

Fiction

Group 7



My Friend Zheng He

Korean International School Springboard, Mak, Arthur – 16

It is 1402, my 19th year and the beginning of my career as a sailor in the Emperor's Fleet. Our Emperor, Zhu Di, has ordered our admiral, Zheng He, to explore all the countries around China and beyond. Right now we are sailing to Indonesia to trade. Below the deck that I am standing on, our ship is crammed with treasures -- fine porcelain vases, bales of silk, gold and silver and many other things from our country to trade and give as gifts to the kings and important people of the countries we explore. We have been to Indonesia many times before, but Zheng He has explored countries much farther away. Some of the older sailors say that he has been to countries where people have black skin and there are strange animals with enormous ears and long twisting noses, and others with long legs and necks. Some sailors say they were on the ship that brought some of these strange creatures back to China as gifts to the Emperor from Zheng He.

Our emperor wants to know everything about the world and has entrusted Zheng He to go out and explore the countries that surround China. When Zheng He was a slave in Zhi Di's father's household, Zhu Di recognized how special Zheng He was. His name was not always Zheng He. He was born as Ma He in a Muslim family. Growing up, he dreamed of being an adventurer like his father and grandfather before him, so it was lucky for him that he was captured and taken as a slave to serve the emperor and that Prince Zhu Di recognized how special Ma He was, because when Zhu Di became emperor, he promoted Ma He to Admiral of the Fleet and changed his name to Zheng He. Zheng He's dream had come true, he could now explore the world.

I think Zheng He becomes popular with people in different countries. In our next journey, I have a map that I got from the pirates that we encountered. The map leads us to an island with huge treasures. Once we realize this, we all shout with huge excitement because we want to get our hands on these precious things. Of course, we can't stop thinking of the treasures. They are not just only for us, but they are also for our people in China as presents. Zheng He is right, we are supposed to share with our people first.