zheng He mentioned about the fleet of ships and the how it's like in China, the king of Africa told Zheng He about the animals there and how life is like in Africa.

“You know Zheng He, I really want to give you an extra gift of friendliness. I hope you accept another giraffe. All of the animals would be really excited about a new place especially if it is a moving city like yours.”

“Now I thank you very much! My emperor, Yong Le, will be delighted!” Zheng He said cheerfully.

After the dinner, the king of Africa said farewell to Zheng He as he led the animals onboard. Four zebras, three ostriches, and six giraffes, Zheng He counted in his head. He directed the animals to the zoo section on one of the boats, no wonder everyone called it the moving city. His workers looked at the animals with eyes of admiration. They would slowly stroke them and say “Awww, you’re so cute!” “You’re going to love this big ship it’s almost like a cruise.”

He waved goodbye to Africa’s tribe leader and grabbed the steering wheel. As the sky was clearing up, Zheng He waved the sixth as a sign to start departing. Zheng He hoped that China’s emperor will settle another trade with Africa so he can visit them again for his fifth voyage.

“Till I see you again!” Zheng He shouted to the king of Africa as the animals walked around excitedly exploring the ship, their new home for a while.

# Pirates

*Western Academy Beijing, Fu, Peter – 10*

When someone mentions the word “Pirates”, usually you think of a foreign, water soaked, stinky breathed man on an old ship looking for gold with a hook for a hand. You would think they have a cool name for the ship, like the “Destroyer”, or “The Queens Revenge”. That’s the exact opposite of what my ship is and has set sail for.

My name is Wang, and I am on “The Emperors ship”. Literally, I am onboard the emperors ship. We have set sail to give gold out to other ships, and visit other countries while we’re at it. I joined because my mother is sick, and has no money to go to the local doctor. I hope to steal some gold without the captain noticing and go back home.

“Wang”! Shouted the Captain as he opened the barrels containing priceless treasures, the whole reason I signed up for this journey.

“Coming, Captain Ke”! I replied. Captain Ke calling me at four in the morning? This was not going to be a happy day.

“Captain Ke, what’s the problem now?” I asked with a tired yawn.

“There is another coin missing. I think I know who stole them all.”

I focused on my poker face as I tried to talk Ke into telling me who he suspected.

Sorry, but am not quite sure yet who is on whose team. I cannot tell a single soul yet, not until they prove to me they are on my side. That was what I suspected he would say but all I got was:

“Go get some sleep”

What!? You called me up for that? I wanted to say, but I knew better than to provoke the ‘rhino’ (every one called him that behind his back) at four in the morning.

When I got into my hammock, my heart was pounding as I pondered over the idea of me being caught. I shuddered at the mere idea of it. I would not let myself get caught. No, my mother and family need me. I would bring shame and disgrace on the whole family, not to mention I would be executed.

As I slowly drifted towards sleep, my mind was still burning with questions and ideas on who the captain suspected. When I finally started snoozing, I dreamt that I was caught stealing gold and the emperor made me watch my whole family being slaughtered in front of me. I went crazy and started to connect my fists with anything that was in my way, scratching and clawing my way to the emperor. Suddenly, another army of soldiers in full anti-crazy man armor appeared at doorway and pulled me toward the executioner. He swung his gleaming sword at the sun and brought it down on my neck. After that, everything felt cold and wet. Then I woke up.

“Wake up!” shouted Li, as he dumped another bucket of fresh seawater on me.

“Why are you dumping water on me?! I did nothing to you!” I replied.

“Wake up call” said Li.

“Disgusting” I muttered while spitting out water and wringing it out of my now soaked clothes.

I was changing when I realized the dream meant something. I now understood the terrible price that came with stealing things that are not yours. Maybe I could wait one more day. Maybe two, or three...

Slowly, the confidence that was there and kept my company for the past weeks I was onboard left me until I was overwhelmed with self-doubt. That was what I was missing. A little self-doubt to fight my over-inflated head and my fatal flaw: overconfidence.

A sharp voice broke my deep thoughts.

“Attention on deck!” Barked captain Ke.

“A pirate ship is coming towards us! We have to prepare all weapons!” Shouted Ke.

Whispers, shouts and murmurs broke out through the crowd as the captain announced this news. Seconds later everyone scattered to find every weapon they could get their hands on.

When I got to my hammock, the only thing I did was write a letter to my mom. I did not want to die leaving my mom nothing to remember me with. Then again, she would be dead if I did not steal the money. I shoved those thoughts aside. I would live. So would my mom.

A deafening noise made me instinctively cover my now bleeding ears. An earthquake like tremble cracked open the floor and caught me off balance. As I tried to regain my foothold, I stumbled across a sword. Recalling that there was an attack, I grabbed it and ran into battle. But it was too late. Almost half the crew were dead. The only good news was that it looked like there was another ship helping us. Finally, we destroyed the pirate captain. Their crew retreated back and sailed away into the vast ocean.

A chorus of cheers erupted from what remained of our crew and the other ship. Too tired to move, I fell asleep.

It has been two days since we made allies with the English people (that is what they called themselves). We gave them lots of gold and treasure from our barrels. Today, we have found a new land with people that call themselves “Arabians”.

I was on the deck when captain Ke pulled me aside.

“Wang, I know you stole the gold. I found a few pieces of gold in your hammock. That is why I need to kill you.”

My insides twisted and turned while my body was paralyzed with fear. My heart was pounding on my chest so fast it could have been traveling at the speed of light for all I knew. Overconfidence. My fatal flaw killing me.

“Please, my mother, she is sick in bed and I don’t have the money for the doctor!” I pleaded.

“I am sorry, Wang but you know what happens to thieves.” He said with a hint of sympathy. Ke then pulled out a knife.

Strangely, the fear left me when he stabbed. I felt at peace, but sad knowing that my mistake cost the life of another person, maybe more.

Somewhere, a mother was calling, not knowing that her son would never come back.



# The Boy That Lived on the Farm

*Western Academy Beijing, Gormley, Saoirse – 10*

## A CHILD

“We have brought you some gifts. We have gold and silver.” said the strange man in a strange uniform. He looks like a tomato.

Li Yang giggled at his own joke. “Gifts for your WHOLE town,” the other tomato man said as he stretched out his arms, refusing to notice the small boy giggling. “Yu Yang, I don't trust these men,” his father mumbled into the woman's ear. His mother shrugged at his father. Li Yang stepped forward, “Why don't we just take it? Our whole town is in a drought and we could do with some fat on us.” He pointed to his very small belly and skinny arms. “I agree with Li yang,” said his older brother. “I'm never full or even close, nobody is.” After that, an old grey haired man nodded for them to bring in everything.

From then on Li Yang and his family were healthy and they didn't need to worry about anything to do with money. Until about three years later, when everything changed.

“Get on the ground, you filthy farmers.” The pirate was spitting everywhere as he talked to Li Yang who was now thirteen. The sharp swords gleamed as they slashed through bags of wheat and corn, and through bag after bag of gold that the small town had saved.

## A PIRATE

As I saw the gold spill out of the brown bags I knew I wouldn't have to worry about money for a long time. The life of a pirate doesn't really suit me, but these peasants don't need the gold, and my children do. So I kept on stealing from the rich farmers. Day after day we came to take more and more.

The last day we came to their house was when I decided it's time to leave.

We went in as usual ready to take our loot but they wouldn't give us the money so the first mate made the parents kneel down and about 30 seconds after that they were on the floor... dead.

A month later I quit my role as a ruthless pirate. Now I am a captain of my own ship, working for the Ming dynasty as a gold giver to the poor. It is a great job, I get to do what I love and feed my family.

"Ok li yang where are you from and who are your parents?" I asked a young boy as he tried to get a job working on my ship. "Umm well I lived on a farm and my parents are." he stuttered "Dead. They were killed by a pirate when they refused to give up their money." "Well, I'm sorry for your loss. But you're hired." At that moment

I remembered seeing the boys face before. We had killed his parents.

A MAN

It took a long time for him to get here. He had to go through deaths, hunger, drought to be the captain of his own ship. The Red Lotus. "It's a great honor to serve under you captain Yang," said a young man. "Thank you, Mr. Yung." The captain said as tied a knot on the boat.

"Time to go," he yelled. " To help the poor, to help the friends, TO HELP OUR PEOPLE!" captain Li shouted to his crew. "Aye Cap'n." His first mate said to Li Yang.

It took about a month until they reached the farms. “Hello farmers, we have brought gold and silver from the capitol!” the older man, Li Yang, said in his tomato suit.

There was some murmuring coming from the farmers. A little boy giggled. They all talked, a brother stood up for the little boy, the parents agreed, and we left. I went back home, back to the family.

AND FROM THAT, THE CYCLE CONTINUED

# The Amazing Journey

*Western Academy Beijing, Guo, Hayley -9*

In 1405, I was 18 years old. I had experienced an amazing journey. I had joined the largest naval fleet in the world. We are not PIRATES! We aimed to build new alliances with other countries and extend the influence of China.

The emperor had appointed the remarkable commander to construct the treasure fleet. It was consisting of many treasure ships, warships and support ships. Treasure ships had carried gold, silk and other precious items, also the chief commander worked there; Grain ships carried rice and food for the crews and soldiers; Support ships were very important as well, all diplomats, trade officers, medical staff, interpreters, financial staff, administrators and other staffs were on these ships. Our expeditionary fleet had seven voyages over three decades, from the coast of the Indian Ocean to the eastern coast of Africa. I was extremely excited to go sailing with hundreds of ships and several thousands of people together in the floating city each time. I worked on the Diplomatic boat; I was an envoy who had made relationships with other places. It was one of the important positions in the fleet. I had attended the first voyage, the second voyage and the fourth voyage.

My first voyage was beginning. It was a real challenge. We visited Champa, Siam, Aru, Melaka, Ceylon, the island of Java and Calicut with 27,800 sailors, marines, interpreters and other crewmembers. We met many friendly people and brought them a lot of valuable gifts. However, when we arrived at Java, there was the Civil war and mistakenly killed more than 140 our soldiers. This situation was so sad and scary for me to see. Unfamiliar geographical location, the variable weather and communication problems made us more dangerous, we need to be more organized in the future. When we were returning homewards, the fleet encountered evil pirates. They tried to snatch the precious objects from us, but our warships led the charge in the battle and soldiers were super brave. They killed 5000 pirates and burned more than 10 pirate ships. After back to China, the foreign envoys from some of these countries visited China to present their tributes.

Soon after, we departed for our second voyage. We sailed to Champa, Siam, Java and Calicut in India. This time, we landed on Java again. We need to settle the enmity between our country and Java. Finally, the king sent an envoy to the China court to admit guilty for killing our soldiers last time. When we stopped at the coast of Siam, got out of our ship there were many very poor people and didn't have enough food to eat and some children had died with hunger. Then we went back to our grain ships and got them some rice and meat to feed their family. They felt so happy. After that my colleagues and me got the permission to meet their king to present with gifts to offer as a sign of friendship. Finally, the king had appointed their envoy to China for making trade relationship.

The last time I went with the fleet was in 1413. This time was an unforgettable time for me. When we docked our ships in India, I was extraordinary sick, my face was turning as green as a cucumber and my body couldn't hold itself as wobbly as a jellyfish. I felt weaker and weaker every day. I believe I was going to die. Even the doctor in our fleet couldn't make me well again. My friends were very worried about me and went to the local doctor please come and see me. The brilliant doctor had given me a traditional medical soup; I had to drink it twice a day for a week. After that, I was ready to go back sailing again, however I was so sad to leave my new friends I had made during my sick days. They will always stay in my heart forever; they gave me my second life.

After stopping at the principal ports of Asia, we went further west to Hormuz on the Persian Gulf. While we were sailing, I saw the most amazing beautiful sights ever, the sea was golden only when the sunshines on it, it was also glowing and charming delicate, besides there was a cave full of pixie dust that was like magic. Then, we arrived at Malindi. At the first, our fleet had frightened the local people, as the largest wooden ship had appeared, they thought we were pirates. They never saw the fleet as large as ours. I had to

follow my leader and present friendly. We were aware there was a great opportunity to make warm, as they showed really interested and loved our silk outfit. Then we gave some patterned silk to their families. Following, the chief of the tribe and guards came, our admiral made expressions there wasn't any nasty purpose, and we only intend to establish trade and relations with them. There was a happy ending we exchanged them with wonderful presents. We gave them luxury silk, precious China and gold. They back us a zebra for our emperor as a showing of good friendship.

After the voyages, we were so proud of our fleet; we were the first great explorers in the world. Not only did the naval expeditions, but also build up diplomatic and trade relations with the places we had been to, also expand Chinese influences in the world.

# 明奴 (Mong nu) Goes to an Adventure

*Western Academy Beijing, Kim, Haneul – 10*

In 广州 (Guangzhou), China, there was a small village called 别放弃 (bie fang qi). It means Never Give Up; so sometimes, foreigners say NGU. It is a short name for this village. In 广州 (Guangzhou), girls can't go outside and play with their friends or go to school like boys. Girls don't matter if they are kids or not. They just have to work in a house. Mong nu was part of it. She thought that this is so unfair, so she decided to go on a secret adventure.

The next day, she packed everything that she needs for her long and secret trip. Her mom helped her. Next, she said goodbye to her parents, and she went out of Guangzhou. The first thing that she saw was a ship. She thought that ship is not a normal ship, also it was hiding in the cave. She carefully went into the cave and saw the ship, and then she thought that she is going to use that ship to prove that girls can also do everything.

When she came back to Guangzhou after a very, very, short trip, she said to her parents that she is going to leave the house to prove that girls can do anything. And her parents let her to do it. Her parents believed that Mong nu is going to do a great job. But, her parents said that they are going to send 2 girls and 2 boys to go with her. She agreed.

The next day, is the day that she has to leave, someone knocked on her house. When she opened it, she saw 2 girls and the 2 boys standing in front of the door. The 2 girls were used to being her mom's best friends, and the 2 boys were her dad's friends. One of the girl's name was Savannah, and the other girl's name was Alina. Also, one of the boy's name was Max, and other boy's name was William. They were from America.

They walked out together to the cave. Max and William helped to pull the ship out. When they pulled ship out, they took it to the nearest beach. They got into the ship, and Mong nu started driving the ship. She drove the ship until she saw the island. Few minutes later, they saw a huge island. They thought that spot is good to relax. So they arrived onto that island. But as soon as they got there, they saw the pirates coming to steal their ship. They ran into the ship, and they started driving the ship.

They drove as fast as they could, but pirates came closer and closer and they got into a huge fight. Max and William were using these huge guns to kill the pirates, and the pirates were coming closer and closer to Mong nu. Then they quickly went into the hiding space. After a few hours later, when they got out, pirates were all gone. None of them were hiding in the ship.

Mong nu started to drive again towards the ocean where it has a lot of gold and find a good place to take a picture. So that she can prove easily girls can do anything. It was their first night to sleep on the ship. Savannah and Alina were already sleeping on the ship. In the morning, they decided that Savannah and Alina are going to drive the ship today. So Mong nu and the other 2 boys went to fall a sleep.

When they woke up, it was already night. The 2 girls were so tired that they lie down on the front of the ship. Mong nu started to drive. It was like after 1 hour? They found a small island. It seemed like this island has a lot of gold or something. They arrived in the Island and they looked at the island carefully. When the 2 girls were sleeping, Max and William were just wondering around, and Mong nu found the cross mark. She tried to dig a hole but she couldn't, because the sand was very hard to dig. So they had to use a knife to cut and then dig it.

When they finished digging it, they found a treasure chest inside. They took it out and they started to put that into the ship. They finally got into the ship and came back to 别放弃 (bie fang qi). Everyone thought the trip is over but Mong nu didn't. She still has to prove her point.

The next day, she went to the place where the president is. She told him all about her trip, and that the girls also have to go to school. After this, the president decided that the girls can also do anything. Mong nu was happy after all what she had done. She was thankful to her parents who gave her such a nice name, and they helped her go on a safe trip.

The week after this week, Mong nu started to go to International school. When she went, she learned a lot of things and she thought that she is going to go on a trip again, by herself. It was really good that Mong nu is a really good, brave girl. She packed the same thing as her last trip. She also drove the ship that she drove the last time. She hugged her parents. But unfortunately, that would be her last hug with her parents. She died while on her new trip. She fought with pirates and she died because she got shot by the leader of the pirates.

Her parents were crying a lot. But on the other hand, they thought that they had to teach Mong nu's little sister and little brother about their wonderful future. Mong nu has been on everyone's mind, and she did a great job. Everyone respected Mong nu. They taught their child about Mong nu, and how to be brave and kind like she was. Anyone can try any kind of adventure. You can also try just like Mong nu!

# Life on Board

*Western Academy Beijing, Lahteenmaki, Elsa – 11*

## Day 1

It was a normal day when all of a sudden I heard gagging coming from my mom's room. At first, I did not notice it but after twenty minutes of that same noise my brother, Samuel went to investigate. "Sonya, come quickly!" Samuel said in a shaky voice. I ran as fast as my little legs could take me. When I arrived Samuel had a look of shock on his face. "What is it?" I panted. I came closer and peered over my brother's shoulder. I gasped in disbelief "is Mom d..dead?" I managed to say. My mother was laying on her bed as pale as a ghost. "No...she is not dead. She is just sick, it's the virus going around town." Explained Samuel. "Go to sea, within you will find great treasure." Whispered Mom. "There is a boat leaving tomorrow morning to give treasures and trade. Maybe we could find the medicine mom needs?" Exclaims Samuel. "All we have to do is hide in one of the large shipping boxes and sneak on board!"

## Day 2

That is how I ended up stuffed in a box the size of a chair. The boat turned from side to side and would not stop moving. Suddenly after about three hours at sea, muffled voices come near our direction. "Okay dad!" One of the voices said "I'll get the food" I heard a creak. "Oh no!" I thought as they were opening our box! "AHH!" Screamed two people wearing striped uniforms. "Who are you guys?"

"This is my brother and I, we are here to try and find some medicine for our mother." I explained. The two people in uniforms showed us around the boat and believe it or not their dad was the captain of the ship! They asked their dad if it was okay that Samuel and I could work on board, he said yes. The two people in uniforms were called Cherry and Caleb, they were also twins just like me and Samuel. Cherry and Caleb helped us find our uniforms. So from now on we also worked on board. Most days we found people that were friendly so we gave them some of our treasure to make friends around the globe. We would give them gold, expensive silk or silverware. We also had a few enemies at hand, one or two people would get hurt from the enemies but not a big fight.

## Day 3

Today started like a normal day but ended in tragedy! We traded with three other countries before we met our biggest enemies.

It was evening, the sun was going down and we were down to our last island for the day. We spot the island and did our ritual call "friend or foe?" Samuel called out. "Friend..." a faint voice said. We came closer to the island preparing our gold and silk to give. We see a group of people lined up on shore. We arrive on shore and the people seem quite nice, so we give them one stack of gold. "More..." said the chief of the island, so we give them another stack and some silk. "More..." he said again. At this rate we would run out of gold and treasure to give. Suddenly they don't seem to friendly... Some take out harpoons and start shooting at us. Cherry pulls me to safety but I can't see Samuel anywhere! I had to split apart from Samuel and Caleb, I just hope they find shelter.

## Day 4

I woke up not knowing where I was or what time it was. I looked out of the hide out and immediately regretted it. The hot blazing sun was pouring on the boat's deck, I could make out bodies laying there on the floor. I prayed that Samuel was not one of the victims of this deadly sight. I wake up Cherry and showed her the awful sight. We went to investigate and found no sign of our brothers. In the distance we hear faint screams come from the jungle, me and Cherry went to see what was going on. The screams got closer and closer the deeper we went. I could see two heads poking out both with black hair, I turn to Cherry but before I could, she told me something "those meanies over there are pirates they want our treasure so that they can be rich." I could hardly believe what she said, pirates were supposed to be mythical creatures weren't they?

"Pirates are not real! People just say that to scare you!" I screamed. "Who is that?" Someone called from the

jungle. "Oh no!" I thought, I had ruined everything. "We said who is it!" That person said again. "Sonya someone is coming look!" Cherry whispered as she pointed to a dark silhouette. Cherry was right about 10 silhouettes were surrounding us! "Sonya, Run!" I screamed. "Not so fast!" A deep voice said, he captured us and took us back to their common area. He tied us up next to Samuel and Caleb. "Just so you little younglings understand we are pirates, therefore, we rule this island." The chief of the pirates explained. "Great now we're all going to die." I thought, "We're maybe the only survivors, now we are going to perish."

"Let us go you meanies!" Cherry said. "Yeah we want to go home!" Samuel shouted. Apparently on the boat one person was still alive and heard the cries of the twins. That person came rushing and found the twins tied up and some pirates standing near them. "Captain!" We all shouted "you came to rescue us!" The captain untied all of us then he took the pirates to the boat's jail cells. Before leaving the pirates' area, I spot something in one of the tents. "Samuel look!" I screamed. There laying on the floor was the medicine mom needed. Me and Samuel both shouted with glee "Mom is going to live!"



# The Crew's Adventure

*Western Academy Beijing, Lynn, Miriam – 9*

## The Crew's Adventure

ALL HANDS ON DECK! shouted captain Shang to call a meeting with the crew of the ship. "Whats wrong sir? Let me guess, hmmm.. did another chicken fall overboard again? "No Oliver, this time it is more important than a chicken falling overboard" corrected captain Shang. "Can I have you attention everyone!" Everyone stopped talking Immediately, which was actually very surprising because normally everyone would ignore the captain and continue talking. Shang felt like he was with a different crew! He announced that the emperor Ming has asked the crew to sail around the world exploring and bringing her gold to offer to all the kind people they meet! Every one gasped excitedly. The next morning the crew started to pack up straight away, focussed on what the Emperor had requested!

## A friend on board

Finally on April, 8 ,1400 we started to make our way across the sea to find kind people around the world. We decided first to head east, across the Pacific. During the voyage, every one was fighting for the Fruit Loops, because there was no other food that you can actually call breakfast, just lobsters and squid. Nobody really liked to eat them, especially because they had been prepared by the chef whose voice really makes him scary!! So no one ate his food.

Another challenge was with friends. Everyone on board had a pal to talk to, at least once in a while. That sort of made me feel sad. But there is someone named Lín on board who I hoped that one day I could be friends with. I know I can't be her friend if she's not asking me and I know I can't be like this for the rest of the Journey so there was only one thing to do. I walked straight up to her, my heart was beating as fast as lightning. I did not know what to say so I just simply opened my mouth "uawwwmm uuh" which did not come out right!! Now my heart was really beating as fast as lightning. I could not see it, but I just knew I was blushing. I ran to the quarter deck as fast as I could. I wanted this all to be a dream so I tried to sleep so I could forget about it. The next morning I still was not sure if what happened yesterday was a dream or not so I tried to pass Lín and she looked at me like she never saw me before. I felt like my opportunity of having a friend on board was reduced but I knew I could not give up so I walked straight up to her and tried again this time "uh... Hi my name is Mēi". Still not impressive, but at least it was not as bad as yesterday. A couple days after that conversation, we started to become the best of friends. We sat next to each other at lunch, we had sleepovers every two days... it all went well until...

## The Storm

All of a sudden the lights started flickering, I went out of the room, it was 11:00 at night. There was a wave, then a bigger wave, and it kept going until the boat started to capsize. You could see thunder ahead, everyone was screaming. I could see at least 4 people falling overboard every 12 seconds. "There's a wave ahead!" someone cried with all his might. I looked where the man was pointing, right in front of my eyes stood the most gigantic wave I had ever seen, which was rushing to the ship. It seemed like it was a monster, but I knew I had no time to think, I had to react quickly. The wave was approaching me. I tried to run to the toilet like a sensible person but I was too late the wave had overlapped the ship.

## The Island

"CREEK" I heard, I slowly opened my eyes and saw crows in the blue sky. I was lying on the sand covered in bird poop. More significantly, I realised I was on an island with a giant pile of bird poop next to me. I got up and walked closer, to get a better look, then accidentally fell in the pile of poop but also realised that the pile was not just poop, it was also captain Shang!! I saw other piles of poop which must be the other crew members who survived. Luckily the ship was also on the island as well. "There must be coconuts on this island" I told myself so I went to where the tree was and found some coconut trees. I could see the deliciousness from the fresh juicy colour of the coconut so I tried to climb it. I was half way up when "BOOM" a net had fallen on me from who knows where and dragged me to the ground. Suddenly, lots of tiny coconut people started surrounding me. I was

trapped! They dragged me using the net they had caught me in. When they were not looking, I slipped out of the net and ran to the piles of poop, and woke everyone up on the island. We got back to the ship and started to sail again.

### **The New Land**

We finally arrived to a new undiscovered land a few weeks later. The crew started to give out gold as a gift to the kind people they met there. However when I helped give out the gold, there was an issue because there were unkind people that tried to steal the gold. But after going to a judge and using some persuasive and emotional words, we managed to find a solution. Since we successfully gave out the gold in our first country, we became world wide famous. But to us being world wide famous was not our reward, our reward was to inspire others to never give up no matter what people say and how hard what you're going through is

# Seven Seas

*Western Academy Beijing, Montagnon, Ivy – 10*

1

7 June 1427  
Jilie

We bowed down before the emperor, Hongxi. He was wearing a royal blue changshan, that reached his ankles. His jet black colored beard reached to his big vast chest.

We stood up tall. I remember in my early years of training the mean old master would make me stand straight for hours on end. I pulled my shoulders back, I clenched my hands tight. Sweat trickled down my face I didn't dare to wipe it away. My silver hangpao stuck to my skin like skin stuck to my body. He paraded down the chestnut carpet, and moved his head swiftly from side to side. His wife walked behind, her pear colored robe dancing as she followed her beloved husband. Looking swiftly from side to side, giving a little nod here and there, Hongxi gave a little sigh as he sat down on a rich, red throne, covered on every side with gold.

'Now my friends, we are gathered here today for some important business, to be precise you want 15 pieces of pure gold, to be shaped into ships?'

'Yes sir, very well sir,' replied Captain.

'Do not call me sir! I have a name! Hongxi, call me Hongxi!' he snapped

'Yes Hongxi.'

'Now the gold will arrive on the 22 of June,' the emperor said as clearly as glass. He began speaking suddenly.

'Jilie, Xu, I would like you to meet me just outside the south gate of the Forbidden City.'

I nearly jumped out of my skin.

'Am I being clear?'

I took one shaking step forward, 'Yes Master Hongxi.'

'Now I think my business here is done.'

He lifted himself from the throne and strolled through the big, vast doors. Once his footsteps echoed down the hallway. We headed in the direction of our ship.

2

8 June 1427  
Mei

The ship arrived at the dock at five. People fled the dock, mostly beggars and some who could not even buy a home or food for themselves. People pushed, people yelled. We stayed giving out gold till our eyes were sore and our hands were bitten with the cold.

We pushed into the dining room. We sat till the dumplings and leek soup had come. We ate without a word. As I ate the food, warmth filled inside me.

We stood on the deck watching the stars float by. Ah, Chi, and others went swimming close to the ship. As I was about to jump in someone shrieked, 'Shark!'. They climbed onboard faster than a blink. I stood there gazing as the fin darted through the water. At that very second, the ship moved into life. Once the fin was out of sight people started to go back to their daily work, just like nothing had happened. Da went to catch some fish, Xing played with the girls who were the Captain's daughters. My mother had come upstairs because the noise was so frightening, but calmly went back downstairs to make the breakfast for the morning. Ping went to help the captain steer his boat. Sheng went to mend things for the ship. Liling and Nuo played some games with Shu. Lastly Jilie was reading a book by herself in the corner of the ship's deck. Zhen (my dog) was chasing my fingers, begging for a treat.

As the sun began to set making a bright, red and yellow texture in the sky, the others started to drift back to their rooms.

Once I was in my bed, I curled up into a small ball, wrapping my frozen fingers round my legs. I fell into a deep asleep.

3

10<sup>th</sup> June 1427

Hai

I woke up to find the ship tilting sharply to one side. My cat, Fei, jumped into the air and landed on my face. I trembled as the ship tilted back into place. I pulled on my clothes, hurrying to see the what the problem was. I grabbed my sword in case there was an enemy ship, searching for treasure. I ran up the steps towards the deck of the ship, sweat running down my arm making the sword slip out of my hands.

'Hai!' a distant call came from the edge of the deck. It was Ah who was being held by enemies.

'Where is your gold?' snarled the pirate.

I tiptoed up from behind, and pulled his sword towards the ground. I eased the sword out of his reach.

'Now who is going to save you?' I said. I swung the sword towards Ah and he started fighting him with the sword. In the corner of my eye, I could see one of the pirates talking roughly to the cook. I found a bucket rolling around on the floor, with dirty water used for our washing. I snuck up behind the girl and poured the bucket on to her head. 'Ahhhhhh!' she exclaimed. Once she had cleared her emerald eyes, I could see her anger building up.

I got my sword ready for the battle. She cut the sword through the air as easily as cutting paper. I moved from side to side as she moved her sword as fast as a lightning bolt.

After a while, I could see that her hands were getting tired, and her eyes were beginning to droop and in minutes she was battling sleep. It was finished as fast as it began. The captain had given up. They sloped off to their ship.

The cook had made us all warm mantou. As we filled our stomachs, a storm approached, the thunder crashed to the sky sending us flying across the room.

# The Fantastic Trip

*Western Academy Beijing, Wei, Leo – 9*

I am invited to participate Zheng he's forth sailing trip. I am a soldier, my job is to fight with hostile enemies such as pirates. When I'm on the ship, I was amazed to find that there were about 27000 people and 240 ships/boats. This is the first time that I saw more than 200 boats. There were 5 kinds of boats: Treasure boats, Horse boats, Grain ships, sitting boats, and Battleships. I was on Battleship No. 63.

The sea was blue and endless. Our plan was to go south and then head west to Africa. On passage, we stopped at 25 stations. They were all peaceful people and we gave them gold, silk away as gifts. We told them about our country and culture. There were different people with different identity. I saw a lot of plants that can't be found in China, for example: coconut trees. We used a compass during daytime and at night we observed the stars to make sure that we are on the right way, and this strategy is called "Navigation Astronomy Technology". Because of our boat was so big and strong, hardly any waves can come in.

The First war was against pirates, there were 6 ships of them. Lucky we had weapons, like canons. They first only saw the few boats so they thought it's easy to rob, but the boats behind came quickly and we easily defeated them. Next, we went to Sumen, we found out that Su Ganyu has killed the old king. So we battled with him and captured him alive.

Finally, we are at East Africa. It is the highest terrain in the continent. They had black skin and there were many kinds of animals that I had never seen before. The sun kept shining and it was hot. For me, the Great Rift Valley was the most beautiful place in East Africa. It's full length is about 6000 km and deepest place the Valley is 2000 km deep. I guess from a space view it looks like a big scar. There is water down there but it was so deep that I can only see a bit of blue just like some sapphire. Then we went to a ginormous grassland. The animals was amazing, zebras, antelopes, and all kinds of animals. I even saw a lion preying a wild deer! There were birds flying from here to there in the sky. Elephants was playing with water in a small lake and the giraffes even joined. This will be a place that is impossible to forget.

After 2 years 9 months, we came back to China and brought a giraffe from East Africa. We took leaves to feed it. We were the first one that told China that there was that animal.

I look forward to the next trip, and I believe that it would be more interesting.

# Fei Shun in the West

*Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Chan, Hok Man Nathan – 11*

Nanjing (1408)

Zheng He looked at his sixty-eight majestic ships proudly. The ships, beautifully lavished, had cabins with open balconies and royal furniture. Now that all was set, he looked at his cheering men one last time, waved at them and followed General Ma Hua on the road back to court.

The officer in charge, General Fei Shun, was an honourable seaman. Treating the sea as his brother, he had a good sense of direction. He was wise too.

The flagship's bell rang. Gongs sounded, and the massive armada pulled away from the harbour to start the journey to the Calicut Kingdom, near western India.

For the first weeks of the journey, the seas and the voyage were calm and uneventful. The crew joked that they should have brought games to play to liven up their boredom. Their days consisted only of them lounging around the decks, eating, plotting the convoy's course and keeping the ship in relative order and cleanliness. Their only companions were the seabirds that stopped to rest.

But then, on the thirtieth day...

Emergency bells startled Fei Shun, who was having breakfast in his cabin. The crew was in a state of panic, running to and fro shrieking: 'Sea monster! Sea monster!'

An enormous snake with a horse's head and a jet-black mane reared its great ugly face out of the water, and tried to bite Fei Shun's ship. The whole fleet was in calamitous chaos.

Then an even bigger blue shark with huge yellow eyes pounced on the snake. The ships shook violently as the two grappled with each other. Suddenly, with a flash of blinding light, the two creatures disappeared.

The dazed crew stared at each other in disbelief. But Fei Shun kept his cool as two rings of hidden light under his sword, in the shape of the two sea monsters, pulsed slowly.

The fleet finally reached Calicut after four months. The crew were duly welcomed there, as they brought technology like compasses and watermills. The Yongle Emperor wanted to turn Calicut into a land that had better technology and also a kingdom with a healthy relationship with the Ming Dynasty. The crew visited the city and some nearby towns, introducing Chinese culture and technology along the way. They were treated very well.

But one night, whilst they slept, a masked man wielding a sabre came into the crew's inn. The man pressed his sabre to a seaman's neck. He said in a low threatening voice: 'Your money or your life!'

Fei Shun, sleeping next to the seaman, got up and boldly said, 'If you want a life, take mine. I would make an ideal sacrifice.'

The masked man took off his mask and smiled. 'Well done. You have proven yourself worthy to visit my coronation.' He was the Prince of Calicut.

The Prince of Calicut was rich and just. He was about twenty-five years old and preferred testing people to prove their worthiness. He had planned this test for Fei Shun about two weeks earlier.

At the coronation, Fei Shun stood as the head guest. He was given a royal sword, jewels and a great feast. He also took some spices back to Nanjing.

A year later (1409), Fei Shun was in the Indian Ocean, with his mighty fleet, sailing back to Nanjing. Suddenly, a gigantic body came to the surface. It had a jet-black mane. It was the sea snake!

Fei Shun's royal sword turned from jade green to sapphire blue. A turquoise beam shot out from the sword and vaporised the sea snake, which vanished in the beam of light that was vibrating and shining. Fei Shun stared at the magical sword. Carved into the sword was an engraving of the sea snake on it.

Four months later, Fei Shun and his crew were at the port of Nanjing. Zheng He was there to give them a warm welcome. They were invited to a princely banquet at court, with the Yongle emperor and Zheng He, to talk about the journey to Calicut. Fei Shun was rewarded with gold and jewels, and the entire crew was given tablets that exempted them from the death penalty.

That night, Fei Shun stroked his sword and put it in a golden box, which he brought in his travelling sack. His sword acquired many other powers over time, and he kept it by his side, never leaving it again.

# The Greatest Foe

*Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Wu, King Lok – 11*

'Sir, I don't think you've knocked on my door yet,' said Shi Jingping, ruler of the city of Palembang, nowadays called Sumatra.

Shi's statement was directed at Chen Zuyi, the pirate. Shi's palace was attacked by Chen and his pirates again. Chen was famous for his ruthlessness. He had control of the seas near Palembang, and whoever controlled the seas had real authority.

'Ha! I want gold, Your "Majesty"!' smirked Chen.

'You won't get away with this,' said Shi, as he reluctantly handed over the booty.

'Well, then let see who wins,' whispered Chen to Shi's ears.

Zheng He looked out into the distance. The sun rose above the ocean, his treasure fleets sparkled with prestige, glory and gifts. Zheng was the admiral. He was a kind and honest man. Born in Yunnan in 1371, castrated at the age of ten, he became a eunuch of the Prince of Yan, who later became the Yongle Emperor. He and the Yongle Emperor were firm friends.

Today, as he awoke, Zheng quickly went to the control deck of the main fleet. Deputy Admiral Wang Jinghong and some sailors were already waiting for him. 'Deputy Admiral, what route are we sailing today?' asked Zheng.

'We were sailing to Palembang,' Wang replied.

Zheng was immediately apprehensive. 'We're going into pirate-land!'

'Not only that, the Emperor has decided that we should help the ruler of Palembang capture the pirates...' Wang didn't even finish his words.

Zheng sighed. Wang was unsatisfied with this mission too, they read the expressions on the sailors' faces. 'The Admiral's a coward, he shouldn't be leading us,' thought Wang to himself.

That night, the ship stopped at Palembang. All sailors-in-command gathered in the main cabin to think of a solution to fight the pirates. At that time, a guard sailor came in. 'Excuse me, sirs, there is a visitor.'

At the port, a mysterious visitor was waiting for Zheng.

'Who are you?' asked Wang, with dubious feelings inside him.

The visitor replied, 'I am the ruler of Palembang, Shi Jingping. I have important information regarding the pirates.'

'Let him in! Deputy! He's a guest! Don't disappoint him!' said Zheng. But Wang was still suspicious of him. The visitor was escorted into the main cabin. They discussed for over an hour.

That was when a sailor frantically knocked. 'Admiral, most fleets are captured by the pirates!'

Zheng, Wang and Shi quickly rushed to the control deck to see what was happening. They saw many pirates jumping onto the main fleet. The sailors grabbed their weapons, ready for a fight. Zheng and Wang turned around, to see Shi still rooted firmly on his ground. An odd smile spread across his face.

'Huh! My brothers are all here, there's no need to hide my identity now!' said Shi.

'You brute! I should've known you're the pirate, Chen Zuyi! You wanted to distract us to let the pirates capture our fleets!' cried Wang.

Wang wasn't fazed. 'Alright, listen up. It's time to fight these brutes!'

As Wang finished his words, all sailors began to battle fearlessly and boldly. But as time wore on, the pirates were beginning to prevail. Some fleets were on fire, others were detonated, and many gifts from foreign countries were taken. Zheng was scared witless; he was about to flee.

'Oh help! Can someone help me? Please!' wailed Zheng.

'Zheng He, you're the admiral of the treasure fleets! You can't escape all the time!' shouted Wang to Zheng.

Zheng left Wang's voice trailing a long way behind him, when he was suddenly attacked by a pirate.

Zheng found himself standing in the middle of nowhere. In front of him were the Yongle Emperor and his teacher, the Daoyan Monk. He heard the Emperor, in a low booming voice saying, 'Zheng He, you can't be scared, you are the leader.'

'But – but –' protested Zheng. He didn't know what to do.

'Zheng He! Fear is your worst enemy! You must overpower it!' said the Monk.

'What should I do?' asked Zheng in desperation.



'Use your meditative consciousness,' said the monk, as the Monk and the Emperor slowly faded into the background.

'Admiral! You're awake!' Zheng regained consciousness to find one of his sailors violently shaking him. 'You fainted, and the Deputy Admiral asked me to take you to your bedroom.'

'Is the fight over? Have we lost?' asked Zheng, wearied and worried.

'Not yet! The deputy admiral is still fighting the pirates till now,' replied the sailor.

As Zheng ascended to the deck, the sailors cheered. 'Admiral!' cried Wang, as he went over to hug Zheng.

Just then, a man in resplendent armour ran up to Wang. 'I am the real Shi Jingping. Our citizens are willing to help your sailors, for their own freedom.'

'Good!' replied Zheng. He summoned up the courage, and boomed: 'Do not give up! Palembang is on our side! We can, and we shall, win! Capture those pirates! This is for us, for the merchants, for the sailors, for the trade route and for the people of Palembang!'

With renewed energy, the sailors fought to the edge. Their hearts became united for the cause. And with the help of the citizens, the sailors gained the upper hand now. At last, the mission was a success. All the pirates including Chen were captured by the sailors. They left Palembang the next day, with many citizens waving grateful hands to their heroes.

Two days after the battle, as usual, Zheng, Wang and the sailors were having a meeting in the morning.

After the meeting, Zheng and Wang exchanged pleasantries. 'You know, Admiral, after capturing Chen Zuyi, I've found your confidence to be higher than before! How?' asked Wang.

'Well,' began Zheng, 'let's just say that I've had a change of heart. As you said, I am the admiral of the treasure fleets, and voyages are always quests for courage. If I'm scared, how can I be your leader and overcome fear, my greatest foe?'

# The Pirates of China

*Yew Chung International School (Primary), Chen, Neo – 9*

The Pacific Ocean was always peaceful, but today, there is something peeking out of the horizon at the crack of dawn. “Argh! I’m so cold, can’t we just have a little bit of silk to make warmer clothing?” a voice moaned.

“No Long! Those are for the other people!” said Captain Zheng. He is a really strict, bossy and smart person, captain of The Friendly Whale. Which is a ship so large that it is almost as big as a whale, hence its name. “Fine! Just wait until we all freeze to death!”

They were friendly enough since they’re good pirates but that doesn’t mean they still behave well. “Stop, it’s not supposed to be done like that! And you, don’t just brush the deck like that! The captain said to clean, not brush!” A fairly fat and strong pirate called Xiao scolded. He is the assistant of Zheng and is almost as strict as the captain himself. All these pirates give out all kinds of stuff like gold and silk to countries.

The next few days on The Friendly Whale weren’t quite as different, but today, the peaceful water wasn’t... It all started one morning when all was usual. When suddenly, a short pirate named Guo let out a squeaky shout “Captain look, there is smoke coming out of the horizon!” In fact, there was, and they’re worst nightmare may come true. The Smoky Sharks are a fleet of evil pirate ships that are known throughout the globe. The captain of the ship is a villainous, scary and powerful pirate that was named Black Inferno, he is the number one enemy of Zheng.

As soon as Guo said that sentence, Zheng took out his binoculars, there, just peeking out of the horizon, was thick smoke. At first, Zheng didn’t realize, but as if God had told him, he thought, “The Smoky Sharks.” Then he quickly ordered his crew to prepare everything and move as far east as possible. The pirates immediately obeyed, meanwhile, the enemy is creeping towards The Friendly Whale. Will they survive the impossible?

Zheng was preparing the fight. The Smoky Sharks were sailing closer and closer because their ships speed is much faster than Zheng’s. “Why is this ship so slow, faster faster faster!” A while later, The Smoky Sharks fleet of ships came into view. Zheng probably has butterflies fluttering in his stomach right now, you can tell by his facial expressions.

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“Argh! This is going to be great! You guys go get rid of the other silly pirates, leave Zheng alone, he is mine!” Black Inferno barked. The Smoky Sharks was about to start their attack. Suddenly, a miracle happened. A blast of white light appeared. Suddenly a boy, a boy named Neo, a boy from the future stepped out the beam of light. “Oy, what on earth is going on ...” Black Inferno Shouted.

“A-a g-g-ghost war-l-lock be-behind...” Never Fear stammered, as he fainted. All the pirates were terrified of a person appearing out of nowhere. “HEEEEEELP!” Black Inferno screamed as he turned and saw Neo, he finally realized what fear was. Neo was just as shocked too. “Wait what, um... PIRATES! Rats, I must be in the past, whatever...” “Wh-who ar-ar-are you?” Black Inferno finally received the courage to ask the young boy.

“Me?” Neo asked as his frown began to turn into a broadening smile, “I’m one of the most famous inventors of all time. My name is Neo Chen, I come from Hong Kong in 3035. I’m a good guy, I’m wondering where...” Suddenly, he caught a glance of The Smoky Sharks sail, history suddenly swarmed into his brain, he immediately recognised it. “Did you hear that boy? He said he’s a good guy. ATTACK!” Black Inferno saw that Neo was just a boy. But the pirates don’t even dare budge, they were too scared and shocked.

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Back on The Friendly Whale, all the pirates were wondering what on earth is going on, The Smoky Sharks definitely are not scared of them, and they don’t usually stop. “They must be tricking us or something, there must be something behind this.” Zheng thought.

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Remember Neo's from the future? Which means a lot incredible mind-blowing things. Take The Edible Weapon. It explodes after 5 seconds and will release bubble gum that will grow to extremely large balloon-gum balls. After the bubble gum is around the place it wants to take out, it will start making the land or thing float away to space. Really powerful stuff, and that is what Neo is going to use to defeat The Smoky Sharks.

Neo quickly ran to the bow of the ship and placed The Edible Weapon down and started the countdown ...KABOOM! A bang sounded and immediately, there started to appear bubble gum, it was growing bigger and bigger. All the pirates were terrified, Black Inferno just stood in shock, but Neo had a trick up his sleeve. He took out a blue teleporter and disappeared and reappeared on the deck of The Friendly Whale. After the gum had done its job, The Smoky Sharks fleet of ships started to rise up higher and higher and finally, the fleet of ships floated into space and vanished.

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Now Zheng's crew were really shocked, so shocked they froze. When they started to move, Captain Zheng asked "Who are you? You must be a good guy, you helped us defeat Black Inferno!" Zheng was fascinated after Neo had introduced himself. Zheng wondered how would he thank Neo for doing such a big favor. They decided to send their goods to their first stop.

Their first stop was Hong Kong. As they arrived at Victoria Harbour, Captain Zheng and the others went giving out barrels of silk and gold ingots. After the citizens and the government thanked Zheng's crew. They all boarded their ship again and waved goodbye. This time, the Pacific will always stay peaceful as Zheng's crew traveled to their next destination...

# Diary

*Yew Chung International School (Primary), Gao, Miracle – 10*

January 12th

Bang! The cannons blasted the enemy ship, leaving a gigantic hole in the hull of the ship. The cannons repeatedly fired, and the soldiers ran towards their posts. This wasn't a drill ; they were under attack. The invaders, were running for their cannons, too. But it was already on late. The Chinese soldiers ran towards the ship, attacking the crew. But just as the last soldier reached the deck of the enemy ship, a wall of fire came to life. The fire began burning the ship, turning it slowly but surely into ashes. The soldiers shouted and cursed, as the ship went completely up in flames, taking the soldiers with it.

Aaron woke up, in the sun. Their were bodies scattered and littered everywhere. Flames were dancing on the wooden dock. *Where am I?* Aaron thought. *What just happened?* Little did he remember, he had forgotten that he had charged up the enemy ship, and then there was a fire and an explosion. Now he was covered in ashes, his clothes were tattered, his face grim, but more or less alive. He had left from the boat, and he had swam to this wooden plank that had fallen from the burning ship. Now, he was holding it like it was his life, which is typically true, based on the fact that he would drown. *I know how to swim, I can swim to land!* He finally remembered that being a captain of a ship, he definitely knew how to swim. He swam back slowly, surveying the damage done. Most of the ships were on fire, a few were sunken. Then, an officer ran over to him.

He asked "Sir, the fleet is leaving tomorrow. Do you want to come?"

Aaron nodded. He knew that he was in for a adventure.

January 15th

Even before he knew it, he was on a ship, and he was watching the ship's sails flying in the breeze. Suddenly, there was a shout. "Land ho!" The clatter of chests sounded throughout the ships, before they realised that the people on the land weren't welcoming the; they were doing the complete opposite. Battle bells rang. There was a cannonball, speeding towards the ship. It hit the ship with a deafening sound. "Boom!" There was fire everywhere, and Aaron ran towards the cannons. He reloaded and fired. "Boom!" The same sound repeated. The cannonball hit the wall of the enemies, and threw about half a dozen soldiers off their posts. The sound of death and destruction surrounded them.

Crash! Aaron tried to jump overboard, but it was too late. The enemies swarmed up the massive ship in hordes, taking prisoners and killing anybody who stood in their way. Aaron considered getting imprisoned, and getting killed, and decided on imprisoning.

The chance came later that night. There was a storm, a great heavy rain cloud looming over the enemies castle and city. Aaron never figured out what happened next. There was an explosion, and the sounds of people screaming. The entire left wall burst open. Seawater flushed in. Aaron trekked over to the fallen part, and clumsily, he climbed over the fallen bricks. The waves were huge. They were at least ten feet high in the air. These came from what seemed like giant tentacles. Looking at it, Aaron remembered his childhood, with adults telling the children not to swim alone because of sea monsters. Until now, he had never believed it. He knew it was a Kraken. A giant one. Its bright yellow eyes glared piercingly with hatred. The enemies seemed frozen on the walls. Seeing his chance at escaping, Aaron dived into the freezing water. The Kraken thrashed around wildly, slightly missing Aaron. The enemies finally seemed to realize that Aaron was escaping, and they shot arrows at him, as he struggled to swim towards freedom. But then, a ship crashed into him, and everything went dark.

January the 16th.

Aaron woke up to the shouting of his name. He forced open his eyes and staggered up like a zombie. There he was, on a ship. One of the soldiers he remembered said: "Sir, we got you outta the ocean. We '*borrowed*' a ship from the enemy. And now we're heading to somewhere West."

"Follow the drill! Don't panic! Fight back!" The pirate invasion caused a stir of mayhem on the ship. The pirates used planks to invade, and jumped to the ship with ease. The sailors and soldiers tried to fight back, but there were too many invaders, and not enough defenders.

“There’s no more cannonballs! What should we do?”, a sailor cried. Aaron was trying hard to stay alive, and almost got sliced by a blade. As fast as a jaguar, a pirate caught up with him. Aaron saw that there was a crossbow lying on the floor, so he picked it up, and shot an arrow straight at the pirate’s face. The pirate howled in pain, and staggered away.

Even though the sailors had the high ground, and were more experienced, the pirates outnumbered them 10 to 3, and with a bit of luck, they took over the whole entire ship. There was no way to win. But... there was one way to survive: escape. Without even thinking, Aaron plunged into the cold, icy water 5 meters below...

Soon, Aaron was on a beach, the yellow sand sparkling under him. He stood up groaning. In the distance, he could make out the outline of a ship burning. His ship. He felt anger turning into rage, and then before he knew it, he was stumbling into the forest of the island he was on. There it sat, a little shack. Its windows were cracked, its appearance similar to a horror movies setting.

Aaron trekked over to the house, inspecting it. He then, saw, with lurch in his stomach, a figure trudging towards him. The figure was a pirate. He laughed. “Looks like you’re stranded here!” he stated. Then, he walked away.

# The Rulers of the Sea – The Journey to India

*Yew Chung International School (Primary), Hsu, Declan – 9*

## Prologue

A few hundred years ago, in the 1400s, there was a fleet of ships that went and gave away treasure. Emperor Zhu Di ordered this to make peace, harmony and to also show the other countries how great China was. But the weird thing was, he chose pirates. It would have been appalling for regular pirates! The emperors must have been pleased to be given that loot.

Log of: The Great White    Day 1    Date:1/5/1405

Hello! The name's Admiral Zheng He. This log is for my crew mates to record the journey. I've warned my crew mates that this is no walk in the park, but they don't really care. They figured that if they wanted to die, it would have been on an adventure. The Great White is going to set sail in a few days. Good luck on this journey, crew mates. May the gods bless us.

Day 2    Date: 2/5/1405

My name is Bo, and I've been invited to go on the ship The Great White! The Admiral Zheng He said they needed a person who was strong and burly like me. He said it was risky and it would be dangerous. It would be my choice. I decided to take that risk. When I saw the magnificent ship, I couldn't believe my eyes! It was as large as a whale shark (although I don't know what that is, everyone just keeps saying it is a prodigious leviathan).

Day 3    Date : 3/5/1405

This is Zheng He here. We've just set sail and a pirate ship led a full-on assault on us. From what I've learned at naval school, the first shot from cannons always falls short, so they came closer, shot all cannons then fell back. Fortunately Bo and Jian threw planks of wood onto the hostile ship, bridging the gap, then used their daggers and attacked the pirates. Hui ignited the flint-tipped arrows and kept shooting until his quiver was empty. Unfortunately, the crow's nest, the mast and the sails were wrecked. It was a good thing that the pirate ship was full to the brim with treasure. We've now stopped at a port in Hong Kong and the ship is being repaired. Now we can give many people in different countries treasure.

Day 4    Date : 4/5/1405

My name is Hui. I'm the genius on board the ship. We are travelling at 62 knots. The ship should reach India in a day. See? I'm a genius! A few hours ago, Chang was making fun of me when I was giving a "lesson" about India, which is our first stop. When I was speaking, he pretended to be sitting on a desk and said "Go on, go on, Professor Hui! I want to get an A+ on the test!" What an aggravating fool.

Day 5    Date :5/5/1405

Hi! My name's Cheng! Although I'm still a kid, I am allowed to sail with them because I can learn more overseas than in school. That Hui thinks he knows everything, but I bet he can't compose a Japanese haiku poem like me. I doubt that he even knows what a haiku is! Here's how my haiku goes:

'Pirates in China

They are the Ming Treasure Fleet

They give lots of gold.'

"Everyone brace! The ship is going to crash into those rocks over there!" I yelled. I was so absorbed in writing my haiku that I didn't notice those rocks! And I'm the lookout! Luckily, the Admiral turned the ship before we hit the rocks.

Day 6

Date :6/5/1405

Vfbjtdnmfgh. Hi. Yes! Finally managed to write! I never learnt to write. Right now, the admiral is teaching me, and Hui is scolding Cheng for not seeing those rocks. Ccrraakk! Oops. I accidentally broke a brush. Just got another brush. Darn! We're under attack. Again! I think it is a Indian warship. Hui is waving a flag of peace. Now Bo and Chang are throwing treasure onto that ship. I think they said we have to meet the king. By the way, my name is Jian.

Day 7

Date : 7/5/1405

Admiral's back! We're sailing towards India right now, but we've been shrouded by a blanket of fog and mist. What? We can't see anything but we can see an island that suddenly appeared there. We're going to crash! Phew! At least we haven't crashed and destroyed our boat. We've docked there. Huh? There's a hole in the middle of the island. How strange. Wait a moment. I can see water coming up the hole. We jumped into the boat, only to just be projectiled by the water. That was a humpback whale. We shot up into the air like a cannonball. Goodbye, cruel world! Hello, Heaven! Arrrrrggggghhhh! Wait, what? What's down there? I think I see India! Whoa! It is India. We landed on India just as the warship arrived. Now we're going to the palace. We've given them treasure and they have given us different kinds of valuables. The king has spoken. Hui has translated it to "We are going to set a port up so we can trade stuff!" This is the end of our first voyage.

# The Ruler of the High Seas in an Adventure with Science

*Yew Chung International School (Primary), Xu, Malvin – 10*

As the pirates rested near the sea, Captain Zheng stood in his cabin, brainstorming a plan. They were about to go to a place in China known for its famous hidden treasures, and the crew was nothing but excited. Zheng was a kind-hearted and loving man. He was tall and fit, with a beard silky and in healthy condition.

Zheng returned to the cabin. He had always dreamed of it, of going to the land of treasures, and now the dream came true.

“Alright,” said Zheng, whilst making a gesture that made the crew gather together.

The Captain explained that in order to get to the treasure, they need enough supplies. Then he said that on the way they might encounter some nasty people, so they need to be alert.

“Now are we ready to go?” asked Zheng.

“Yes, we are!” chanted back the crew.

They lined up to board the Qi Xia. The ship was parked against the deck of the vacant seaside cabin in where the pirates rested. The tides were low and the weather seemed friendly, so it was perfect for them to start the journey.

The pirates were exceptional pirates, and they sailed the sea giving merciful people their treasure, whilst fighting off bad pirates. They travel around and have an adventure and find treasures. They also greatly appreciate helping people in need.

Finally, the anchors raised. The ship was filled with the air of excitement: the pirates danced around, sang shanties and got out the food. It was a festive time now in the year, and the pirate crew just couldn't help it.

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It was a warm morning when the captain announced that this was the first stop for refill and rest.

“First stop,” said Zheng. “We need to find a place to rest, and we need to get the ship checked up and supplies ready. You guys can rest in the cabin or guard the ship.

“Alright, guys. I'm going to find resources and load supplies onto the boat. See you guys later” said Zheng. As he walked off and the pirates set off to guard the ship.

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After a while, the captain came back. In his arms, he carried loads of cardboard boxes.

“Hey guys, I've –” the pirate captain got cut off as he saw the pirates chatting with a random guy who was sobbing on one of the pirate's bed.

“Hey guys, what are you doing?” questioned Zheng.

“We just found this guy sitting in his cabin crying. And he is a scientist, we just asked him,” said Li.

“We were just trying to comfort him,” exclaimed Bo.

“So what happened?” Zheng asked the scientist, with a bit of pity.

The scientist explained to them how his brother was heard to be captured in Zhangjiajie, and he heard it on the radio. The pirate captain suggested to help, and the scientist greatly accepted, brightening up a little. The scientist already felt a part of his mind feeling gratitude towards the pirate Captain.

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When the scientist went aboard their ship, he told them about the horrible scientist that was against him and his theories and inventions, and that he was afraid that the lost scientist would get all the attention, and lose his customers.<sup>6</sup>

“Such an old greedy hag, wants the treasure all to himself,” said Bo.

So they set off towards Zhangjiajie, checking the nautical charts every few minutes. The boat sailed through rain, blizzard, hurricane, and storm: nothing could stop them, now, as they have a mission ahead, and the crew will never rest if there was a mission to be completed.

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Saturday was ship cleaning day, and everyone was cleaning the ship. Suddenly, the pirate captain announced that they had, finally, arrived Zhangjiajie. They got off the ship and gathered around a beach.

Then the scientist briefly described the appearance of the malicious scientist.

“He sort of has some grey eyebrows, whooshy moustache, hair sticking straight up and grey hair poking out off his ears,” replied the scientist. “And has round glasses, a white lab coat, and he's sort of short.”

“That seems like a grey man.” retorted Li.

Zhen explained to the others that they could go and find the person at different places, and then he made the connection that the scientist's brother might be captured by the evil scientist and threatening the scientist with the death of his brother, so that the scientist won't carry out his theories and inventions to the public.



“That makes sense! All of it, and by the way, I might know a place where he might be hiding out: the Gentleman Science Lab. I might lead the way if you want me to. I’ve been here to give lectures with other scientists.” remarked the scientist, later known by the name of Darwin, and his brother as Euclides.

And thus, they set off.

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Bo was the first to notice.

“HEY, YOU! TELL US WHERE EUCLIDES IS, OTHERWISE WE WILL RUN YOU THROUGH WITH A CUTLASS!” Bo shouted.

“Oh,” gasped the scientists. A few blacked out.

“Tell us.” Bo directed to the horrible scientist.

“Y—you m—mean E—euclid—des?” stammered the scientist. “Yes.” confirmed the crew.

“H—he is hang—ging on a cl—cliff in Av—avatar H—hallelujah M—mountain.” stuttered the scientist. Then, he passed out.

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The crew set off to the famous Avatar Hallelujah Mountain.

After a while, they reached the peak. A few of them were afraid of the enormous height. They looked around but couldn’t find him. They were about to leave, considering the scientist being a liar, when Li shouted, “He’s here, everybody! Come and help me lift him up!”

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“Thanks, I, I just don’t know how to thank you!” Darwin sobbed of joy.

“Oh, this is normal, isn’t it?” Zheng replied, modestly.

“Yes.” replied the crew. They even found some treasure on the peak, and now the crew was interested in nothing but that.

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It was another calm day. An adventure was ready to come, at the right time, in the right place...

# China Rules the Seas

*Yew Chung International School (Primary), Zhao, Nancy – 10*

The Atlantic can be a very dangerous place. The Zi Tao was right in the middle of it, the Atlantic Ocean.

They were at the wrong place at the wrong time. At first, it just swayed softly, unaware of the dangers ahead of them. But slowly but surely, the swaying became stronger and stronger. It started to jerk around. The pirates aboard the Zi Tao were still in a deep sleep. It was an ear-piercing screech from the wind that finally woke someone – Fong. Fong was the captain of Zi Tao, a Chinese pirate ship, and he was the youngest, too.

Fong looked out of his window. Oh no, he thought, a storm.

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Fong ran onto the deck. His jet black hair flew behind him as he ran. The rain started pouring as he started to spread the news of the storm, yelling on the top of his voice. The next few hours were chaos. Crews yelled as they used up their strengths trying to steer the ship to a calmer place, but it was no use – the ocean had a will of its own. The wind forced them to sail more west, making them leave from their track.

Gradually the storm calmed. Everyone was exhausted, but they were lucky to be alive after all.

‘I think,’ said Fong, clearing his voice, ‘I think that we should go back to sleep. Take some rest and restore our energy. Leave all the work to me today.’ The crews all nodded solemnly, they couldn’t have agreed any better.

Liu stayed behind. He knew that Fong would be very lonely on his own, so he decided to accompany Fong for the rest of the day.

Liu was a young boy of twenty-one, just one year older than Fong. Liu was Fong’s best friend, but many mistook them as brothers, because they looked rather alike.

Both had jet black hair and dark eyes. Both were tall and strong, and both were rather handsome.

The ship was wet and damp from the storm, so the friends set to work in cleaning up, laughing and joking the entire time.

They spotted a ship ahead of them, so far away you can barely see them, and the mist that just appeared didn’t help the situation, either. The other ship sailed closer and closer, but they weren’t targeting them...

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‘Aha! I see a ship ahead!’ said Captain Jack. It was the Hoop. The Hoop was a pirate ship from America, but not just any pirates, evil pirates. They earned their living by stealing things from other ships.

‘Yes, captain. You are very right’ said scrawny Meg, Captain Jack’s sidekick. Meg was very short and skinny. One shall have mistaken him as a stick if he wore brown all over with leaves sticking out of his arms. Meg only came up to Captain Jack’s ankle and was ‘accidentally’ stamped on by his wicked captain whenever he made just the tiniest mistake.

The captain himself was very tall and had a black moustache above his lips that he had always been proud of. He always dressed rather unnecessarily, as he always wore huge boots for dancing day and night, whether he was dancing or not. And his hat always had feathers sticking out, a different colour and shape or each day of the week. Captain Jack wore unnecessary clothes, and was an unnecessary man – his team would have been better off without him.

‘Of course, I’m right!’ bellowed Jack. One mini thing would set him off in a real mood. Just as he said that he began his usual punishment ‘accidentally’ stepping on Meg.

‘Look! Captain!’ shouted someone, distracting Jack from Meg, ‘The other ship is within reach!’

Jack stood up straight. He always loved terrorising other ships and watch them sink into the very bottom of the ocean. According to him, there was nothing more satisfying to look at.

As the Hoop sailed closer and closer to the other ship, they were able to identify the other boat – the Helina. The Helina was an Australian ship who also took pleasure in stealing and killing, and was Hoop’s worst enemy. The two enemies sailed towards each other, preparing for a battle without a single sense of fear – this was a life or death situation.

The two ships finally faced each other properly. The Australian pirates glared at the Americans and the Americans back..

‘Perhaps they think they can beat us, the most powerful pirates existing!’ laughed Jack.

Without a single more moment to waste, the Hoop fired cannons at the Helina and immediately it started to sink. The Australians screamed as they lowered their safety boats, but unluckily, they weren’t quick enough.

Captain Jack cackled like a witch as their enemy screamed – a scream that shall never be answered.

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The Zi Tao watched everything from behind, burning with fury. They decided to teach the Hoop a lesson.

Fong stood there, shocked by what had just happened. He was furious at what they had just seen.

'Wake up everyone!' Fong shouted loud enough for his crew to hear but quiet enough to still be oblivious to Hoop. 'I know this is your day off, but this is an emergency!'

Fong and Liu quickly filled them in on what had just happened and they decided to teach the Hoop a lesson – a lesson they won't forget.

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'Hey!' Fong shouted to the Hoop, 'we saw what you did just now!'

Jack took one look at the Zi Tao and burst out laughing.

'Your ship looks rich,' he said, and then, facing his team, he said, 'let's fire!'

However, the Chinese ship was prepared. They aimed their cannons and shot. Just like the Helina, the Americans tried to lower their safety boats but were too late.

Fong closed his eyes. He hated killing, but if they didn't, who knows what would happen to the oceans?

Fong took a deep breath and shouted, 'China rules the sea!'

A loud applause followed.

# The Seventh Voyage

*Ying Wa Primary School, Chan, Roy – 11*

Our ship disembarked for the twelfth time, leaving behind a band of cheerful people clutching our crates of presents, while waving at us.

My name is Chan Se, and I am a crew member aboard our captain, Zheng He's ship on his seventh journey. This is my first journey and my heart already longs to return to my family.

There are strict rules that we must follow on board, and the number of crew members getting seasick has reached three-digits long ago, the same goes to the people I know who want to quit this journey and return home.

The sky starts to get dark – a storm is brewing. 'Full speed ahead!' shouts Captain Zheng. The mast flutters in the wind, and the hull creaks and groans. Several people on board get seasick at the same time as the ship lurches and all stagger to the railings to throw up into the raging sea.

Suddenly, our lookout runs, gasping, up to Captain Zheng, looking frightened. 'Pirates!' he exclaims. Indeed, a vast ship is emerging from the dark horizon, bearing a ragged flag with the familiar crossbones symbol on it. Standing on the ship's deck is a tall, heavily bearded man with a wild look in his eyes, and he is twirling a gun in his fingers easily, flanked by a dozen other pirates.

'Ready the cannons!' cries Captain Zheng. The crew obey quickly, and soon all our cannons are all trained onto the pirates' ship. Our enemies quickly train their cannons at us also, and a tense feeling falls between the two ships.

The pirate captain shouts, and a volley of cannonballs hit our ship, sending several people overboard. We return fire, and soon both sides are shooting cannonballs at each other as fast as possible, with the sea full of people trying to climb back aboard their own ships to help and fight.

We almost seem to be losing the fight when suddenly the pirates retreat, running away quickly. Feeling puzzled, we turn around and the answer unravels in front of us.

A humongous creature is rising from the depths of the sea. It has millions of tentacles all over its body, and an enormous, bloodshot eye in the middle of its lime green forehead. With a slap from its tentacles, the ship tilts dangerously to the right, then starts to sink.

'At that moment I saw the rows of razor-sharp jaws inside the creature's mouth. I thought I was a goner, but I somehow managed to grab hold of a drifting piece of wood and drifted to a nearby island. Weeks passed by, and I finally managed to catch the attention of...'

I looked over at my son sitting in the chair next to me, he was hiding a smile, clearly thinking that I was mad. I sighed to myself. No one had ever believed me after that incident, being a surviving witness on board. I slowly closed my eyes, letting go of my past, and entering heaven.

# New Tales of the Ming Treasure Voyage

*Ying Wa Primary School, Chow, Jayden – 10*

The storm was howling through the night. Waves as high as mountains whipped up from the sea. A ship sailed steadily on, not afraid of the wind. It was bustling with activity as the sailors hurried around the deck. This voyage was known as the Ming Treasure Fleet.

“Captain! Our deck has broken, and a ginormous hole is visible! Please give your commands, sir!” A commander reported obediently to the captain, Lawrence. “I see. On the safe side, bring the treasures away from the hole, and patch it up immediately,” he ordered. The commander rushed back and forth, giving orders. Lawrence gazed out of the window. He sighed, “Our ship might not hold for long. I must have a back-up plan.” Just after he spoke, another voice came. “Captain! Our sail has fallen! Luckily, nobody was injured. What do I do, sir?” Lawrence sighed once again, and quickened his pace to check the damage.

The next day, the storm had gone. Lawrence had gathered up all of the sailors on board to make an announcement. “Fellow sailors, commanders, cooks, and everyone on board. I have made a decision. This ship,” he said, “is worn-down, old and it won’t provide us much more protection. So, I have decided to build a new one.” Murmurs spread like fire.

“What? Another one? How can we manage?”

“Oh no! That means more work!”

Lawrence tried to calm the crowd. “If we all pitch in, I’m sure we can achieve that. Please help! Of course I will help too!”

It seemed to calm the murmurs among the crew, and that made Lawrence a bit more confident. “Set sail to the nearest island!”

After days of sailing, they reached an island named Tropic Island. It was beautiful with loads of gardens and rose bushes. A city could be clearly seen in the middle of the vegetation. Lawrence decided to go explore the city. He told the crew to start building the ship, while he walked cautiously towards the city.

Soon, he had arrived. As he walked further in, he found that the city was seemingly abandoned. “Hello? I come in peace. I do not carry any weapons. I just want to make friends.” A few heads popped out from corners and behind walls. In a few seconds, there were tons of heads looking at Lawrence. One tall and skinny man walked out of hiding, trembling. “Yes? May I ask...who are you?” Lawrence introduced himself and his reason why he was on this island. “I need help. Can you lend me a hand?”

After a few minutes, they had made a compromise. Apparently, the Tropians (the people on the Tropic Island) were weak against pirates’ attacks and needed more protection. That’s why the Tropians hid when Lawrence came. Lawrence promised the Tropians to defend them as well as they could, and so the Tropians let the crew on the Ming Treasure Fleet stay to build their brand new ship.

Meanwhile on the beach, things were going pretty well. They had gathered wood from the vegetation on the beach, and were cutting them to a size that fits the build. Lawrence returned, this time along with the Tropians. They were planning how much space the crew was going to take up. Lawrence was quite satisfied about the progress they had made. He grinned.

Months passed by. The ship was finally finished. The Tropians were quite disappointed when they heard the news. After all, the crew had protected them against all sorts of attacks. Lawrence could see their frowning faces, so he gave them weapons from their treasure storage. The Tropians promised to repay the crew for their protection. With that, the crew sailed off.

Another year passed by. Lawrence was extremely proud of himself, because he just made friends with the Indians. Just when he was celebrating, he heard a huge BANG. Pirates were invading his ship. His cannons had unfortunately broke down when he needed them. He had neither defense nor attack weapons. The only thing he could do was to run. He suddenly saw the now empty treasure vault and remembered the Tropians. He immediately ordered his crew to set sail to Tropic Island.

When he arrived, the Tropians were putting up the crew’s old ship in the center of the city as a statue to remember the crew for helping them defend them against the pirates. The Tropians once again stared at Lawrence. “Remember me? I’m Lawrence!” he yelled. “I need your help! There are pirates after me! My new ship has broken down! I need my old ship!” The Tropians beamed. They finally had a chance to repay the crew for their kindness. They got to work right away. The braver Tropians helped defend the pirates with the weapons the crew had given them. The rest moved the old ship to the other side of the island. The Tropians followed closely behind. “I want to go with you,” the tall, skinny Tropician said.

“So do I!” another Tropian raised his hand. More and more voices popped out, saying that they also wanted to go with Lawrence and his crew. Tears streamed down Lawrence’s face. He nodded, smiling.

Soon, the crew and the Tropians were both on the ship. “Set sail!” Lawrence yelled. The ship sailed away from shore. Lawrence patted the old ship. “It’s good to have you back,” he said.

Back in China, the Tropians were given a new home and weapons to defend themselves. Some of them were even accepted to be soldiers to defend the country!

Lawrence’s old ship was on display in China, and the new ship that the crew had built was later confirmed destroyed by the invading pirates.

As for Lawrence, he was raised to become the Emperor’s advisor. And although he seldom roamed the seas now, his dream had never changed – to sail bravely in the sea with the ship he once sailed with.

# The Facebook of Zheng He

*Ying Wa Primary School, Lo, Yik Ming – 11*

Do you know what is the most popular social media network? Of course, it is the Facebook! Even Zheng He had switched on his phone and registered a Facebook account, renewing his status everyday...

Mr. Zheng is happy with Mr. Yongle today                      July, 1405

Hi everyone, I am Zheng He. You can call me Mr. Zheng or He He. The first Ming treasure voyage is going to begin soon, so I am very excited now! The Mr. Yongle emperor treats me very well. He gave me 27,000 troops and at least 62 ships. And he gave me boxes and boxes of treasures and told me to give the other countries during my trip too. He also said that there will be another eunuch, and he will be a partner of me. He is Wang Jinghong, who talks loudly and grabs all things to do. He is so rude!

Mr. Yongle also taught me a magical expression by Whatsapp on the half of my way. It is 'Attack! Let's battle to victory!'. But he told me that I can only use this when I see some pirates on the sea. I don't know who leaked the confidential matter, and told the other people that we have a great amount of treasure! Alas, there will be countless pirates waiting for me through my trip and they will kill me so they can steal everything on the ships! Shh! I see the Mr. Yongle is actually not that good. I haven't taken a shower for at least a week. But that miser only gave me a tattered shirt and a pair of old and torn trousers. Such a sad life for me!

Mr. Zheng is surprised of his troops.                      January, 1406

We have met pirates today. Proof of fact, my magical expression is useful. When I cried that slogan loudly, our troops fired to the pirates. The battle is intense and fierce! Unfortunately, my phone's battery is dead, otherwise I must record a video and upload it in Facebook. Anyway, we won in the battle! We will still meet pirates, but we go on to victory every time. One time, I was caught by a pirate, and they gave me a comfortable and warm bath! It's quite boring along the way. The general always says, 'Oh! Admiral... Admiral Zheng is caught by the pirates!' Wang Jinghong always says, 'I am hungry!' He only pays attention on food and girls. And the troops will only say, 'There is a pirate!'

Mr. Zheng is feeling relaxed in Malacca.                      May, 1406

After a long journey, I found that Malacca was a good place for me to have a rest there after my retirement. But the network signal there is too bad!

Mr. Zheng is frustrated in the communication with the residents in Calicut.  
December, 1406

Finally, we made port at Calicut (now India), and communicate with the residents there. We taught them how to farm easily, and they want to teach us their religion and the passages of scripture. They asked, 'Have you brought your USB here?' Ah? Nobody said that we need to bring our USB here! I only brought my phone, and the phone memory is only 32GB, but they said the scripture is 250GB! Wow! We had to exchange our email address, and wait for them to send it back a few days later.

Ahhh! Why don't they say they can send it through email before our voyage start?

# Battles in America

*Ying Wa Primary School, Loi, Jasper – 10*

Pirates usually travel the sea looking for gold to steal, but have you heard crews that do the exact opposite?

“Welcome!” the king of the Ming Dynasty said, “I heard you brought along precious and marvellous gifts from China, can I take a look?”

“Sure!” Jasper, the captain of the ship replied. He brought the king onto the ship, leading him to the Treasure Room. A shining golden door with a keyhole was to be opened in order to go in the Treasure Room. Jasper and the king, accompanied by Marcus, Jasper’s right hand man walked into the Treasure Room, filled to the brim with piles and piles of valuable and precious items such as gold and silk. The walls were lined with ancient Chinese dragons, which the citizens believed would protect the ship from intruders, carved by pure gold.

The king stared at the treasures for a long while, unable to get his eyes off the magnificent and extremely valued gifts. “Thank you so much!” the king said.

“Oh, you must have mistaken, only one twelfth of the treasures are yours, there are other countries that we also have to gift,” Jasper corrected.

“No, you’re mistaken,” the king laughed maniacally, “go up deck and you’ll see.”

Jasper and Marcus rushed up and found everyone included in their voyage tied with sturdy strings and bundled up in a bag. The crew’s muffled screams could be heard even from the outside. Jasper and Marcus were wild with fear. They backed away from the millions of soldiers with their swords sharpened out. “Go away!” Marcus shouted. The soldiers walked closer towards Jasper and Marcus every second.

The duo finally swung their swords at the soldiers, their swords glinting in the sunlight, as if in glory. At last, the soldiers sprinted at Jasper and Marcus and slashed their swords together. Jasper side-stepped and dodged instinctively from an attack. He stabbed his sword in the soldier’s gut.

“Jasper! Marcus!” Luke, a fellow member exclaimed, “You’ve got to get us out of this dungeon!”

At that moment, they heard someone panting heavily right outside of the cage where they were imprisoned in.

“Jasper!” someone shouted from the dark, “Luke!”

Jasper stared out from inside the prison. He inched closer towards the bars and found himself staring straight at one of his crew members...

“Peter!” Jasper gasped, astonished, “How?”

“I... I was asleep in our secret headquarters when they came,” he talked, still breathless, “I followed the soldiers sneakily as soon I found them carrying you guys here.”

Peter took out a silver key with the word ‘dungeons’ carved on it. He put the key in the lock and the bars sprang open.



Suddenly, footsteps echoed from above, alerting them that the guards were near.  
“Come on!” he yelled, “We’ve got to run!”

The entire crew dashed along the hallway, running away as quickly as possible. Soldiers ran in front of them and the ultimate battle had begun...

The crew swung their swords at the soldiers, knocking them out of the way. They kept doing that in order to keep a clean path towards the exit. Soldiers attempted to damage the crew, but together they were undefeatable. They ran and ran and ran. Finally, they had exited the dungeon into the clear plains. The crew kept darting away from the soldiers, unwilling to take on any trouble.

They darted up the dock and leaped onto the ship.  
On the ship was their last and greatest threat, the king himself. He slashed his sword at Marcus, Marcus held up his own sword to deflect it, but the king was just too strong. The king pushed Marcus to the boards of the ship and smirked. He then started dealing with Jasper. Immediately, Jasper knew there was no way at all he himself could finish the king off, but together, they might stand a chance.

“We’ve got to fight him together!” Jasper screamed.  
The king dodged the first few blows, but was unable to dodge the last one. The king shrieked in agony and fell to the board as he said his last words.

“I... I will get my revenge.”

# The Adventures of Zheng He and His Army

*Ying Wa Primary School, Tong, Colin – 11*

An entourage of armada stood at the harbor, waiting for this extravagant journey to inaugurate. A drizzle fell cloaking the raven black sky and the smell of gunfire enticed the soldiers' nostrils followed by impending rain. Zheng He strode forward without any qualms. The adventure would commence. I stood on the ship, acutely feeling guilt in my heart. I would leave my hometown and my family, but it had happened and was now water under the bridge. Farewells were bidden and the ship left. I would fight for China's peace.

Other sailors reciprocated the same feeling. Homesick and seasick, we endured the onslaught of intrepid storm. Nautical miles from home, we sat in terse silence every night, trying not to throw up. Finally, one day, 'Land Ahoy!' there came the shrieks of the excited crew. Zheng was thrilled. Before I could say anything, a gale ruffled the ship and I suddenly felt myself being torn up by a magnetic force.

I was inordinately shocked awake. It seemed that several doors of my dark side had opened. I suddenly found that I was not in my own drab room, but in a commodious room full of maps! 'Mr. Zheng, the ship is almost ready for the sail!' a voice said. Immobile as stone, I digested the crew's words. I suddenly knew what had happened. I had exchanged identities with Zheng He! I ran to my room and found a man in a state of irreparable confusion, Zheng He. He was stark white with fear. Then he spoke. 'Mister, we faced terrible storm hours before. Now we have exchanged identities, I hope you can help me to be the leader. I will be you. You are a brave warrior, and I know you can face adversities like this.'

We had arrived at the first port at Champa. We exchanged goods to the leaders there and got animals (an ambitious sign) and silk, and we set sail again, every soldier filled with nourishment. This time, we went to Java, Malacca, Aru, Calicut, and other places. I was crossing the Indonesia waters when we spotted Chen Zuyi and his gang. Notorious and nefarious for their guns, tales said that their gunfire could practically masticate a person in seconds by lack of blood.

We were out of luck when we crossed their way. They launched an attack. The discordant sound of gunfire clashed. My forces fought back like a Tasmanian Devil unleashed, unbeknownst to Chen Zuyi who was evading into a rowboat, I swung a sword at him. We won in our first battle.

Awaken, I found myself on the deck of the ship. I was a regular sailor again. The ship had boarded at China.

I was on the fleets on the fourth voyage. Being an opportunist, I had a platoon of men following me. 63 ships and a myriad of 28000 men was commandeered to the Persian Gulf. I was on the deck of the ship when I felt a foreboding sense. The same sense I had felt on the first journey! I fell into a deep sleep.

I was a doctor on the ship. I was in a daze as I looked at the uniform I was wearing. A doctor! I was clearly on the lower deck of the fleet. Seasickness was the matter of debilitating illness. Every person lying there was emaciated. I helped those who had severe injuries and were hapless.

The next day, I was back in my room.

What had caused me to turn into different people?

Years later, I found myself on the Ming treasure fleets for the last time. Embroiled in a dire matter, we had to leave at once. The fifth time was most latterly due to exorbitant demands from the king. Fortuitously, we were going to Africa. First to Aden at the mouth of the red sea, then onto the east coast of Africa. Stopping at the city states of Mogadishu and Somalia and Kenya. There, I met my lover. She was the cream of the crop. Impeccably dressed in traditional African clothes, I loved her with my heart. She boarded our ship. Her smile that could rival the sun, her manicured fingers, her serenity, were all feigned. One stormy night, when the onyx black waves splattered against the ship, her men she brought aboard attacked the crew. A wolf in sheep's clothing. She had been sent by the African king, who had appeared congenial and friendly with our ambassadors, but when I saw my wife's true colors, I knew what had happened. The mendacious king must have wanted to usurp the rights of China and rule over China. Fortunately, we had exchanged some silk for gun-fire but we lost the battle. Alas I had lost my beloved, who was buried at sea during the sea. That night I prayed in bondage of the Africans, to let me win the battle one more time. Suddenly, a gale ruffled myself and I was whisked away. Stupefied, I sat up and noticed that it was sunset, just like hours ago. Time travel! Posse of man was alerted and men regurgitated the message to all people. Hence, we were prepared when my wife and her men attacked. Imprudently, she pulled out a knife. 'Die!' Alas she was too slow – I had killed her with sorrow. The others were consigned back to China and would be beheaded back to China.

I died on this voyage. I had a dream, lying on my deathbed, my dreams wandering the desolate moors of Africa. I saw myself on the second voyage, the third voyage, the fourth voyage...then I thought about the further fortifying of my dearest country, China. I thought about the magical times when I became Zheng He and a doctor. I thought about my lover, my dead wife. We had brought back goods and tributes and envoys and whatever you could name. Zheng revered me as a leader and I knew it was time to return home.