



Fiction

Group 2

The True Treasure

Bloom KKCA Academy, Leung, Beverly – 11

Lee Song stared at his finished painting with pride. Painted on the pebble was a chained bird on a swaying tree, struggling to fly.

“Lee Song!” the voice cut into his reverie like a knife. “You were supposed to be mucking out the stables. Are you painting by the lake *again*?”

Lee Song whirled around to face his Cousin Lee Chao, his archenemy, who had bullied Lee Song for years.

Lee Chao inspected the pebble with mock interest. “Lee Song! A painting will not add food to a table. But a rock—” he grinned cunningly, “—will add ripples to a lake!” He raised his arm, about to fling the precious painting into the water.

Finding his voice, Lee Song indignantly exclaimed, “No! Don’t!” He lunged for the rock.

Lee Chao laughed maliciously, and flung the cherished pebble into the lake.

Lee Song stared at the water. The heartless surface reflected back only his pain, mocking him.

His cousin chuckled. “Now go and muck out the stables,” he ordered.

~

That evening, Lee Song trudged off to gather his family’s goats. A rotund runaway goat, Pangzi, frustrated him by attempting **yet** another escape. Angrily, he chased after the mutinous animal, following it to a gathering of grottoes in the plain.

Lee Song cautiously stepped through the winding tunnels and inspected the caves as he searched for the goat.

Framing the spacious caverns were reassuringly solid walls, dry and with no leaks. *Nice*, he thought.

A flurry of scuffles came from behind a rock. Lee Song turned. *Pangzi*! After capturing him, Lee Song herded all the mischievous animals home.

~

After the evening meal, Lee Song snuck out of his house to see his best friend, Chen Lin. She was an independent, free-spirited sculptor, a revolutionary against the social stereotypes of ‘girls who were expected to stay at home and look pretty.’

When he got to her house, Chen Lin was sitting in her courtyard and tinkering around with a clay carving. “Hey, Lee Song, what’s up?”

“No good news”, Lee Song mumbled, dejectedly. “Today Lee Chao threw the pebble I was painting into the lake.”

Chen Lin tactfully remained silent for a moment, she knew Lee Chao was a sore topic, so she changed the subject.

“I’ve got a great idea, how about we find a little place for all the artists in this village to work? We can sneak out at night and work there instead of risking being caught out here.”

Lee Song brightened up. “I know just the place, a little group of grottoes I stumbled upon today in the middle of the plains, along the silk road. It’s perfect.”

“That’s great! It’s a more cheerful topic than the upcoming war. The boys being sent to army registration offices are getting younger and younger these days. The Jade King is desperate for troops.” Chen Lin sighed.

“Well, the Warring Emperor *is* advancing on our borders. In a few moons, the Emperor’s soldiers will be here, at the Village of the Tiger River!” Lee Song was worried.

Suddenly, Chen Lin’s sister shouted, “Chen Lin! Wash the dishes. Hurry!”

She frowned. “If you want the dishes done, do them yourself!”

Lee Song surreptitiously slipped into the shadows.

~

When Lee Song returned home, Lee Chao was lying in wait for him. “*Why were you out so late?*”

Lee Song stopped, petrified.

Lee Chao continued his harangue. “Do you want to bring more shame to the House of Lee, you idiot?”

Just then, Father appeared sleepily. “Will someone explain why you two are up at this ungodly hour and waking the whole of China?”

Lee Chao smirked. “Uncle, Lee Song snuck out and went gallivanting all over the village. He must be punished!”

Father glared at Lee Song, fury and frustration on his face. “For the hundredth time? You know here, in the Village of the Tiger River, you are a farmer and warrior. Nothing else. A painting will not stop the Warring Emperor, nor quell the famine in this land.

“You continue to disappoint me, boy, and you will forever. The next time I catch you creating meaningless artwork, I will throw you out of the house. Now go!”

Lee Song gathered his thoughts. “I will go, but I am done being a nobody. From now on, I will do the chores allocated to me in exchange for living here and my meals. I will not be treated as a scapegoat.”

Father clenched his teeth. Lee Song would be a cheap worker. He would have to agree to the terms. Lee Song knew that never again would there be love between the two of them. He had always hoped that one day, when there was peace and no threat of famine, his father might finally appreciate his artwork. Now he knew that day would never come.

As Lee Song arranged all his material in the caves, a strange sense of inner calm washed over him. His father had rejected him, and society spurned him. However, he was free and independent now.

He felt like the bird in his painting, only he had broken his chains.

He was flying. He was soaring in the sky.

~

The centuries passed. The world changed, yet the caves remained the same haven they had been since the day of their discovery. First in a trickle, then a rush, artists around the Tiger River began to gather inside the caves. A girl specialising in sculpture. A boy who was an expert in calligraphy. Twins whose talents lay in poetry.

The caves were for those who worked with paper rather than plow. For those who wielded a pen rather than a sword.

Steadily, precious pieces of art accumulated within the caverns.

But the real treasure to be found in the caves was the sense of community and appreciation, the affection and warmth. You could take away the artwork and literature, but the camaraderie and respect would remain. That was the *true* treasure of the Mogao Grottoes—friendship.

The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Almeida, Nero – 9

“Enough arguing,” my Dad yelled as we climbed out of the dusty car. We had parked close to the entrance of a huge cave. It had a cavernous mouth and we could just catch a glimpse of tunnels leading away like tonsils. A sign said: ‘The Mogao Grottoes.’ and ‘Entrance here.’ A guide stood waiting for us outside.

Welcome, sir,” he said.

“Hey, how come he only addressed Dad?” Siena said.

“That’s because I’m the most important person in the family.” Dad joked.

“Hey, that’s not fair!!!” Siena exclaimed angrily as we all stepped into the darkness. The guide instantly shushed her.

“You have to be quiet in here otherwise you’ll start a landslide.” But it was too late..

At first only five pebbles fell. Then eight. Then ten. And without warning, boulders started hurtling down blocking the entrance and sealing off our exit.

“Now look what you’ve done!” Dad shouted. I elbowed her. “Ow!” she said and stumbled backwards. Her elbow hit a jutting rock which shifted backwards, revealing a secret passage. Siena tumbled into the passage as though she was being swallowed down a gullet. We heard a loud “THUMP!” And another “OW!”

“Guys there is a chest. You have to come!” Siena’s words drifted up to us. I jumped in after her to find her seated in front of large wooden chest containing. We turned the key in the lock and the lid popped open revealing a ladder going even deeper into the darkness. We all climbed down and reached a musty, damp tunnel. After walking for a long, long time we pitched camp, scared and cold.

After a terrible sleep, Dad shook me awake.

“Get up buddy.” We gathered our belongings and set off, still afraid but hopeful of escape. After walking for an even longer time, the tunnel finally started to slope upwards.

“YES!!!” we high-fived each other, even the guide. We started to run up the slope and eventually we noticed that we could see each other again. We kept up our frantic run and finally stepped out into blinding light. We cheered and clapped while covering our eyes from the glare.

“Uuuuuuhhhh, guys,” I said. “I think there’s a problem.”

The ground was covered in snow and there was a pack of wolves with raised hackles under a nearby clump of fir trees.

“AROOOOOO!!!” Wolf howls filled

the air. Everyone backed into the dark tunnel, spun around and then ran as fast as the wind back into the depths.

After we rounded a few corners, we stopped to catch our breath. We glimpsed stairs up ahead and began a long climb up a rickety ladder. After an eternity we came to a glass hatch. My Dad had to push it open it was so heavy and when it eventually gave, warm water and light flooded over us. We had surfaced in a rockpool on a tropical beach.

“Booyeah!!!” we all yelled happily. We were so thankful for the magic of the Mogao Grottoes.

The Basilisk Cave

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Almeida,, Siena – 10

There was once a young novice monk who was known as Shenzu. On Shenzu's ninth birthday, a Zen master selected Shenzu to be his pupil. The Zen master's name was Sitagu Sayadaw. After the second year of Shenzu's training, Sitagu said it was time for Shenzu to recite The Sacred Vows at the Mogao Grottoes to finally become a real monk. Shenzu's friend, Abhaya, and know-it-all Dae Shim would be coming with him, for it was their time to become real monks too. The journey to the Grottoes was long and hard, and Shenzu was grateful when they reached bedtime prayers.

Late one evening, Abhaya poked Shenzu in the arm.

"Why didn't Sitagu let us read the scrolls? It's Sunday," Abhaya asked.

"He only lets me read once a month, and only if I've been good," Shenzu replied.

"What?" Abhaya said in shock. "My teacher, Dandan, lets me read the scrolls every Sunday."

Abhaya threw down his blankets. "This is disgraceful. If Sitagu won't let me read, I'll do it anyway. How does he expect us to become wise enough to heed The Sacred Vows?"

"No!" Shenzu pleaded. "Dandan is known for his generosity! Sitagu is different! He's strict!"

"What's going on?" It was Dae Shim, yawning and rubbing his eyes. He surveyed the scene, Shenzu with his arm on Abhaya's shoulder, and the scroll in Abhaya's hand. Dae Shim gasped.

"What are you doing!? If Sitagu finds out, he'll punish the lot of us!" Dae Shim flung his arms out in exasperation, knocking a clay pot engraved with God's noble deeds to the floor. It shattered, breaking into a million pieces. There was the sound of a chair jolting in Sitagu's chamber. Abhaya grabbed Dae Shim and Shenzu's arm, pulling them into a nearby rock tunnel and then rounding two corners for safety.

"Sitagu told us not to go into rock tunnels! We'll be lost for—" Shenzu put his hand over Dae Shim's mouth.

Sitagu's footsteps came nearer, and then receded. Abhaya swiveled about on his heels. Somehow, they had wandered into a labyrinth of tunnels.

"Uh—oh," Abhaya said. "I'm afraid we're hopelessly lost."

Dae Shim looked like he was about to launch into one of his lectures about doing what you're told, but Shenzu saved Abhaya the trouble.

"You're just kidding. Right, Abhaya?" Shenzu said, looking pointedly at Abhaya.

"Right," Abhaya said. And he headed down the tunnel he hoped led to Sitagu and the safety of a warm glowing candle.

They walked for a long time. Maybe fifteen minutes, maybe a hundred. Time was different in the cold rock tunnels.

"Look!" Shenzu yelled. Up ahead, there was a tunnel leading to two blinding yellow orbs of light. "The candles!"

"I told you," Abhaya shot back defiantly. Dae Shim began running towards the orbs, dodging the piles of pebbles that lay in his path.

"Sitagu!" Dae Shim cried. "It was all Abhaya's fault—" Dae Shim's eyes grew wide with fear, and he collapsed to the floor. Abhaya and Shenzu ran to see what was the matter. Shenzu knelt down to check Dae Shim's pulse, while Abhaya looked to see what had made Dae Shim collapse.

"Abhaya!" Shenzu said urgently. "Dae Shim doesn't have a pulse! He's close to death!" There was no response, except the thump of a body hitting the floor.

"Abhaya?" Shenzu slowly raised his head. The orbs of light were eyes. And they were looking right at him.

Shenzu was in a crystal cave. Not one of those pretty ones with dainty fairies welcoming you, but a black cave with dark blue icicles hanging from the ceiling. There was a long green snake-like creature with yellow eyes and a huge mouth that housed hundreds of teeth. Next to the monster, there was a hideous pile of skulls and bones. Shenzu opened his left eye a slit to watch the creature, hoping it wouldn't see he was awake. But the creature's nose had a unique sense of smell, and the creature swung around.

'I am a Basilisk,' The creature said in a mean, growly, musty voice that seemed to come from the bottom of his throat. *'With my eyes I cast The Basilisk Curse over prey. Then I eat them, and add them to my pile of bones.'* The Basilisk's voice became angry and booming, filling the cave with echoes.

'The imposters that dare enter my home, the generation-old Basilisk cave that I now proudly call my own, will be eaten, or, if they dare challenge me, will be eaten alive.' Shenzu's stomach crawled. But the Basilisk's warning gave him an idea. If he challenged the Basilisk, he would die honorably, and if he won, he would find a way to reverse the Basilisk curse and set Dae Shim and Abhaya free. Shenzu grabbed a sword from the remains of a skeleton and said boldly, "If that is true, I will fight."

'Foolish child,' The Basilisk said. *'A choice between dying painlessly or painfully, and you choose painfully. Enough chatter.'*

The Basilisk lunged towards Shenzu. Shenzu deflected the Basilisk's attack with his sword. Shenzu tried to stab the Basilisk, but he kept missing. He frantically stabbed the air and ran towards the Basilisk hoping his sword would pierce the fleshy part of the Basilisk's neck. The Basilisk clamped his jaws down on Shenzu's shoulder. Shenzu dropped to the ground, defeated. But then he heard a huge thud and realized the Basilisk had fallen down dead beside him.

Shenzu sought out the shapes of Dae Shim and Abhaya in the dim murkiness. They slowly revived consciousness. Shenzu helped them to their feet and together they hobbled back towards the warm safe candle of Sitagu. As Shenzu felt his way back along the dark rock tunnel he tried to make sense of the Basilisk encounter. Perhaps wisdom was not to be found in the scrolls but instead in the choice of honor and friendship. And after what felt like an eternity, the friends stumbled back into the candlelight.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chan, Jeffrey – 9

Ch.1 Meeting a New Friend

“Are you alright?” the voice asked nervously. “Hello, can you hear me?”

I woke up and looked around. There was no one else except myself. The stillness in this place was uncanny and I could not remember anything about this place. All that I remembered was riding on a camel, on 2nd September. My friend Vikas and I were obsessed with the fun. And just a moment later, all around me were winds and sands. The winds were going in a way that I've never seen before. I could not see anything in front of me except the feeling of being lifted in the air...

Thousands of thoughts went through my mind as I was recalling my memories. I was dead!

The voice seemed to know what I was thinking as he saw me shaking. As I snatched a look to my right, a face illuminated from the wall by a faint icon-like glow, like a ghost without a body. A light film of sweat covered my face, with the sand hanging dense around like a second layer of grey and brownish skin.

“You have fainted for two days here,” the mysterious boy answered. “In the famous Mogao Caves located in Dunhuang, China.”

I was shocked. For a few seconds I could hear nothing but my breath. It should just be a dream, I was supposed to be with my teachers and schoolmates, on a unique summer exchange.

“You should feel excited about it. This place was not open to all, and was listed in UNESCO's world cultural heritage around three decades ago,” he added.

“Mogao Caves...do you mean the glittering pearl adorning the Silk Road?” I raised my eyebrows at the icon-like glow as I heard of this ancient trade route before.

“Exactly,” he replied merrily. “I am from the virtual world. which means I am not physically here. However, I can help you in your exploration and to overcome the obstacles TOGETHER.”

Together...that echo...echoooo... His shouts bounced back and forth around the cave. We both listened, laughed, and that's how my adventure began with this new friend, **Jeffrey2.0**.

Ch.2 The Magical Scroll in the Library Cave

BANG!

“Ow!” I yelled.

“I just bumped my head onto something, like a wall!” as I crawled through the blackness.

“Stretch out your hands and see if you can find any torches,” said Jeffrey2.0 “Some explorers may have accidentally dropped their flashlight in the past.”

A torch! Yes, I got it and wiped the dust off the torch.

Surprise!

In front of me was a mountain of scrolls and manuscripts, that stank with a damp and mouldy smell, hundreds and thousands...Behind that were some ancient paintings, with fading colours and a myriad of Buddhist images, hanging on the wall and covered with a layer of dust.

“Choose a scroll”, a voice in my head said. Out of temptation, I secretly opened a scroll that looked comparatively good and complete. Like a modern magazine, the book had a lot of pictures, musicians playing their instruments, fairies flying around the Buddha... I felt as if I was in that book, and as if I was in another world. Which, actually, I was!

Whoosh!

Whoosh!

I looked up towards the sound.

“Don’t touch my scrolls,” an animal roared, in a throaty voice. “Anyone who intends to steal will be locked up here forever!”

“I am not!” I called out, dropping the scroll accidentally as my hands paralyzed with fear. ‘What are you?’

“Fool, who else would be flying around in a cave? Batman?” The animal showed its body.

“It w—was... a....” I uttered. It had already been enough of a shock for me to discover, that I was in the Library Cave; and that it had been even more disconcerting to see a dragon inside this secret place.

“This dragon was summoned by the Highest Buddha to guard these valuables,” explained Jeffrey2.0. “Explorers have been pouring into China from all over the world in these decades, trying to steal these treasures away for their studies.”

“Now, get out of my Library!” shouted the dragon. All of a sudden, the scroll that I opened shone, unleashing some flying fairies—like musicians up in the air.

“What happened?” I gasped.

As I blinked my eyes, the scroll mountain was gone. Instead, a group of musicians appeared to be flying above my head, playing some sort of lullabies with their instrument. A Buddha was sitting in the middle, with an aura glowing around him which looked like a rainbow enclosing the cave.

“Get out of the door before the music ends!” Jeffrey2.0 shouted. “Or you will sleep here forever.”

But how?

I ran and sped towards the door without an idea of what to do...The music was getting louder...the dragon was roaring...Jeffrey2.0 was shouting something...but my ears were not working properly anymore...

With a huge spurt of speed, I just jumped and grabbed one of the flying musicians by his long silky sleeves. And a second later, I closed my eyes and swung myself towards the door with all my might, hoping for something miraculous to happen...

Ch.3 Reborn

“Are you alright?” Vikas asked nervously. “Jeffrey, can you hear me?”

“Wh—where am I now?” my voice suddenly sounded hoarse, as though my mouth had gone dry for days.

As I was waiting for my old friend’s answer, though I knew I was in the same Gobi desert, I found something in my hand. It was a part of the musician’s clothing. It was a smooth and light fabric that shone with glossy gold. The material was rare and unique, and that I knew I wasn’t dreaming.

"What’s that in your hand?" asked Vikas.

Before I could reply to Vikas, I heard a squeaky voice hissing, “This is mine. Return it back to me!”

“How can I return it back to you?” I yelled back silently.

“***The Reborn Door,***” He laughed in a creepy and spooky voice... “The door you just escaped from...”

The Mysteries Mogao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chan, Moses – 9

A long time ago in B.C. times, there was a monk and his big village with millions of people, discovering a cave with secrets of Buddhism. When they saw it they were blissful as quokkas, so they celebrated by catching the most delicious meal the grain rice that they brought with them for celebrating their success!

The next day, they made a map of the cave and marked an “X” on the map to represent the cave. Then they named it “The Magao Caves”, because Magao means peerless, which means “Something better than any other of its type.”

They also went in to find even more secrets inside the cave. Every day they found more and more secrets, which meant that they went deeper and deeper, which means it was more creepy and dangerous every day because the deeper they went the greater chance they will get lost.

Days passed, deeper they went. They wanted to find the piece of gold, but they only found some art and carvings. The monk died, but as he said before he went to discover “If I can’t complete and find the gold my sons and daughters will if they don’t, my grandson’s will...” 5 months passed, they then went back out, to get food, because they only got 3 more weeks food, which meant they had to find food for years or more. They came across this hurricane, which destroyed their camel cars, in the group people died from, viruses, extreme temperatures, and natural disasters... By the time they got back to the village, they got food for years. While going back to the caves they came over little earthquakes, which slowed their pace, but worse of all a very strong triple tornado came by. It killed a few hundred people of the leftover people in the group, it killed most of the leaders of the group. They fought for food, drinks, and even shelter. People got scratch marks, diseases, but back in the villages were having war towards them which they didn’t know about, which was dangerous... Days passed until they went back to the caves.

1 week passed every day they wrote a journal about the day, but art was what they only found... They only got 10 people left after everything and it was their mission to find the gold... All they did was try and try until the gods thought it was time for the people to get the gold, so they place the gold and some other treasure there when they were sleeping! The next day, the monk’s friends found golds, silvers, diamonds... They brought it back and showed people and achieved their mission where they found the treasure!

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The Secret of The Mogao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chen, Heather – 9

“Passport, please?” asked the customs officer. Jade Wong was on a flight from Hong Kong to Dunhuang, a famous city in China because of the Mogao Caves. In fact, the reason why she wanted to go there was for the inspiration for her new books!

After an exhausting flight, she checked into the Dunhuang Hotel. Her room had traditional Chinese decorations with a lustrous red carpet. She then changed into a red qipao to enjoy dinner before the trip ahead of her.

The next morning, Jade arrived at the Mogao Caves. She was amazed by the Mogao Caves instantly! It had beautiful statues, mysterious paintings and Chinese culture. Jade traveled deeper into the caves, and found a statue of Buddha reclining. The Buddha was lying down with a calm expression on its face.

Strangely, there were no other visitors besides Jade. *I thought visitors would be crowding in to see the Buddha!* As if hearing Jade’s thoughts, a voice behind her boomed: “I just put an enchantment on them so they wouldn’t!” Startled, Jade cried: “Who are you?” “I am... the Buddha!” Jade saw a *formerly* reclining Buddha sitting up.

“I wanted you to right a great wrong. A wrong that caused destruction in China a long time ago.” “Then why do you want *me* to right it? I’m not that special” said Jade. “I chose you because your ancestors have helped save lives out of the goodness in their hearts.” explained Buddha.

“The Great Destruction, was a dystopian version of ancient China. It was ruled by King Dargon and Queen Demonia! They’re cruel as they killed their people in order to keep track of the population.” “No wonder why you want to stop them.” said Jade, finally understanding. “I’m about to take you back in time. Hold my hand.” said the Buddha calmly. With shaky hands, Jade took hold of the Buddha’s massive hands, and a wave of dizziness swept across her.

“Are you alright?” Jade suddenly woke up. “Do you want to stay at our house? I mean, it’s not much but...” the stranger trailed off. “Of course! Thanks for your hospitality! My name is Jade Wong.” said Jade. “My name is Lily So!” Lily said happily.

Suddenly, a figure pounced on them. “Arghh! Who are you?” asked Jade fearfully. “I am... Queen Demonia. Welcome to our land,” she sneered, “I never liked newcomers, so everyone who is foreign in our land, goes to jail! And so do the people who help them.” Demonia glared at Lily.

Lily gulped. “Bye girls!” cackled Demonia, as a chariot whisked Jade and Lily off to jail. “We are in one of the most dangerous dungeons in this city. In order to get out, we need to escape the cell, dodge all the booby traps and swim through a lake with alligators in it.” said Lily, trembling at the thought of it. “I know! We can try using my hairpin!” said Jade excitedly. “Hope it works.” muttered Lily as Jade stuck her hairpin inside the keyhole and turned it.

Clang! When they got out, they dodged past swinging logs, slithering snakes *and* flying swords. “I’m afraid we’re down to the last obstacle. The lake of yangtze alligators.” said Jade gravely.

When they reached the lake, they saw those alligators. They were *smaller* than she expected, small *but* ferocious, with their jaws full of sharp teeth and keen eyes, it would be *impossible* to get past them. Suddenly Jade had a thought: “Lily! I think alligators *might* ticklish!” Jade said.

Without thinking, Jade jumped in. She tickled the first two alligators. Surprisingly, they cackled so hard they sank to the bottom of the lake. Quick as a flash, Jade put some metal chains around them, so they wouldn’t escape. Suddenly, *another* alligator appeared. This one seemed the most fierce of them all!

Strangely, when Jade tickled it, the alligator didn’t move a muscle. Jade immediately backed away from it. Lily wanted to help Jade, so she jumped in to distract the alligator. Jade caught on and started bounding the alligator in chains. It didn’t take long for the alligator to sink to the bottom of the lake.

“ The only problem is... Demonia and Dargon.” said Jade solemnly. “ I have an idea on how to defeat them! They must know that we escaped by now. So we turn ourselves in, and offer to be their servants. Then we will turn the guards in the palace against them.” finished Jade.

Once they got into the palace, a voice bellowed: “ So you have come to my palace? What a great honour!” said Queen Demonia sarcastically. Suddenly, Dargon entered the room, Jade said: “ We want to be servants instead of prisoners.” “ All right. You’re servants. Work, now!”

The girls discussed the plan while they were cleaning. “ First step: Make the guards go against Dargon and Demonia. How? We tell them they’ll be free. After all, everyone likes freedom” explained Jade.

“ Let’s go!” whispered Lily. They ran down the hallway. Suddenly, they spotted guards protecting the hallway.

“Do you hate Demonia and Dargon? If so, our plan is: if all of you go against Demonia and Dargon *and* win, you’re free!” said Jade. “Are ya sure we’ll win?” questioned a guard. “ Of course! Your numbers outmatch Demonia and Dargon greatly.”

“ Then let’s go. Charge!” screamed the guards. A battle started, and during the chaos, Lily cried: “ Let’s go!” They ran through the doors of the castle, and out into the light. Suddenly, Buddha appeared! He congratulated Jade: “ Well done, I shall send you back to the future.” “ Oh! Jade is from the future! Take me with her! ” cried Lily. “ Alright. You can come. If you don’t say a *word* that hints you are from the past.” said Buddha sternly. Suddenly, they went back to the present. That was the story of how Jade and Lily rewrote Chinese history. Thanks to these young ladies, China has the largest population in the world!

The Bodhisattva, Creatures, and Monks

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chen, Renee – 9

“Kaboom, crack!” Lightning shone from the sky; thunder groaned like lion roaring right beside you. A gust of wind ran through the leaves as if it was playing tag. It was raining cats and dogs, and if you were there, you would drench in just one second. Luckily no one was living there except for plants, plants everywhere. In such severe weather, plants were soaking in the water world with big drip of water pouring down. Rocks fell from the mountain hitting hard on the ground. Not falling off everywhere, the rocks bended and formed into an enormous cave.

After a few days, the rain stopped. A grand rainbow stretched across the sky like an upside down smile. In the lake, water glowed as if jewels in the water. Some trees were lying on the ground, and some were leaning.

Up on the sky, a bodhisattva was sad about what had happened, but still, she was thrilled that a cave formed in Dunhuang. It was a cave with large golden rocks covering it. The bodhisattva got a brilliant idea – to paint the cave to make it colorful and to use each art to represent a story. After a well-thought-out planning, she called up her mythical creature friends to do her painting job because of their gigantic size and their strong paws.

“Swoosh!” In just few seconds the mythical creatures gathered. They examined the spacious cave, their eyeballs turned and then smiles spread across their faces... The mythical creatures ran into the cave, took their paws and started scribbling, actually, they were making the beautiful cave arts. After a while, the sketches were finished and it was time to add some painting to it. There were a variety of colors on the creatures’ fur and they can control whatever color they want to paint on the wall. Rub, rub, rub, scratch, scratch, scratch. Adding paints on it made the drawing more enjoyable.

The mythical creatures didn’t report to the bodhisattva after a week. The bodhisattva got worrier and worrier, she decided to go down and have a look. When the bodhisattva got to the cave, in an instant, her mouth fell agape, she was stunned and speechless. Her eye opened wide – she was completely shocked by the drawings of people, creatures, and the views. On the wall, the mythical creatures were sweating, their tongues were sticking out their mouths and their eyes drooped. What a busy day!

Years passed, no one has gone into the mysterious cave. Until one day, when a monk was riding a camel, he saw half of a painting sticking out. The monk was curious and decided to go inside to discover. With just one step in, he saw cave arts with the attractive drawings and paintings. Impressed by the masterpiece painting, he thought he could add something to the cave to make it even better. In a flash of inspiration, he got an idea. He could build something to cover the cave – temples! The monk convened thousands of his fellow monks to build these temples. With innumerable trials and hardship, they finished the temples in decades.

Up on the sky again, it was really cloudy, the bodhisattva was playing fetching with her mythical creatures, she spotted something bright on the ground. It was from the cave with amazing cave arts painted by the creatures. But it looked totally different now.

The bodhisattva took a step back, “OOWWWWWWWW” screamed the bodhisattva. She got tripped by a spike. The spike was as sharp as the horns of an ox. Despite of the pain, she slid down to discover what was going on.

It was the spiky needle on the top of the temple roof that tripped the bodhisattva. The gigantic temples were as colorful and bright as the cave arts. When the bodhisattva stepped in the fabulous temple, she was amazed by the delicate sculptures, her eyes started to sparkle, she seems to be in love with it. Inside, there were also tall statues standing still. In a jiffy, the bodhisattva dashed out the temple and called for her mythical creatures. Immediately, the mythical creatures landed next to the temples, they were incredibly shocked as the bodhisattva was.

It was almost dark, the bodhisattva continued to explore the cave with the creatures – small parts of the sculpture were carefully carved by hand. Some pictures were in strange shapes that the bodhisattva didn’t even understand. In addition, they discovered more statues. Statues of buddhas, and other creatures that look like lions.

“What is the name of the cave?” The bodhisattva asked. No one had an idea, not even one.

“Then let’s come up with one!” The bodhisattva exclaimed. The chats started and went on and on and on and on and on till the next morning.

“Why don’t we call it the Mogao Cave?” shouted a lion–body, dragon–skin, ox–horn and three eyes creature. “Because,” continued the creature, “The Mogao Cave means peerless with cave arts, temples, sculptures, and statues.”

The long – hidden legends continue and remain to be discovered.

The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Cheng, Maegan – 9

What would you do if you were stuck in a cave, with no way out?

It was the year 2016, Tyler who was now 18 was a few months away from graduating. He was so excited that he couldn't even start describing what he felt. Tyler was going back to his hometown in China for college and to visit his grandparents while he was there.

In China he felt back home welcomed in open arms, he couldn't wait to see his grandparents again.

It is now the year 2017. Tyler was now a freshman in his college. He soon learnt that they were going to visit the Mogao Grottoes. In class, Tyler's mind was in the clouds and he missed the safety rules and instructions for the Mogao Grottoes caves.

During the visit, Tyler was so clueless that he even bumped into a huge rock pillar, but suddenly he heard a sound like a crack, as if something was ready to fall. Tyler was then taken aback.

Different sized boulders came crashing down, but Tyler managed to escape the boulders, only to find the room pitch black. As Tyler's eyes adjusted to the darkness, he saw there was no escape. Tyler tried to think of ways to escape but the same thought kept returning to his mind. There is no point, there is no way I can leave here until someone notices I am missing! I should've listened. Tyler tried his best to stay calm. He tried repeating the same thought in his mind. He tried meditating. He tried thinking of happy times. He even tried banging the rocks, but nothing worked. Tyler started to cry and he started to scream in his mind. This can't be happening this can't be the end yet right?

A few days had passed, Tyler managed to stay alive, thanks to the food and water in his backpack, but he was almost down to nothing. 28 days had passed since Tyler's disappearance, everyone was concerned about where he went, but no one came to his rescue. Tyler is surviving Thanks to bugs and puddles of water. One day when Tyler was finding some water puddles he came across a flashlight, to his surprise, the flashlight was in a suitable condition, he used it to look around, and he saw a giant sculpture, a Buddha sculpture. Tyler was amazed by the fact that he was in this cave for maybe a few months, but never did he realize that there was an amazing sculpture right in front of his eyes. Then he curiously, but carefully explored the Buddha statue. "Wow..." Tyler gasped. Cool, this thing was built 1,000 years ago.

A week had passed, and Tyler was found! He was ready to cry. To be honest, I never thought I would be able to see light again!

"It is the same time of the year again., do you know if we are going to visit the Mogao Grottoes again? Maybe this time it will be the Yellow Mountain." Tyler asked Ben. Ben is Tyler's one and only best friend. "Beats me." said Ben "But the real question is, are you gonna get trapped in a cave again?" "Maybe not, I will cautiously approach them." Replied Tyler, but the truth is that Tyler was trembling all over. Ben frowned "Are you okay?". "I am better than ever! Why?" "No, it just looked like you were trembling."

At Mogao Grottoes, Tyler was given a supervisor. Just in case he goes missing again. When everyone saw it they laughed, they laughed until they coughed. Tyler's nose and face were now rose pink. Why can't I be left alone? Why do I need a supervisor? I'm 20! Great, my face is now rose pink and people are laughing at me, just wonderful.

Tyler then discovered that the supervisor's name is Mark

Being followed by this guy is a pain, he's so annoying, he's like a walking encyclopedia, I know some people like that but not me. He keeps on spitting out random facts at the wrong time, overall he has bad timing. *sigh, Mark frowned "is something wrong" and he just had to ruin my thoughts, I'll just tell him I'm fine. "No, I'm good." I wonder what thoughts he has about me. Mark thought

"Hey by the way, which cave are we in? Tyler asked "Cave 51" Mark replied that is the only reason why he is useful. "Watch out!" Exclaimed Mark, "Close call, thanks" Tyler said and maybe that's another reason why he's useful. I wonder if he likes me now, because I kind of saved him from getting trapped again. Mark thought. Suddenly Tyler laughed and said "I guess I really need a supervisor" Mark laughed too. I guess he's not that bad. Tyler thought I guess I don't have to worry about him hating me. Mark thought

“Hey, is this the library cave?” Tyler asked “Yup” Mark answered joyfully “Wow... this place is so cool, I never been to one of these before.” Tyler said “I know right?” Mark asked “I think we should tone it down a bit, the echo in this cave is making it seem loud.” Tyler whispered “Yeah.” Mark Whispered.

It’s time to go.” Whispered Mark. “ *sigh it was fun while it lasted.” Tyler whispered quietly.

Back outside they took attendance, and made sure everyone was here. While Tyler was getting bullied by other students saying “Did you have fun, having a supervisor?” or “How does it feel to have someone following you?” Tyler’s answer was simple, “Yes it was fun, Mark is funny and nice.” Then Tyler heard all of them murmur about what he said.

When they arrived back at school, their teacher wanted them to reflect on their journey, and create a presentation about it. The presentation was due in a week.

The day of Tyler’s presentation went splendid everyone listened and clapped for him. When everybody clapped for Tyler’s smile was bigger than anyone else’s.

Mogao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chiu, Ellie – 9

A cold winter morning, in the north-western part of China, a class of students was thrilled to be going on a field trip. The location they were heading was the Mogao Caves, a group of 500 ancient Chinese temples over 1500 years old. But recently, there had been cases of missing children around that area. For security purpose, the principle sent more teachers to go on this field trip to watch over the students. The whole grade 5 was going on this day, and the teachers grouped them into teams for extra safety. Nobody was allowed to explore alone. Teddy was partnered up with Amanda, Sarah, Rachel, George and the teacher Ms Applebee.

Once they arrived at one of the caves, it was already crowded with people, but they went with it because this place was beautiful. There were ancient drawings on the walls, and lots of statues, with a big Buddha sculpture right in the middle. Teddy's group wandered around and found an empty room with no people inside, except for four security guards standing just inside the room's entrance. But these guards were wearing different uniforms than other guards. Teddy's group walked into the room and used their iPads to take nice pictures inside. All of a sudden, the security guards ran out of the room, took keys out of their pockets and locked them inside.

The teacher and the students all panicked. Everyone started screaming for help, and banged on the door as hard as they could. Before long, some of the students started crying, some started peeing, and some got very mad. The teacher tried calling for help many times, but there was no signal in the room. Most of the students gave up screaming, as they were tired and hungry. They had left their lunch boxes at school, and only had enough water for one person. Ms Applebee felt miserable and they were running out of ideas. The screaming didn't work, the banging didn't work, and the phone didn't work. Everyone is scared, not to mention some of them needed to use the restroom.

By the time it hit six, everyone got super hungry and thirsty. There was only a slither of light from a crack in the wall. As time passed, it got dimmer and dimmer. Mice and other small creatures started coming out through the holes on the wall. After a while, the room was filled with mosquitoes, mice, ants and lizards. Everyone was tiptoeing and leaning against the wall. Some screamed and cried with the little energy they had left. But Ms Applebee thought of a brilliant idea. She told the kids to step on the creatures and eat them if they were really hungry. But none of them listened to her, as they thought the idea was disgusting and may even get them sick or poisoned. Time kept ticking, and their hunger grew. Out of despair, they all started screaming and kicking the doors again. When it hit midnight, everyone got really cold. Some brought extra jackets but it wasn't enough. Using the light on their iPads, they started looking at the pictures on the wall to find clues for getting out. But they found nothing useful. Soon they all got sleepy and tired, and didn't really have the energy to do anything. Suddenly, the pictures on the wall started singing and dancing. Most of them freaked out, but some found it funny. Rachel was so shocked that she fainted! After five minutes or so, the singing and dancing stopped. Ms Applebee tried to calm down the kids by saying it was only their imagination, but she looked very frightened herself. After a long night, everyone finally fell asleep.

When morning came, everyone was upset. They had hoped it was all just a dream, but it wasn't. George was particularly mad because he didn't like sleeping in his outside clothes, not brushing his teeth, and not having pancakes in the morning. Sarah knew there was no way to escape, and that only luck can save them. Seeing a large Buddha statue in the room, Sarah bent down and started praying to Buddha for help. She closed her eyes and mumbled to herself. When she got up, everything was the same, not much had changed after the praying. Moments later, a light started glowing out of the Buddah's finger. The finger started moving inch by inch, then it stopped, pointing at a wall full of pictures. Everyone moved closer to find clues, but they found nothing interesting. Out of madness, Teddy started kicking on the wall. Later, George followed and started kicking as well. Then Sarah noticed that the wall made different sounds depending on where they kicked. In one particular area, it sounded more hollow. Then Ms Applebee told the kids to pick up rocks and started throwing them at the hollow area. After some effort, the wall started cracking, and breaking. They finally made a hole and saw light from outside! Everyone thanked Sarah for her brilliant idea to pray to Buddah.

When everyone got out, they were all cheering and thankful. The teachers told the parents to pick them up, and the parents were very glad everyone came out alive. And the homework for that day was to write a letter about their adventurous field trip.

Masterpiece Tales From The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chong, Selene – 9

Prologue

‘You will never be successful! You are wasting your time! You have got to be kidding me!’ Those were the words I always heard. Every single second, my extremely malicious parents said that I could be anything *but* an artist.

You see, when I was young, I loved drawing. As a matter of fact, I would choose drawing over reading or even playing games. All my life, my parents were disappointed in me, but I knew I just couldn’t change their mind even if I really wanted to.

Chapter 1

‘Wow!’ Every piece of fabulous artwork surrounded me. Inspired, my eyes filled with big, bright, shiny stars. I felt my heart pounding in my chest. I yearned to be a famous artist, but everyone just looked down on me. The more people looked down on me, the more I believed that I couldn’t do it. I quietly walked down the hallways; my footsteps echoing. I saved up all my money for this trip —I just knew that this way, by getting inspired, I could definitely be a famous, inventive artist.

In each piece of artwork the Buddhist have made, I studied it carefully. Wondering how they made each detail fold in the sculptures, and how they got their inspiration for their drawings and paintings.

I creaked the door open to the second floor. Just when I opened the door, a piece of paper floated as gracefully as an eagle soaring freely and landed on the dusty floor. As curious as a cat, I picked the paper up. I slowly unfolded the delicate paper, and it read:

Dear reader, I predict that you are here to improve and become an artist.

If so, I have carefully chosen some very helpful tips just for the one and only you.

Tip 1: Be yourself — art isn’t just a way to create, but it is also a way to express yourself on a sheet, canvas or sculpture.

Tip 2: Normal is fine — you don’t have to fit in with others to be famous, show the world the real you, what makes you so unique and special.

And lastly tip 3: Go straight forward — if someone says ‘you can’t’ or ‘you won’t’, they’re probably scared that you will.

Signed,
Leonardo da Vinci

I gasped in shock. I didn’t know how to react.

Wondrous?

Peaceful?

Nothing?

Leonardo da Vinci was whom I admired the most.

I thought deeply back into his very last tip. ‘Was that something I needed to hear?’ I had a whole mind full of questions. But then the most important question came to mind ‘Was this note real?’ As much as I wanted to believe that it was real, that question fought against that theory. I knew there were fakers in this horrible world but would someone really create a rip-off of Leonardo da Vinci writing a note?

I thought about that question when walking back to the hotel with the note in my hands. At last, I’d finally arrived at my hotel room, I slumped in my periwinkle coloured bean-bag and set the piece of paper on the table. Suddenly, a slight breeze encircled the piece of paper. The paper floated in mid-air, higher and higher. My mouth hung wide open, what was happening? Gradually, the piece of paper floated back on the table. I picked it up to make sure it was safe but something caught my eye. It was Leonardo da Vinci’s signature! It was real! I blinked a few times to see if I was dreaming or not, but it was actually real! I was holding the note Leonardo da Vinci wrote himself. Half of me wanted to shout and yell happily while the other half felt amazed.

Swiftly, I pulled out a drawer in the silent room. I took a piece of colourless paper and a few paintbrushes. With a positive mindset, I started painting. At first, I just dabbed the paintbrush on the paper, but later on I started using my imagination to paint something unique, special and creative. I pressed hard on the paper and slowly ran the paintbrush against it. Soon, I had created a mini mural — a masterpiece.

While I was looking at the masterpiece, I remembered something: ‘every artist was first an amateur’. That’s how I realised, I was on my very first step to a great, forever lasting journey.

New Tales from The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chow, Annabel – 9

CRASH! BOOM! BANG! Bullets flew, grenades exploded and time felt like it stopped. The queen of Mangawea (mang-ga-wee-a) was sending off foreign packages from inside the city. No one knew what was inside the packages and no one knew what was happening, except that it wasn't good. The queen was making an escape and trapped herself in a box and told her servant to send her off with the other packages. The servant did as he was told and sent her off. Attached to her package was a star that let him know which box she was in when it arrived at the destination.

The queen never got to the destination due to a boat crash. The other boxes were recovered by her servant as he was very loyal and never gave up looking for the queen. No one knows what happened to the queen but the servant buried the boxes deep inside the sand. That was many many years ago. The boxes were opened by the king of Sephjavaia (sef-ja-Way-ii-a) in 1804. Found deep inside the sand the boxes were filled with shovels and tools made of gold. As he peered into the box he admired the beauty of the gold and lifted it up into the air to shine in the sun when someone took it right out of his hands. It was the queen's servant!

The king yelled pathetically in desperation and told his servant to find the man and capture him. The soldier nodded and left. But he was very curious and wanted to read up on the boxes to gain some extra knowledge that might help him. At the library, he read for hours and hours, days and days, even weeks and weeks. By now he was as wise and smart as an owl and was able to tell the king all about the boxes. The soldier told the king all about what happened and apparently, the servant was still alive. The servant was the only one alive who still knew about the story so their number 1 subject was the servant. They had a lot of power over the world back then and so they checked all boat records and it turns out there was a man that left Sephjavaia recently. The boat landed in China so they set sail to China. As they traveled the king and the soldier planned how to capture him.

When they arrived they scanned the city. They found a man about 38 years old who held a familiar-looking box to the wise soldier who read about the boxes, but it wasn't the same box that they discovered in the sand, it was the box with the queen inside of it! They grabbed the box from the servant and opened it.

Inside the box was a scroll. As they opened it they saw a map from exactly where they were to Silk Road in China. The soldier told the king what he had learned and stuffed the servant in a bag just in case they needed him. The ride was pretty smooth, the servant didn't try to escape and the transportation was easy. When they arrived they followed the map slowly to a cave but it wasn't just any cave it was the...

THE MOGAO GROTTO CAVE! Why did the map lead them here? The building had many levels and was very colorful. You could feel joy from looking at the building, the red and gold-colored railings, and the beautiful murals in the background. As they examined the building they saw that there was a door next to another door so they shook the handle of each of the doors, but they were all locked. They thought about the golden tools, and used a hammer to hit the wall as hard as they could and the wall broke. When they entered there was a room. The room was magical. It had a beautiful tiled floor, the sun was shining through the window and it reflected onto beautiful golden murals. On the floor was a scroll. The scroll said that the queen, in fact, built the very room they were standing in. But the scroll also said that it was getting harder and harder to leave until she couldn't leave and no one knows what happened to her. Soon the room started to shake. They evacuated as fast as they could. They realized as soon as they got out that nothing was shaking and their hole was gone but they didn't get to read about who wrote the scroll.

They went to check on the servant that was still in the bag. When they got back to the front of the cave and got to the bag they looked inside the bag and no one was there. Did he escape? Or maybe he was never there? Did the queen use him to lure them there? But why would she want to lure them there? It was too good to be true! Was it all a dream?

The Adventure

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chu, Kai Xin Davina – 9

The raging fire was quickly approaching Chen Yin Ming. He was dodging left and right while dashing through the monastery, but the fire was still close. He looked ahead, he looked back, but there were flames everywhere. Heat was burning his body as sweat was dripping onto his hands, body and legs. Suddenly a door appeared, as he thought finally he could escape, until he felt the doorknob. It was burning but he had no choice. He dashed in, thinking that he could easily escape, but nevertheless the inferno still caught up to him.

2 days later.

“Mom, Dad I know ever since the fire, you don’t want me to be a monk any more, but I want to be one. You and Dad were monks too. So I have the right to become a monk like you guys.”

“Chen Yin Ming, trust us: it is too dangerous.”

“I know, but I want to. How is it fair? You know how many times I have heard in the monastery of how adventurous you guys were. Why can't I?”

“Fine. When your Dad and I were young, there was always this legend going around. It said that two boys went to travel to the Western Paradise, but they stopped in the Gobi Desert because they saw a vision. The vision was a lot of golden Buddha’s and they were both so inspired by it, they made the most beautiful cave ever made by man. People say if you find the Mogao Grottoes, it is an honor to humans.”

Chen Yin Ming left for his journey, with water, food, a sleeping bag, a tent, and his phone, little did he know he needed to bring more than that.

As he was walking through the Gobi desert, he saw an enormous scorpion trying to eat a snake. Chen Yin Ming was so afraid that he tried to run as fast as possible, but he caught the scorpion’s eye. He ran faster than a hot knife gliding through butter, but the scorpion still crawled closer and closer. He felt something touch his back, and then he felt really tired and closed his eyes.....

“Are you alright? We saw you on the floor; we almost thought you were dead. Me and my dad think it is because of the scorpion sting on your side that made you unconscious, but we saved your life luckily. If you were in the desert like that you would have been dead meat. We saved you but I think you have been severely hurt. I don’t recommend going anywhere in the next few weeks and definitely not today!”

“I’m OK, just let me go. I need to go somewhere,” But the pain was like the fire right next to him again but burning him, making him dust. As he walked the fire was growing inside of him, making it grow and grow, even though everyone was shouting, until that pain suddenly rushed through his veins and his eyes closed once more.

“Let us help you, we might be able to help you but you have to be more careful and listen to us.” said the little boy

“Fine. I am trying to find a monastery but I still don’t need your help. I am fine.”

“Please trust us” answered the little boy. But Chen Yin Ming didn’t want to bring a little boy and his dad on this journey. He thought it was going to be too dangerous, until he felt a sting on his back and woke up. He was still in the desert but his back was in horrendous pain.

As Chen Yin Ming checked his bag for some bandages and some food he realized his bag was gone, and he was more desperate than ever, thinking, “Will I ever make it back?” Through the night he had no shelter to warm him up nor food or water. As he tried to sleep, his tummy rumbled as loud as a lion.

The night was long but the next day he could barely walk. He would eat anything as long as it was not poisonous. He walked and walked until his face, body, and legs were skinny, until he had to crawl. As he crawled he saw a cave. He entered it thinking it was finally the Mogao Grottoes until he saw ancient writings.

It all told him to select one. “But select what?” He looks around the room and on one side he saw gold, and the other side had nothing. He remembered a lesson that he had learned, and would always remember, because he lost someone’s life for it. The time was when he picked money over his teacher. For he thought money was the most powerful thing in the world, until he grew older and he realized he was wrong.

That is why he picked nothing instead of gold, and as he went to that side of the room, he felt the floors moving up. When the floors stopped moving, he saw something that was beyond anyone’s imagination, it was colorful yet dark, it was beautiful yet airy. He stood there and took it all in.

Lit with Stars

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Derman, Elise – 10

The sky was lit with stars. Their light illuminated the silhouette of a small girl, perching on the sandy roof of a hut, her legs swinging and her azure eyes staring intently at a sea of people. Dressed in red, villagers danced and laughed under the light of a full moon. It was Lunar New Year and Una had never spent it away from home before. Her eyes drifted from the throng of people to the mountains overlooking the oasis village. Was she imagining things or did the holes and crumbles in the rock look almost like gates? Doorways to freedom?

Something cold touched her back, ripping Una out of her daydreams. She toppled over and skidded dangerously close to the edge of the roof. She shut her eyes, praying for her meagre grip to hold. It didn't, she fell.

Una groped around in the darkness. She cried out but she couldn't hear her own voice. She was standing in a cavern, the walls made of solid rock, painted upon them were murals, dozens of them, all lined up and depicting different scenes in delicate brushstrokes and faded paints. Buddha's, great monarchs and kings – their postures regal and demanding. A shiver ran down her spine as a foreboding chill crept its way into the room. "Now go to sleep," a voice said. "Let the waves of time wash over your body and let yourself sink into the ocean of memory." Silence was sweet like the darkness it resided in, and Una gave in. She slumbered.

For as long as she could remember, Isi had been alone. No one to confide in. No one to acknowledge that she existed. According to the rest of the world, she might as well disappear, for absolutely no one knew that the Mogao Grottoes had a ghost as a resident. What would she do with this human? One of the people who had killed her family. Out of fear. This fear was a monster. It made people do horrible things. Were children capable of fear? Isi had been watching Una, and she had recognised kin.

Isi sat atop a towering sculpture of the Buddha, at least twenty feet wide and thirty feet tall, holding a large pink lotus in his hands. Isi's gaze fell onto the slumbering Una. Her white hair was sprawled around her rosy face. Isi slid down the back of the Buddha and landed quietly on the floor beside Una. She knelt by her side and began to tap on the hollow drum in the corner of the room. She sang while she played, and Una awoke.

The sky was washed in bright pinks and purples. Two silhouettes were sighted, perched on a crumbling mound of stone that sat at the edge of the cave, one snowy headed, the other with the head of midnight, chattering to one another in the brisk morning breeze.

"This is not a simple story..." Isi told her. "But if it helps you understand who I am, I will begin."

"Dragon people, with silver scale
Never welcome, never ail
Cast away by human finger
Told that they shall never linger
Hide away beneath the boulders

Years and years they spent a making
Months and months they spent creating.

The word spread throughout the land
Pilgrims, priests who were at hand
Travelled far, travelled wide
To make art in the temples' tide.

But soon after these days
Soon after these ways
They were found by someone so mighty
They cowered and cried, and their enquiry
Wasn't even thought of
Wasn't even listened to
Wasn't even reckoned that they might know a little thing or two.

They made a promise to each other
That they would never forget
That they would always remember
All the secrets they had shared
All the religions that they had brought to light
All the people they had inspired
And then they died..."

"Why would anyone ever do something that horrible to innocent people?" Una asked in a trembling voice.
"You created these beautiful caves and yet you were discriminated against! Why?" Isi paused in silent thought.
"Sometimes people do things out of fear," Isi said.
"Humans feared the powers of the Dragon people. And so, they thought to get rid of us."
"It's only fair that I tell you my story too," Una whispered.

"Born to a noble family
With wealth abundant from their hand
You would think I had the best
That's what you misunderstand
My father ran off with a water spirit
She hadn't been approved
Casting him into shame
And his dear children too
When we were born
You could hear it in the doctor's cry
Me with my snow white hair
And my brother with his only eye
Looking too different
Strange and scary
Something like aliens
Watchful like an eyrie

But it all got out of hand
Brother was killed on command
Father rushed up to the squires
Shrieked and scrambled in the muck and mire
Cried and cried for months and months
Couldn't hear my pleas for once
So I was sent away
Told that here I would be safe
Am I really, though?"

A blinding blue light exploded at the feet of the Buddha as the poem ended. Una tried to make out the shadow of the statue and her dragon friend. Emerging from the light was something very different. A towering man in beige robes with eyes the colour of flax, holding a large pink lotus in his hands. The Buddha was awakened for a purpose.

The Mogao Grottoes were opened once again. And people rediscovered the world the dragon people had created. Isi came to live with Una and her father, who were welcomed back into their home. The grottoes were given to the care of the two who had worked so hard to see it thrive. Una, Isi and Mogao, one and all, all and one.

**Double spaces between paragraphs notes a new chapter*

The Tale of the Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Fuji, Miki – 9

Once two curious boys named George and Shawn wanted to explore the Mogao Caves in the desert on the Silk Road in China.

They packed food, sleeping bags, water, a torch and a tent and off they went.

After a long haulage through the desert, they finally arrived at the oasis.

Looking for the caves, they went through woods, lakes and rocks.

Just behind the White Rock, they saw a ferocious Mogao panther.

They ran as fast as their legs could carry them. They hid in a dusty old cave.

George looked at the wall: a map of an old temple!

Shawn decided to sketch the map, so, he used some ketchup as ink on a white t-shirt. It worked!

They decided to follow the map to the old temple.

They quickly went out of the cave and continued exploring. They both looked at the map and it said to go west. So, they went west all day long.

They traveled for days, and the days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into months.

Then one day when they stopped for lunch break, they realized their food was over. Since they had no food, they had to seek for their food. They picked wild berries and stinky cabbages; they also found a cave to live in.

One day the ground started to shake! Rocks rumbled and boulders tumbled: earthquake!

They quickly went into a hole in the ground. When the earthquake stopped, they came out of the hole and checked what was wrong outside.

What they saw was mind blowing!

Two of the four boulders supporting the cave had just collapsed: they needed to leave the cave immediately. They looked at their cave one last time and waved goodbye.

Shawn looked at the t-shirt map and he pointed East: "I guess the way we are going must be East."

On their trip to the East, they were very tired because they had used a lot of their energy on their trip to the West.

They fell flat on their tummy. Since they had been sleeping too long, ten dirty little rats took away their food.

They were both starving for many days, so they kept on drinking cold water.

A few months passed and Shawn and George grew up.

It was a miracle that they had survived almost a year without proper sleep and meals.

Then one day when they looked at the t-shirt map, they realized that the trail had stopped at the edge of the map.

The boys were both stunned!

What made them even more shocked was the place the map had brought them: a golden temple!

Everything was golden. Then they saw a treasure chest.

They filled their bags with some gold bars and then they ran back to the oasis.

It was time to go home.

Once back at their village they used the gold to build a school for young explorers.

Shawn and George became great teachers.

An Adventure in the Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Hadi, Zayna – 10

Startled, Lilly sprang back, scrambling for her torch. The Buddha stared at her. In the half-darkness, Lilly stared back apprehensively. Had the Buddha just moved a moment ago when she stumbled and fell against it? Yes, she was sure of it. She peered around in the darkness – but everything in the Library Cave seemed still.

The Library Cave was one of the most famous of the Mogao Grottoes, the ancient caves on the edge of the Gobi Desert that had been an important Buddhist pilgrimage site along the Silk Road. In the fifteenth century, as the Silk Road fell out of use, the caves were forgotten and lost in the desert, until their rediscovery in the early 1900s. A student of archeology, Lilly, had been studying the manuscripts found there in cave number 17, also known as the Library Cave. Lilly had long dreamed of visiting the site where the manuscripts were found. As she had approached the mystical caves in the scorching sun that afternoon, she had stared in awe and amazement. At the entrance, a tall structure seven stories high was held up by slender red pillars. Jutting out of the sandy rock, the roofs of each level were like Chinese pagodas.

When Lilly had walked in, she had seen the many Buddhas lined up against the walls, and numerous pieces of Buddhist artwork. The Buddhas had calm and peaceful expressions, as if meditating. Colourful Buddhist paintings covered the rocky walls. She had headed straight for the Library Cave, knowing her way around after all the hours she had spent poring over the maps of the grottoes during her studies.

Distracted by her thoughts, Lilly did not notice her untied shoelaces. As she stepped into the seventeenth cave, her shoelaces suddenly caught beneath her hiking boots, causing her to trip. Dropping her torch, Lilly stretched her arms out to break her fall, crashing into the largest of the Buddhas in the cave. It was then that she had felt the Buddha move.

Curious, Lilly placed her hands on the Buddha's knee and pushed. Nothing. Planting her feet firmly on the ground, she pushed again with all her might. This time, it moved, sliding to the left. Where the Buddha had originally stood, Lilly saw a handle, but the rest of the area was embedded with spiderwebs. Gingerly, she placed her hand on it and brushed them away. Once all the cobwebs were gone, it made more sense. It was a trapdoor! Lilly lifted it up, and saw a narrow chute sloping downwards. Afraid but intrigued, Lilly cautiously climbed into it to get a better look with her torch. But the chute was slippery, and she started to slide down the cold, damp passageway, unable to stop. Terrified, her mind raced through horrifying possibilities of what she might find, but an adventurer at heart, Lilly didn't let her thoughts stop her from feeling excited.

Eventually, she landed with a loud "thud!" onto a hard wooden floor, wincing in pain. She stood up, and looked around the large yet crowded room. There was a shelf full of ancient Chinese books and paintings of Buddhas filled the spacious area. On a desk-like platform were creased scrolls and a bottle of dried ink. Mesmerized by the ancient but well-kept items, she realized something. All this had probably belonged to Yuezun, the monk who had a vision of a thousand Buddhas, and was the first to start building the Mogao Caves. But how come no one has found it yet? Surely archeologists would know, she thought. Looking around some more, she saw a wooden knob jutting out of one of the walls. Thinking it was a door, Lilly walked over and tried it. Surprisingly, it opened with ease, not even making the slightest creak.

Entering a room with a high ceiling, she saw stone and sculpting materials. This space must have been for sculpting the Buddha statues. Except for the tools that hung on rusty iron nails, the rocky walls were completely bare. Something caught her eye on the dusty floor – it seemed to be a scroll. Picking it up, she examined the sketch on it. It looked strangely familiar. Suddenly, she recognised one of the drawings. It was a map of the Mogao Caves, but was drawn upside down compared to her books. If all this belonged to Yuezun, this had to be his design. Perfect! Now I can figure out how to get out of here by looking at the map, she thought.

Except there was a problem. The map didn't show an exit or entrance; instead there was a large blot of ink where the chute should have been. Without another choice, she decided to climb up the chute. Lilly placed her hands on the dirty and cold edges of the slide, and tried climbing up. Clenching her teeth, she started to climb. Losing her grip, her sweaty palms let go of the slide, and she tumbled back down. Not ready to give up, Lilly tried again. Once again, she

failed. She tried again and again, yet kept failing repeatedly. Finally, Lilly gripped the edges of the damp chute so tightly her knuckles turned white, her face full of concentration; she succeeded.

Panting heavily after the long climb, Lilly clambered out, carefully shutting the trapdoor. Remembering how she had first gone into the chute, she groaned when she realized she would have to push the large Buddha back into place. To her astonishment, however, as Lilly looked up she saw the Buddha where she had first found it. Feeling excited about her magical adventure, she smiled to herself as she headed out of the caves. How impressed would her professors be when she told them about her discovery? Stepping out into the cool desert evening, Lilly took one last look at the Mogao Grottos and thought They might even name this cave after me!

The Mystery Of Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Hata, Mina – 10

Chapter One

I have hated my birthdays since I turned 6.

My 6th birthday was the last time I saw my dad before he went missing. My dad was a leading archeologist on Mogao Grottoes. He always told me fascinating stories of the mysterious place.

Today is my 11th birthday. I hate my birthdays — I always end up lying in bed wishing that I could hear the laughter of dad as he tells me stories. Stories that make my heart skip a beat. I wish I could at least see him one more time for at least one second that I would treasure for the rest of my life.

Here I am in dad's study looking through his old dusty books, the scent of old books always reminds me of him. I flip through the pages of the oldest book, and I notice pages 14 and 56 have red circles around their page numbers. "1456!!? What does this number mean!" I prance around like a cheetah "Bingo!" I realize it has to be the code to dad's safe box. I have always been warned by dad never to touch it, but I dreamt of discovering what's in there. I shout "Timmy come here. You better come now or else I will discover something spectacular without you!" My younger brother Timmy comes shouting "Coming Mariana!" I type the code into the panel of the lock..... "click!"

The lock flings open making a high-pitched noise as if someone struck a chime letting the ringing free into the air and fade away. Something glassy catches my eye. A blue gem. The gem is ancient stratified, with layers of rich blue, it is small and scintillating. We both stare at the extraordinary, beautiful gem. The gem is cut in half but the other half isn't here. I want to touch it but I'm afraid, what if it disappears into thin air like dad or maybe what if I dropped it. I clear the cloud of worries in my head. Timmy holds my hand encouragingly and I touch it. It is smooth and slippery and curved. I carefully place my hand on the perfectly rounded part of the gem and said to myself, dad.....

The gem suddenly trembles then ignites, illuminating the room light blue. "swish zoom!" A beam of light shoots through the room, it blinds us. I hear my mom shout "Mariana, have you practiced your piano yet?" but I blackout.

"Where are we? Why are we in a cave?" Timmy says. I wake up and realize we are sitting in a mysterious cave, no longer at home! "shhhhhhhh! Follow me." I walk carefully trying not to leave prints in the lush earthy grounds. As I walk through the dark gloomy cave I discover carvings on the cave walls, beauty in every corner. Painting rich with vibrant colours, there are also magnificent sculptures carved very carefully with each stroke. Then I saw the painting — deer with 9 colours. "That is my favourite story from dad, remember? The man who got saved from drowning by the deer, then betrayed the deer, to collect a huge reward from the king. " I said. "Then what happened? Tell me!" Timmy said. "Look at the painting on the wall....." I say. Timmy says "oh now I remember! The merchant got taught a lesson and in the end drowned. It's painted so well!"

I notice a man in the distance, wearing an Asian monk's robe. I walk towards him, my heart pumps with fear and curiosity, my hands trembling. I gently tap him, he turns around, I feel an electric wave shoot through my body, "Daaaaaaddddyyyyyyyyyy! Is that really you?! I miss you so much!" The familiar face, the dark black hair, the broad shoulders. My brother's jaw drops. My eyes fill with tears. Dad looks puzzled and says "Who are you? How did you get here?!?" My heart drops, my excitement turns to confusion, even the Buddhist sculptures' faces turn pale. The vibrant colours in the paintings become dull and sombre—some. The nice ancient scent in the air turns cold and sour. I ask "Remember me? Your daughter and Timmy, your son." Dad's face turns pale and confused as if I said something in a different language.

Just then I heard footsteps coming. It was a Monk. He grabs my shoulders and tells my brother to follow him in an intimidating voice. We are brought into another cave, walls covered in rock concrete crusted with gold. Suddenly a blue light catches my eye, it is the other half of the blue gem! Dad probably needs this half to go back to our world! The Monk said "Give me the other half of this gem or end up like that man having no memory of past life. I am part of a secret society that has been protecting Mogao since 366 AD because it holds a great secret about Chinese culture. Every member of this society has 2 halves of a gem that allows us to travel through time. I had one too, but I somehow lost it in the battle of Dunhuang against the Mongols 10 years ago. 5 years later that man showed up, holding one half of MY gem, wearing weird clothes like yours. Now tell me where the other half of my gem is and what year you come from." the monk says. The battle of Dunhuang 10 years ago? So we are now in 1237! I realized. Should I give the other half of the gem to him? What if this scary monk travels to our time 2022, and mommy is home alone..... I wish mommy could be here with me. What should I do? What should I do?

To be continued.....

Surviving The Rockfall

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Ho, Jonah – 9

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Professor Archibald Atkinson and I am an archeologist. In 1907 I led a team of eight people to the historic Mogao caves in northwestern Gansu Province. This is one of the largest set of caves in China built into dates back to ancient times.

A little history first. These caves, around 500 of them, were hand-built around AD360 originally as a Buddhist temple. As a result, they were richly decorated with carvings and colourful paintings of the Buddha. Our team's task was to map the caves and photograph the detail of the art work inside them. Some of these artifacts have lasted extremely well over the hundreds of years they have been there.

Our team included myself, a speleologist, a geologist, a doctor, a surveyor, a mountaineer and two Chinese professors from Beijing University.

We took a cargo ship's passenger cabins to China via the Suez Canal, our destination being Tianjin. From there we met our Chinese colleagues to agree upon arrangements regarding transporting eight people with technical supplies and camping equipment. We travelled 1,790 miles from Beijing via Lanzhou to Dunhuang by train.

Next evening, we arrived at the site of the caves, excited about setting up our community tents and testing out our equipment before entering the caves.

In the morning, we entered the first cave we had already mapped. We noticed it had a crawling space to the next cave. We struggled through pulling all our gear with us. Unlike the smaller cave this one had no sunlight so we had to light it up before starting on our work of surveying the cave.

After about two hours work, we took samples and photographs of many carvings and commenting upon the advantages of this recent discovery. As we chatted away, we all noticed a vague but strange sensation beneath our feet. It was a very unusual feeling as if the ground itself were shaking and with it shaking us. Our Chinese colleagues assured us that light earthquakes were common in the region. For nearly all of the team this was new experience, one that made us rather fearful. There's no emergency exit in the Mogao caves.

As we were about to stop for lunch, we noted a few loose stones dropping from the side wall of the cavern, where we had entered it. This was followed by a sound similar to rushing water. We realized that this was another quake but a stronger one. Immediately we tried to take cover from the wall that was collapsing inwards on the cave.

During the wall collapse a thick dust cloud filled the cave and we had to wait for this to clear before we could understand fully the difficulty we were in. Firstly, we had lost some lighting in the collapse but more importantly one of our parties had suffered a broken leg. Our team doctor made a leg splint by cutting two wooden sticks in half and then injecting the patient with a pain killer.

Shocked by the situation, we sat down covered in dust and grime to think through our best plan for escaping from the deathtrap we were in. The rockfall was massive and it completely blocked our exit. It was a mountaineer and our caving expert [speleologist] who came up with what we all accepted as the best way to get out of the cave.

Jerry, our 'caveman' said that from the rock structure he felt that the top of the cave would not be very thick and that if we hacked at the rock, we would be able to clear an escape route into the daylight. I asked our mountaineer whether he could climb the 30 metres wall above us and attach a rope to the rock face with petons. He said he could do it and started out trailing rope up the wall every two metres or so with petons to give other team members the best chance of escape.

When Nick, our mountaineer, reached the top of the cave and use a sledge hammer chipping the ceiling rock away. Another discussion we had but decided against it, was the use of dynamite for fear of falling rocks that would crush those of us standing on the bottom of the cave.

Jerry and Nick continued to try and break through the cave's ceiling rock to make a large enough hole to allow us through into the outside world. In turns the team kept hammering away at the rock. Then in the late afternoon a ray of light shone through. There was great sense of relief and a lot of wild cheering. Nick climbed through and shouted to us to rope our equipment together so they could haul our gear up out into the opening.

With some anxiety each of us began the climb while two remained behind to stay with the injured team member. By now we had already made a sling and a home-made stretcher for him. Slowly but surely, we hauled up the sling. Near the exit clearing at the top, we had to turn the sling from a horizontal position to a vertical position to get our injured man through the tight exit hole. We managed this and were soon joined by the doctor who gave him another shot of painkiller.

The remaining members of the team started their climb up the rope to the safety of the outside world. We returned to camp, freshened up and over large mugs of tea and biscuits babbled on about our luck. The lesson of our experience that day was to remember the power of Mother Nature; tragedy is so often one false move away. Put simply we were lucky, very lucky.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. If you have any questions about our unexpected adventure or the remainder of our survey work at the Mogao caves I will do my best to answer them.

Yes madam, the lady in the pink dress ...

Treasure of The Magao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Kumar, Zara – 9

Long ago, an European pirate Black Beard was filled with greed in his mind. He definitely lived up to his fearsome reputation. After getting his ship and treasure raided, he was leftover poor and lonely. He had no money left. Then he found that he can be a billionaire if he steals the Buddha statues from Magao caves. Well he did not have ship with him (because it was raided) so he had to do it in the old fashion way on the foot. He and his mates journey began. They have to walk miles away to reach their destination. On the way to Magao caves, they saw another groups of Pirates and started to fight as they were also going to Magao caves in search of some treasure. Black Beard and his mates were about to win the fight but suddenly more pirates appeared from nowhere and joined the ongoing fight.

Unfortunately Black Beard and his crew got bashed up badly. Now they had to swim a very long distance. Dense grey clouds rise up in the sky, “ Boss, I think we need to wait for the storm to pass away” said Black Beard’s assistant. “No! we need to find the treasure before anyone else finds it” barked Black Beard fearlessly. Everyone got scared and they had no choice but to follow their boss’s order. After spending fifteen minutes in the water high tides rose up and it crashed on them. “Swim towards that Island” the fearless Black Beard ordered them.

Finally, they reached the shore but one of their mate Roger was missing. “Roger, Roger” everyone shouted for him. He was tired and struggling to swim in the sea. Everyone encouraged him to give his hand to them to hold on but it was too late. Alas! A gigantic tide hit him and the poor Roger drowned in the water.

When everything seemed hopeless Black Beard had an idea “We can cut the trees and build a boat! How does that sound?” he screamed

“ARRRR! Now that’s what I was thinking about” said the other pirate mate. They built a beautiful boat. The storm started easing and it stopped raining. Then they continued their journey for treasure of Magao caves in China.

After waiting patiently for a week they finally reached their destination. As they unloaded their boat and walk few miles to the Magao caves they couldn’t take their eyes off from the spectacular Magao caves. “Shiver me timbers” yelled Black Beard. Tears of joy poured from his eyes. “Let’s complete our mission” said the greedy man. He was planning to take all the treasure and did not want to give single penny to his mates.

When they went inside and was about to steal all the paintings and artefacts, A man in plain clothes with glow like moon on his face (Monk) caught him in the act. Politely he asked “ what are you searching for?”. The Black Beard froze in the moment and didn’t move a bit. “Do you want to take them?” asked the monk. The cave was dark and there was utter silence. “I know you are here to steal the most precious treasure” said the monk. All the pirates got afraid and they were sweating profusely. No, we are notThey didn’t know what to say. Monk asked them to tour the cave with him, they were little hesitant but joined him to look around.

“ I was a pirate before becoming a monk” he said. Black Beard and his mates were shocked to know his truth. The monk continued “ Stealing does not make you rich and happy” he said. “Real happiness is not money”. I have experience how satisfying it is to be good human being said the monk in convincing a voice. “ I was once a greedy pirate! If today you don’t listen to me and disagree with me, you will regret later on” said the monk in calming voice. “The real treasure is to give happiness to others by helping them” said the monk.

What do you think he will choose ? To become a good person or remain a pirate? You are going to get surprised but he chose to be a good person and he decide to stay back in the Magao caves for rest of his life.

Tasha And The Holiday of No Escape

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Lam, Megan – 10

It all started in sunny California.

“Mom?”

“Yes, honey?”

“Can I go on a trip to the Mogao Grottoes?”

“Tasha, where is that?” said her mom, grabbing her phone.

“Found it! It’s in China! The Silk Road!” yapped Tasha, still scrolling on her computer finding more information to yammer to her mom.

“Well, I suppose you could—” advised mom,

“Yeah! I’ll go buy the tickets now!” cheered Tasha

“Tasha. I said you could but under one condition.”

“Awwwwwww. Mom!” whined Tasha

“You have to go with someone.” Mom said firmly

“Someone? Well, I heard Liz was free for the next couple of days....” mumbled Tasha.

“Great! I’ll call Jan and ask if Liz is free!” Mom said, scrolling to the bottom of her contacts to call her older sister Jan.

Tasha went back to her room and sat down at her cherry wood desk and opened her computer. She continued scrolling through Google, trying to find a website to find more information about her travel. She came across a site that said:

Visit The Mogao Grottoes!

Looking through the photos, Tasha was shocked. She knew the Mogao Grottoes were big, but she did not know it was big enough to have hundreds of caves, statues and even a library! She decided as soon as she got there she would explore these caves and explore their newly discovered secrets.

When lunchtime came along, Liz busted in, dodging all the pens and papers on the ground with Jan walking right behind her, both rushing to the dining table. When they finally started eating, Tasha told Liz and Jan all about the trip to the Mogao Grottoes, and surprisingly, Jan agreed!

The day had arrived...

As they boarded the plane, Tasha could not stop jumping up and down. It was the most excitement she had ever experienced in her 18 years of living!

—After the 12-hour plane ride—

Tasha became a walking, talking computer after watching too many Mogao Grottoes documentaries on the plane. Liz had to go through a 1,300-word presentation about the hand-sculpted buddhas.

On the way to the hotel, Tasha saw 3 people who were wearing black hoods guarding a rocky wall with carvings on the front, there were carvings of a piece of paper balancing on a rock with a buddha sitting on top of the paper with pure calmness plastered on his face. As they were walking, the amount of black hooded people they passed was increasing by two. First 3, then 5, then 7, then 9, and so on. Soon it reached fifteen. And the hooded people disappeared.

Soon Tasha and Liz reached their destination, with Tasha sweating from walking too long, but Liz looked fresh and excited for the look of their hotel room.

The next day, the cousins started their trip to the Mogao Grottoes and the black hooded people were back at their posts like they never disappeared. Tasha was not dumb enough to not know that this had a connection and decided to look into it once she gets back to the hotel. They set foot, walking towards the mountains with Liz's pace quicker than Tasha's.

At the sight of the building, Tasha rushed up the closest stairwell and ran in the small entry with Liz trailing behind her in curiosity. Suddenly, Tasha let out a loud squeak that echoed around the "room" and Liz saw what was going on. Tasha had led them into the library. She had pulled out a book from a cherry wood shelf that wobbled stiffly.

The bookshelf swayed side to side like it was dancing to a jazzy beat and revealed a hidden entry. Tasha caught a glance on this hidden entry and pushed the bookshelf to the side with a loud scraping sound and exposed the whole secret entry.

Tasha immediately stepped inside the dark entry then rushed out and dragged Liz in. It was pure darkness in there, with at least ten more steps, a hint of light glinted in the darkness. They continued walking, with loud echoing of their footsteps getting nearer to the light.

It was like a teleportation device but instead of portals it was the more classical way, walking.

Through the light, you could see it was a balcony. Liz wanted to stay behind and watch

It was the *seventh floor* balcony.

Tasha was staring straight down from the balcony when she heard thundering. It came from the door behind her, Liz was still inside the magical tunnel and Tasha did not want to alert her so she kept quiet.

She turned around and saw a wooden door bust open, all she could see was a dark shadow of a boy carrying what looked like a small satchel. The shadowy figure got larger and larger and she felt a stick crunch under her foot, then it was black.

Tasha slipped. She heard footsteps creaking against the floorboards and gripped the edge of the balcony, decorated with red paint peeling off the bars holding up the top plank of wood.

“Tasha! Hold on!”

The footsteps turned into leaping and leaping turned into thundering steps bouncing off the balcony’s platform. Suddenly a head popped out from over the balcony ledge. Liz lowered herself in a way that felt like a mother bear lowering her head to nuzzle her child. As she lowered herself, she reached out and tried to grab hold of Tasha’s bare hand. But then she slipped. After all that unpacking from the past day, her fingers had turned weak and she missed lousily, with Tasha still clinging on to the edge of the balcony. Liz shoved her body back up and gripped the top bar of the balcony and stretched her hand, trying to reach her younger cousin who was clearly struggling and needed help.

Then suddenly there was rumbling, The ground started bouncing up and down as if the tectonic plates were colliding like never before...

To be continued.....

The Mysterious Discovery

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Lam, Naomi – 10

The camel's rough hooves trotted against the warm desert sand. The fine sand was dark, tanned and golden. "Here!" Wang Yuanlu hollered, "I've found the perfect spot!" Wang tugged aggressively on the camel's long reins and led him to an old and mysterious looking temple. Wang was a Taoist monk who wanted to explore China. After carefully dismounting from his camel, Wang gently flattened out the creases in his dark saffron robe. Wang's tiny eyes stared at the temple for a while, then he excitedly jogged into the temple. The bright sun shone on his bald head. The heat resulted in sweat rolling down his wrinkled face.

At long last, Wang arrived at the ancient temple, panting heavily, his chest rose and fell as he tried to catch his breath. Not knowing what to expect, Wang carefully walked in. Clouds of dust filled the room while rust and mold lived in the grouts of the grey tiled floor. Curiosity and excitement twirled in Wang's mind. He looked down at his feet and then took a deep breath. Wang scanned the room for a bit. A couple of minutes flew by before he made his final decision to investigate the mysterious place.

Suddenly, something caught his eye. "A cave?" Wang was confused. Wang carefully entered the random cave, shoving the clouds of dust out of his face. Wang was right, it was a cave! The large cavity consisted of shiny, shimmering crystals and beautiful, rare rocks. Wang displayed a relieved smile as he rested his hand on a sparkling emerald. Wang was surrounded by crystals with vibrant, glowing colours. Wang's small eyes couldn't believe it! All of a sudden, he saw a glistening diamond in between two humongous rocks on the wall of the cave.

Wang decided to just pull the diamond out. "What can go wrong?" Wang confidently thought to himself. He gripped his hands on the smooth diamond and pulled with all his might. THUMP, BANG, CRUMBLE! Out of nowhere, the rocks from the walls came pouring down like an avalanche. "I better get out of here," Wang thought to himself, all panicked and showing a completely pale face. When Wang ran to the only exit, he noticed a huge problem. He didn't just cause a giant landslide, he built a colossal wall of heavy stones blocking the only exit! Well, at least that's what Wang Yuanlu thought.

Three cold nights slowly passed. Wang had to sleep on the uncomfortable cave floor. His oversized stomach growled like a vicious lion. Wang had no food for three whole days! He tried calling for help on multiple occasions, Wang yelled until his throat was dry, numb and sore. Unfortunately, there was never a response. Wang had lost hope, it was the end of him, or was it? Wang called for help ten more times, with no success. Suddenly, his little eyes spotted a vivid light shining through a crack in the cave's wall. Wang's heart was violently pumping, but his skinny legs couldn't resist kicking at the crack, while preparing for the worst. A camouflaged trap door creaked open. Wang was confused, what was happening?

Wang carefully entered the mysterious room. Was he the first one to discover it? The cave was filled with ancient books and scrolls, happiness invaded his entire body. Wang had just discovered a new cave! "The Library Cave" is what he named it. This cave had a wide opening leading outside. Wang was extremely relieved when he found his camel still conscious. When Wang finally returned to his hometown, a wave of questions lapped over him. "Was it scary?", "How many scrolls did you see?", "Were there any rooms filled with gold?" Everybody knew about Wang now. Wang's discovery was important because it helped the preservation of the ancient manuscripts and literature. Wang was like a bright star in the night sky and he lived joyfully the rest of his life.

New Tales of the Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Laracy, Maria – 9

It was a dark and stormy night. The wind was howling and the rain fell hard on the deserted Silkroad. There was a little girl who lost her way. Her name was Mayling. Mayling was delivering a birthday gift to her grandmother. Suddenly she tripped and fell over from the cliff and down, down until her body hit the ground. She realized she was standing in the middle of an abundant city. She looked herself and found some scratches on her feet but they are not so deep. She decided to take a couple of steps into the tunnel in front of her. She saw some old paintings and sculptures of animals and gods there! They are paintings of horses and mountains that she could recognize once she saw at the history museum. And she remember that was Tang dynasty exhibition.

Meanwhile at the village her grandmother lived people are worried about Mayling was late.

It was half day trip if she didn't get lost so Grandmother called Mayling's mother and father so now they are worried about Mayling, too.

Not knowing those facts Mayling was enjoying to look around paintings and sculptures inside the tunnel.

There are just like museum exhibition rooms and Mayling loves art and museum. She kept walking and went inside one of the cave.

It was right against of the wall of the narrow cliff. There was one painting on the wall it looks like China but from different angle it looks like other country. Just then Mayling felt the ground she was standing started to shake! The shake was coming from further distance and slithered up to her. She saw the ground had split! Mayling jumped and grabbed a rock and climbing up until she found another cave then there were so many monkeys staring at her. By the time the shake was stopped. She was so tired so lies down for a while. Mayling wished all of this was a dream. At that time monkeys are making noise because there was a mother monkey giving birth baby monkey. They were very busy and noisy. Finally a thin tiny baby was born. Mayling got closer to them. Suddenly one monkey talked to her. "Could you help this baby?" Mayling was so surprised that Monkey could speak! "What can I do for this baby?" she replied. "Can you take her to your place and look after? There is no food for this baby here."

"but I lost my way to grandmother's house." "She will help you." This time baby's mother told her.

So Mayling held baby monkey and said goodbye to other monkeys.

The baby monkey opened eyes and told Mayling "This way, just climb up rocks." Mayling decided

to think this is a long dream because it was hard to believe that baby monkey can talk. Anyway she wanted to get away from there so follow her instruction.

After climbing some rocks she went back to the road she was before. She was so happy and found

that the baby monkey turned into the amber stone. Mayling was happy because she lost birthday gift for grandma when she fell down to the tunnel. It was shiny and glowing. She brought that stone to grandmother's house and told whole story she had experienced. Grandma was smiling and listening and gave Mayling a bowl of red bean soup. It was warm and sweet and the stone was glowing in Mayling's hand.

Searching for The Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Lee, Cara – 9

Water? Check. Camera? Check. Notepad? Check. Chocolate? I rummaged through the junk, hoping to find chocolate. I was going to a trip to China, searching for the Mogao Grottos, so it's important to bring chocolate. "AHA!" I pulled out 2 packs of KIT KAT and M&M'S. As I was stuffing junk food and other food into my bag, the doorbell rang. I opened it to find my friend Margo. "Hi Margo! I'm just getting ready to go. Wanna help me pack up?" I asked. "Sure." Margo chuckled. Oh, I forgot to mention that Margo was going with me. Soon, we were at the airport. "RING! ATTENTION PASSENGERS ON FLIGHT 46, HEADING TO CHINA.YOUR FLIGHT WILL TAKE OFF IN 10 MINUTES." came the loudspeaker. I grabbed Margo's hand and together we got on our plane.

We got to China 4 hours later, then we headed to the mountains. We saw a store and decided to go there. A nice-looking lady greeted us. "Hi!" She called, "Are you looking for something? Or just to chat? It's fine. I like both the same." "Wowzers, I thought. This lady sure has energy." Margo spoke up. "We are looking for the Mogao Grottos. Could you tell us where it is?" The lady gave me a piece of paper. I read it out loud. "Remember your friendship ". I looked to find the lady to ask her what that means, but she had disappeared. I tucked the paper into my pocket. We decided to keep going and camp. We set up camp. It is hard work. Phew!

After a good night's sleep, Margo and I hiked up a trail. We came to a part where we had to choose whether to go left or right. "We should go right." I proposed. "No, we should go LEFT." Margo argued. Suddenly, we got into a HUGE argument. Margo and I ignored each other for hours. Finally, after we talked about it, we decided that I would go and find it, and if I found it, I would place a red flag and then go back and tell Margo. At that time, I still HATED Margo. I set off, leaving Margo behind. I soon started to miss Margo. She kept me company when we hiked. She was always there for me when no one else was. I stuffed my hands in my pocket. OUCH! What was it?

It was a piece of folded paper. I read it. "Remember your friendship." I gasped. Suddenly I understood. I ran back to Margo. I explained it to her and then, hand in hand, we hiked up until we stopped. The place looked kind of like a...face. There was some sort of puzzle. It seemed made for 2 people's hands. We tried placing our hands there. After a minute or so, the earth began to shake. A big Buddhist statue appeared. Then, a sign said: "You have reached the Mogao Grottos". We passed the test! Me and Margo both learned a lesson. FRIENDSHIP.

The Scroll

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Lee, Chloe – 9

The rising sun blazes down onto the sand dunes, rolling and unscrolling into endless glittering amber sand, like the pillows of the desert, soft and gritty under Ling Ling's trudging steps. The vibrant blue sky is dotted with wafer-thin white clouds, drifting lazily in the stinging breeze. Looming ahead is a giant cliff with dark and mysterious caves. She walks towards it in awe, and anxiously, she approaches one of the caves, hoping it is the right one.

As Ling Ling's eyes adjust to her surroundings, she sees a startling shadow, at least the size of four or five humans. She leaps back in horror, but soon realizes it is just a statue of a reclining Buddha, as a shaft of light beats down on the Buddha, unveiling the peaceful meditative look glowing in the light.

Behind the Buddha is an ancient mural, carefully carved, with rows of fading figures in robes. Upon closer inspection, the figures seem to become more vibrant, more alive. Some of them are vaguely bobbing their heads from the corner of her eye. One by one, they fix their gaze onto her, and chant in unison, "Ling Ling... you will face a set of challenges... to prove you are ready for what lies ahead. It's your time!"

With these monosyllabic words reverberating inside the cave, she stares into the distance, engrossed in the humiliating memory buried deep in her subconscious. "It's your time," goaded the other apprentices. "Get yourself into the vault and bring us the scroll. Now." With trembling hands, Ling Ling had fled. The next day, whispering about how she had not had the nerve to go into a vault had filled her school hallways whenever she was around.

A thump brings Ling Ling back to the present. Suddenly, her feet, faltering, sink down into a soft sponge, as if it was quicksand. Ling Ling instantly tries to yank her feet out of the moldy sponge, but her feet just sink deeper in, until she is enveloped in a vortex of sand, engulfing and tossing her like a dummy from left to right. Eight small platforms of sand are taking shape, dribbling away like cascading sand in an hourglass. She would have to jump with all her strength if she had to jump from one to another! One small misstep could cost her her life.

She shudders in fear, knowing what she has to do. The scroll. She has to try... She climbs onto the first platform. So far, so good. She bends her legs, grits her teeth and jumps.

Ling Ling barely clears the gap. Every second she is in the air, her heart starts racing, tension gathering in her chest. Suddenly, enticed by the murmuring of the figures, she looks down and pauses for a moment, mesmerized. How could humans have built this majestic sight? She comes back to her senses, clenches her fists, and leaps to the next platform. But on the last one, she wobbles slightly, and her hand hangs on the edge of the final platform. Ling Ling's mind seems to come to a stop. All her senses freeze. All she can think about is the whispering in the hall, the jeering stares. Right before she falls, she pulls herself up to the next platform, with beads of sweat pouring down her forehead.

"Ling Ling, congratulations, you've passed the first challenge." The strange voice comes again. "It's time for the second and final challenge."

She takes a deep breath, and steps forward. This is it. The platform slowly floats to the next room. She looks around cautiously, to see the next challenge. Luckily, she does not see animated murals or platforms of sand. Instead, she sees three pieces of parchment. The curious, unintelligible writing on the parchment looks like drawings.

"Ling Ling... for this challenge, you must solve this riddle. Look at this scroll."

There are ancient letters forming on the scroll, and slowly but surely, they morph into regular letters:

Encounters with the Buddha

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Ma, Martin – 10

Recently, I have invented a super paper plane that can take me to wherever I wish to go in just a few seconds. The plane can also change my size during the journey and restore me when I arrive at my destination.

To test the magic plane, I order it to take me to a desert that I have never been before. A strong wind blows and all of a sudden, I land in front of a big desert temple. I become my normal size again. I fold the paper plane and put it in my bag.

Wow! What a big temple! It is a very special 9-floor temple built by wood and sand. I can only see half of it because the other half is inside a big cave. They call this Magao Grottoes. The paper plane has already booked the ticket for me.

The leaflet says that there are 735 caves with so many wall-paintings and sculptures. This place is in the oasis city of Dunhuang area along the famous Silk Road. After listening to a simple introduction, I walk into one of the caves. It is rather dark and we are not allowed to take photos. I can see five Buddhas on the left and five Buddhas on the right. When I look at the middle Buddha, it is almost 100 feet tall! It is called Maritreya Buddha. It moves!

“What year is this?” the Buddha asks.

“It’s now 2021.” I answer.

“Oh My God ! I ‘m 1000 years old !”

“Cool !”

I go on to another cave. There is a very pretty Flying Buddha. The Buddha flies and swings her ribbons.

I ask her, “Why are you black? Do you come from Africa?”

The Flying Buddha replies, “ Oh! I don’t come from Africa. The reason why my face and skin are black is because when people first made me, they used man-made colours from India. After years and years of hot and cold weather, my face and skin are oxidised. They change slowly to grey and black. But look at my clothes! They are still red and bright! Don’t you know why? It’s because they used natural colours from our own country. It’s called Cinnabar – a kind of mercuric sulfide. It lasts for a long long time and is still beautiful.”

“Oh! I see.”

The next room I enter lies a very big Sleeping Buddha.

“How long have you been sleeping here?” I ask.

“ A thousand years, may be.” The sleeping Buddha answers.

“Are you tired by putting your hand under your head? And why are you sleeping.....”

“Stop talking! I need more sleep.”

“You look so big to me. Are you the biggest Sleeping Buddha in the world? When will you get up?”

“ Young boy, don’t disturb me!” the Buddha sounds a bit angry.

I walk quickly away from him in case he calls the security guard. I feel a bit tired after looking at so many paintings and sculptures. I know that I can never finish looking at these uncountable murals and statues. I decide to take my magic paper plane home.

Arriving home, I realise that I have left my iPhone in Magao Grottoes. I must go back to find my iPhone and view more Buddhas. Some paintings and sculptures look old and their colours are fading. I know that they need careful protection and preservation. Otherwise, this beautiful world heritage will disappear under the sand and wind of the Gobi Desert.

The Visit to The Mogao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Pang, Hailey – 9

“This place is amazing!” Katie said in disbelief as she boarded the airplane for the first time. She was a researcher in the US, but she had only been researching in the US. Katie hadn’t gotten a chance to fly on an airplane as her family was poor. As Katie was finding her seat, the plane started showing the safety video. She quickly hurried to her seat to watch the video as she had never been on an airplane. Katie squealed and her heart was racing as she explored the airplane and she was ready for this awesome adventure to start.

Hours later, Katie woke up and looked out the window and spotted a beautiful sunrise and moments later, the airplane had touchdown at her destination. She quickly hopped off the airplane and got past the immigration and collected her bags with joy. She exited the airport and could feel the cool breeze and got into a cab and headed to her hotel.

The hotel was neat, it was filled with daily use things. Was she dreaming? This was amazing! She rubbed her eyes, the view wasn’t gone! Maybe she wasn’t dreaming after all. Katie then changed into her pyjamas and went to bed as she was exhausted and needed to wake up refreshed and ready to go to her adventure that was waiting for her!

The next morning, Katie woke up excited for the day. She quickly jumped out of bed, got ready and headed down for her breakfast. After breakfast she zoomed out of the door to get a taxi. She quickly hopped into her taxi and headed towards the Mogao Caves also known as “peerless caves.” As Katie was closer to her destination she could spot the huge, festive caves exterior, it was awesome! Few minutes later, she had finally reached her destination. Katie was amused and shocked as she still couldn’t believe that she was standing outside the Mogao Caves in person.

After she signed in, she met her tour guide, Kayden. The guide showed her around the site, she was amazed! As they were walking, Kayden explained that Mogao caves were carved by hand starting from 1,700 years ago. As Kayden explained, Katie took lots of jot notes. As they were exploring they saw lots of pretty objects like wall paintings, painted sculptures, ancient architecture, movable cultural relics and their settings.

“Did you know that the cave was once very famous? After a few years, the cave was forgotten. Luckily, someone found it again and it became as famous as before and that is the cave you are standing right in front of, face to face!” Kayden explained.

“That’s awesome!” Katie said in a surprised manner.

The sun started setting and she headed back home. It was a long day for Katie. She couldn’t wait to go back to the U.S and write the article about her journey to the Mogao Caves. The sunset was beautiful, she sat in her taxi and headed back to the hotel.

Katie quickly washed up and headed to dinner. She couldn’t wait to try some new food! She ate quickly because she knew she had to get some good night sleep before she flew back tomorrow. She thought the food was delicious and she couldn’t wait to try it again. She did miss home though.

The next day she woke up late, her alarm was broken! Katie was sad to leave her wonderful adventure. She packed her bag, fast as lightning. Katie couldn't miss her flight.

She zoomed from gate to gate finding her gate once she got to the airport. She couldn’t find her gate! Finally, she found a guard and asked where the gate was and she made it to her gate in the nick of time.

Katie looked down the floor as she walked down the aisle. Her flight had been delayed for a few minutes because they were waiting for her. She thanked and appreciated the people who worked on the plane that waited for her.

After Katie got off the airplane, she instantly grabbed a taxi and headed for lunch! Katie was on her way to her favorite restaurant and she couldn’t wait to eat what she was used to eating. Katie met up with her boss and gave her the jot notes from her trip. Her boss thought the jot notes were good, so Katie started writing her article that night, as it was due tomorrow at 10:00 A.M.

Hours had passed by and Katie was still writing her article. She felt a bit tired, so she decided to take a quick power nap. Few minutes later, Katie got up and went back to it. Finally, many hours later, Katie's article on the Mogao Caves was nearly done. She sent her article for a quick proof check to her boss.

After her boss made quick fixes to the article and checked over it, she also couldn't wait to publish the article. The following morning, Katie's article had been published on the front page of the Newspaper Times. Later that day, all everyone could talk about was what Katie had written in her article. Out of her mind, Katie was shocked and couldn't believe it. Everyone kept congratulating Katie and telling her that they'd like to visit the Mogao caves someday too.

The day was almost over and Katie was overwhelmed with all the calls, messages and comments which she had received. Her tour guide from Mogao Caves had also come across the article and called her up and told her how proud she was of Katie for publishing such a successful article. Katie thanked her tour guide for all the information she shared with Katie during her trip to the famous cave. A week later, the article had received so many views from all around the world and people were so keen on visiting the Mogao Caves. Katie was now very well known and popular around the globe.

Tales from The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Pong, Danielle – 10

The strong wind blew in Qin's face as he stared into the mist. The silent moon came into view as it started raining heavily. Oh, how Qin wanted his family back, sadly Qin was as lost as the family. The feeling in his guts was overwhelmed with sorrow and guilt. He wished he hadn't run away from the small cottage. The warm feeling inside made his heart calm. The trust that he had from his family was large and almost unbreakable, yet he had chopped it up with a sharp ax. He felt spoiled. Qin had run away because of the angry wolf that attacked their cottage. He wanted to be the hero, the savior of the mother, father, and sister. But he failed. He failed to save them, unable to sacrifice himself for his sister, who had died from the wolf and had forgotten even to be a good son. The boy failed at everything, and he was sure that he would be a big disgrace when he returned.

He didn't know where to go. The tears were brimming in his eyes. The echoes of his mother were screaming at him, saying that he was a horrible son. "The buddha must be angry at you, waiting for you to perish so he can send you to the demons and eat you up like a sweet dessert." Qin thought. His imagination always got the best of him, seeing him as a naughty and playful boy. To think that he would be that naive to betray his family. Qin couldn't think of anything else but his guilt and his thirst. The saliva on his tongue was almost gone, so he was dehydrated. Qin walked sadly to an old abandoned shack and fell asleep, stuck with sin.

Qin woke up as the bright sun rose like a balloon. He felt a bit better but still had second thoughts. His footprints remained in the dirt as he trekked through the sandy path. His hope was disappearing like his survival. He was clinging onto a cliff of worries, and he knew the ground would crumble, and he would fall. His aching feet stumbled across a dusty path so dry that it seemed like a miniature lonely desert. His toes felt a bit wet when he saw the stream of the cranes, the rarest river in china. He ran like the wind and took a big gulp, his body refreshed and energized. He stood up and decided he would do his best to go home.

The old village of North China is called the ancient prophecy village. The first word that went into his head was emptiness. The houses were sloping sadly on a small hill, the shops were all closed, and there was no single person in sight. The wind whistled past his ear just as he noticed a dark cave. It was as black as midnight, as quiet as a mouse, and creepy as the corpses in a graveyard. He swore he could see Buddha's face, so he ran in and fell into a pit in the pure, dense darkness.

He woke up to delicate water dripping from the stalactites above. The squeaking sounds of the noisy bats echoed across the cave. Gentle water dripped from the sharp stalactites above as it landed delicately on Qin's face. You couldn't even tell the tears of pain apart from the water, about to give him something unimaginable. Qin wiped away all the water from his eyes and sighed. He was so deep in the caves he couldn't even see sunlight, or as a matter of fact, couldn't even see anything besides rock. The hurt boy bumped into something hard, something crafted or artificial. Finally, the scared boy came to his senses realized he had wandered into a lost city hidden under the surface when his eyes adjusted. The grottoes were so shady to protect the priceless treasures and still are. Jewels the size of Qin's head were scattered over a Buddha statue. Qin found gold jewelry and silver ornaments everywhere in this underground sanctuary. This city was now a secret treasure chest, and Qin had just discovered a mark of history, never to be forgotten. He saw the statue having a colossal dent right where the brain was. The Buddha's face looked gloomy and hurt. A sign by the feet of this god started to glow as if it wanted Qin to read it. He walked over and read the messy letters scattered over the paper. "Without a mind of intelligence or bravery, the alive will cease to exist. Help our god live and let us protect him as he protects us." Qin thought for a moment. He knew that the Buddha needed a brain, just a brain. The brain needed intelligence or bravery to let a god exist. Then an idea struck him. He needed to find a jewel-like brain that was blue because the color blue represented intelligence. Qin found a serene blue jewel, climbed the buddha's body, and stuffed the treasure into the head. Suddenly, the dome closed, and the buddha's eyes opened a sparkling gold. The god began to float upwards, through the cave roof and through the dark underground. The statue glowed a wondrous aura of shimmer and fantasy dust as it floated towards the sky and into the clouds. This gave Qin the warm and lovely message to himself: "*You will reunite with the dead soon enough, but live the life you can and make sure to beam a smile.*"

New Tales from The Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Tsang, Andre – 9

Whoosh. Bang! Mike collided with the debris like two rocks smashing into each other. Sounds of terror, fear, and pain rushed through his head. 'Looks like this is the end' Mike thought as he closed his eyes in defeat. But just as his eyes shut admitting k.o, he caught just a tiny glimpse of something he only thought he'd see in legends.

Beep! Beep! Mike just hated that alarm clock. With its blaring noise blasting right into his ear, he slammed the snooze button. "Great, it's today," Mike said as he slowly dragged himself out of bed. "Mooring mom. Mooring dad." Mike said as slow and as tired as a sloth.

"Wake up sleepyhead. You're going trading!" Mom and dad said synchronized. "Eat your breakfast, and then you're heading straight out." Mike dreadfully managed to hold his body up without smacking his face on his food. 'Never thought I'd see the day when my parents kicked me out of the house to go shopping.' Mike thought as he held his body like he was holding a cup on his head.

As soon as he ate the final piece of breakfast, without warning, his parents opened the front door and shoved him out. Mike hadn't even managed to change out of his silly pajamas, or brush his teeth. All of his neighbors just froze in place as soon as they saw him with cold, blank looks. Then, they all just burst out laughing and pointing at Mike. 'What a GREAT way to start the day.' Mike thought.

The day got worse and worse, from getting blisters on his feet to going the wrong way. After what seemed like an eternity to Mike, the Silk Road came into sight. 'Finally, a place to rest my legs.' Mike thought as he trudged on and on. As he reached the trading center, he realized he forgot the #1 thing to bring: his shopping list. 'And I thought this day couldn't get any worse.' He thought as his exhausted body had to move step by step as slow as a turtle. Sadly, his memory was as bad as a concussed sheep, so not a single item on the list was recalled. Luckily for him, he could spend the money on all the things HE wanted but never got. Suddenly, the wind slowly started to speed up.

Whoosh. The wind started spinning in a circle faster and faster until everything started taking off. From fruits to machines, nothing could withstand the sheer power of this wind of utter doom. With barely any time to react, he sprinted out of the tiny trading tent and tried to figure out what was going on. There was just one problem: Mike has run into the updraft.

"Aaaaaaah!" Cried, Mike. However, nobody responded. They were all gone. Besides, all Mike could hear was the torrential wind blowing right into his body like slicing bread. Nothing was available to grab or even stand

on while floating in midair. That's when he saw a sturdy rock to hold on to. Mike tried to grab it, but it was heading for him. Aiming for a headshot.

BAM! Mike crushed through the rock as painful as spikes. His screaming sounded so loud even people living a whole mile away could hear him. Every part of his body hurt. His eyes slowly closed as he heard the roaring of the tornado howl in his ear. Just before his eyes fully closed, however, his eyes were just able to see the tornado ripping through the mountain. But it wasn't just ANY mountain. There was something inside.

Chirp. Chirp. Mike's eyes slowly opened, seeing the devastation on the trading center in rubble and dust. Not a single tent or person came into sight. It wasn't the destruction he saw; It was the mountain. As Mike looked closer, he saw not one, not two, but three different statues on what looked like the Buddha. In the center, there was a pagoda. This breathtaking sight was one to remember.

Bao heard the rumbling in the ground as everyone from his town came charging over. As they came into view, they were awestruck by the new art. It seemed to stretch on for miles, with probably more than 2000 sculptures across. All their jaws just dropped to the ground. Mom and dad came running as fast as a cheetah. "Are you okay?" They asked worriedly.

"I'm fine." I replied as we all walked towards the new art and admired it. Then, we walked home, leaving The Tornado on Silk Road behind us.

Mysterious Mogao

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Tsui, Brian – 9

It was a rainy day, a curious young monk named Hong Bian was searching through the caves to look around for his friends to play with. He discovered a creepy door and Hong heard tons of whispering people inside. ***Why is that..?*** After sitting there for a while, he decided to go into the door and see the real truth about it. ***Ah, it's hard to open! Is it locked..?*** He thought that the door was locked, but after some force... Creek! The door opened.

What... I- Hong thought that his place has never been discovered. But there he but there he was. Standing there with his monk friends looking at him weirdly. ***“Are you okay Hong?”*** One of his flustered friends said. ***“I... Yeah, I'm fine.”*** Hong walked to his friends awkwardly. Everyone started chatting again. Even his friends. They completed ignored Hong. ***“What's happening?”*** Hong said quietly. ***“There's been mysterious sounds lately. But we don't know what happened to this cave. To our home..”*** Hong was shocked. He wanted to check down with his friends.. so they sneaked out as quiet as a mouse to go check out the noises.

“Yes! We're out!” Hong's friend said. So, they searched all over the cave.. But couldn't find anything mysterious or weird in the cave. But Hong got a idea. To dig underneath the cave. It took them hours just to take one little pile of dirt out of there. ***“what a day, wasn't it..?”*** Hong said. They thought that they were never going to do that ever again.. And they probably wouldn't even if they wanted to. Then, boom. z

When Hong woke up, he was in pure shock. In the middle of nowhere. ***“Where's my family, where's my friends? Wh.. where's my home? I was abandoned wasn't I?”*** Hong decided to go search around for, his cave, the place where he lives, his home. He searched far and wide for his home. But it was nowhere to be seen. Then, he turned around just to realize that the cave was behind him. Broken, and never to be fixed. All the statues and monks that he met, the place where the good memories arose. Hong was going to get... ***revenge.***

Many things were on to him, he was the prey, but everything else was the predator. While searching for a place to stay, he decided to dig down even more. In the day and the night, he worked hard to find what the noise is. Click! Click! Hong heard light switches near the bottom of the cave. He dug hard to find what was happening underneath there. ***“Ugh. It sounds like a party is down there... What is happening..?!”*** He couldn't do this for any longer. Hong couldn't do that anymore, the sounds in the night was getting underneath his skin. Hong wanted to make a stop and start his own life again. But he couldn't without his family, friends, and fellow monks. He ***needed*** to make a change for his family so they could live peacefully for where ever they were. ***“It's time to help my monks.”***

Hong tried hard to make his dream come true, for who or what was down there. But he never figured out. But he knew that one day, he would be brave enough to go down that black hole, and start his journey again for finding that person. But for now... he was still trying to make a living off of his little messy home. So he took jobs and tried to be helpful for once, and for all.

Everyday, Hong worked hard to get what he wanted to achieve, he got what he wanted. But not so... though he wanted revenge, and that person to taste his or her own medicine... he figured that he would just let it go. He did start a new journey, still being a monk... Hong created more and more caves, so he could always remember that he worked hard, he worked hard, and let nothing stop him. And now, there's lots and lots of caves. He passed it down to his other fellow monks so they could work hard as well. Believe in happiness and humanity. But just to begin with, it was Hong.

The Selfish Snail

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Wong, Sophia – 9

Once there was a snail who was clumsy, fat, and selfish. At that time, he was getting more and more selfish even his friend Dudley can't stand it so Dudley went to a place where the witches live and ask for help.

The witches thought for a long time and decided to help. One of the witches will pretend to be Dudley, and the witch will ask to make the popcorn better, but she actually makes it so yummy by adding a potion to make the popcorn explode. When it explodes, it will make Mr. Selfish goes to a world where everybody is more selfish than him. When he learned his lesson and not being selfish anymore, he could go back to the world Dudley is in.

The night came when Mr. Selfish went to a world where everybody was so selfish and mean to him. He had no money to buy any food. After a year had passed, he finally learned his lesson, but he has to pass a test which lasted a whole day. Finally, he proved that he was not selfish anymore, so they had a party.

When his friend got home, almost every movable thing were gone! Then after awhile, he figured out that he has been robbed! But then another question popped into his mind: only Mr. Selfish came here but surely he can't carry that much stuff. So, he decided to go to sleep.

The next day more stuff were gone! Then, he quickly realized that his friend had a whole bunch of people helping him! He was shocked and mad at the same time.

A few moment later, he heard a sound: Ding Dong Ding Dong. It was the witches. It turned out that the witches had made a mistake. They had accidentally given Mr. Selfish the tip to be good. So, he got out in no time from that magic world. He didn't learn his lesson and became a robber.

Legend of the Mogao Caves

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Wu, Austin – 9

The wind howled in the stormy skies, as Austin headed for the Mogao caves. Austin was here in the Mogao caves to investigate some rumors about monsters. He headed for one of the caves and ventured deep into the depth of the cave. Austin had permission to enter the restricted zones, just for the case. Deep inside the caves, it was creepy and cold, droplets of sweat fell from Austin's neck. He saw the eerie glow of the torches in the caves. He shuddered. He nervously turned on his torch. "EEE!" There was suddenly a blaring screech, coming from the cavern below. A shadowy torso appeared out of nowhere. Austin screamed at the top of his lungs, he took off as fast as a rocket.

Austin stopped to look behind, luckily nothing was there. Austin took a big sigh of relief and continued exploring the cave. He stopped near a small lake and decided to rest there. Suddenly he heard a thudding sound growing louder and louder. Austin was shivering to the bone. The sound grew as loud as 1000 drums beating toward him. Austin saw a giant rocky monster, with bulky muscles and it was glowing red with hatred. It bashed toward Austin at full speed. Austin had nowhere to dodge and saw he jumped into the pool. "Splash!" Austin was in the freezing water, he successfully dodged the monster's blow. He swam as fast as he could and reached the other side of the pool. The monster was too heavy to swim and decided to jump toward Austin. Austin was on the run again, this time panting to catch his breath. The monster stomped behind and chased behind him. The monster lifted his hands to grab Austin. Austin wasn't so lucky this time he was grasped by the monster's hands and was choking to death. This was the most intense moment of Austin's life. He tried to breathe, but it was impossible. I guess this is it, thought Austin. He prepared for the worse when an idea struck him. He took out a torch and threw it at the monster's eyes. The monster howled in pain as he let go of his hands, and Austin dropped down. His first instincts were to run, he zoomed toward the opposite direction. He never looked back.

Austin found himself near a sculpture of Budha, he laid down. "OOOHHH!" A ghostly sound came out from the Budha sculpture. Austin was scared to the bone, his feet and arms felt like jelly, he wobbled backward to steps. He couldn't see anything. It's an invisible ghost! Austin thought. Austin ran as fast as he could, he could hear the eerie sounds of the ghost chasing him. He saw a shaft, near the cave. He ran in, not knowing what was inside. A shadowy body appeared out of nowhere. It was a zombie! "AAAAAAAHHHHHH!" Austin screamed with terror! They zombied its arms and tried to hit me. I opened the door and ran out at the speed of light! I stopped to catch my breath. Austin was looking at thousands of paintings about Buddhism, it was like a cave to the past. While he was admiring the clay sculptures, he noticed a small hole next to the cave walls. It was small. Austin decided to climb into the small hole because of his curiosity. It led to the outside of the cave.

Austin decided to never look back at the scary Mogao caves ever again. He thought this cave is so spooky and ancient, he shouldn't enter. Would you enter the scary Mogao Caves?

Trapped in Adventure

Chinese International School, Chua, Sophia – 10

I looked around the Mogao Grottoes as the tour guide stepped out of the cave to answer a call. The air was dark and misty. Each wall was covered with colorful paintings and thick dust. I walked towards the Buddha painting to get a closer look. I'd always been interested in Buddha. He was a prince in Ancient India who sacrificed his riches to teach people the path to enlightenment. It was almost time to leave, and I enjoyed the tour at the Grottoes.

Suddenly, the door slammed closed. I tried to pull it open, but it was locked. I was stuck in the cave by myself! I panicked, trying to open the door again, but I couldn't. Beads of sweat started dripping down my face. I hadn't even realized I was trembling until I looked down at my shaking hands.

Immediately, all the paintings started to move; the characters stepped out of them as if they were real people! I was terrified, thinking maybe this was a dream, but it wasn't. Buddha stared at me like I was an alien.

"What are you doing here, Lyla?" Buddha asked.

"The staff locked the door before I could exit," my voice stammered, not knowing how Buddha knew my name. He looked at me as if he could see through me.

"We can trust her," Buddha declared, and the other characters nodded, agreeing.

"We need to find a valuable stolen object that belongs to us. Can you help?" He asked.

I nodded, partly in fear and partly because I had no other choice.

"Wonderful! The valuable object is a staff that is used to do good deeds. It teaches people to learn from their mistakes. We tried to find it, but at the last minute, the enemy escaped with it." Buddha explained. I understood the urgency and worried this was the end of doing good deeds.

As if the Buddha could see my thoughts, he shook his head.

"No, it doesn't mean that no one will do any more good deeds. But, there will be a lot less of them," Buddha said.

My job was to locate the staff. Buddha and his companions would take it from there. Buddha handed me what looked like an ordinary string. He told me that if I found the staff and the enemy, or if I was in danger, I could pull it for safety.

"You will know that you have found it the moment you see it. But just in case, it's a normal golden staff with a carved wooden handle. There are the five main rocks encrusted on the staff: diamond, sapphire, ruby, emerald and rock. The rock looks normal, but it is the most powerful of the five. When you touch it, you will feel its aura and power," the Buddha said.

He motioned for me to step into a painting.

I felt the sun hit me and I suddenly felt warm. I saw a park with gigantic trees planted everywhere, leaving no free space. There were no flowers, but there were a lot of stray weeds. The sky was gloomy and dark, with rolling black clouds passing quickly. A roll of thunder boomed and lightning soon after. I walked around the park, trying to see if I could find the staff. An eagle whistled above me, the sound meshing with the wind. I looked up at it and a golden shimmer caught my eye. It was the staff stuck between the branches! It was the only bright thing in the whole park.

The staff fit Buddha's description completely. I pulled at the string. This job was so easy.

It wasn't until a monk came into sight that I knew the journey was not over. The monk was a slender and delicate-looking person with dark skin.

"I'm the great monk, Devadatta. What are you doing here?" he demanded, glaring at me.

I was too scared to say anything but I remembered the tour guide telling me about Devadatta. Devadatta hated Buddha for being so kind and empathetic, especially when Buddha had taken care of the swan Devadatta had shot down with his bow. The Buddha had warned me that the powerful monk Devadatta might have the staff because he wanted everyone to make mistakes and conquer the world with his evil power.

“Did the Buddha send you?”

I could only manage a quiet whimper. I hoped this would be over soon because my rescuers were on their way.

I was taken off guard when Devadatta grabbed me by the collar and lifted me up. I screeched.

“You make a sound, and you’re dead,” Devadatta growled.

He unlocked a big cage with his free hand, and threw me in. Suddenly, I heard a cry. I looked between the bars of the cage. It was a big and beautiful swan, standing right in front of the cage!

Devadatta came running in at the sight of the swan, took out an arrow and was about to shoot when Buddha appeared beside the swan. Devadatta aimed the arrow at Buddha.

“No!” I cried.

Devadatta released the arrow, but the arrow just ricocheted off Buddha's skin. Devadatta then sprinted away from us and in a second, he was gone.

Buddha held out his hand and I took it. I felt myself transported back to the Mogao Caves.

“Thank you for your help, you did a great job. I must make peace with Devadatta soon.” he told me.

I slunk down against the walls, exhausted by the mission. Tonight had been an extraordinary night, where I learned that the power of teamwork was an unbreakable spell. I heard a key turn and the characters rushed into their painting where they became lifeless paintings again.

A guard came rushing in and said, “I’m sorry, I thought everyone had already left. I didn’t notice you were here until I looked at the CCTV camera!.”

As he escorted me out of the caves, Buddha gave me a wink.

Tada

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Chan, Tsz Yiu – 10

Have you heard of the tales from the Mogao Grottoes? The impressive Dunhuang murals hide many interesting stories. Guess what my favorite story is? Let me tell you!

The story I like best is about the Nine-Colored Deer, a deer covered in nine bright colors, who one day, was walking by the river and saved a man from drowning. That person was called TaDa. TaDa was very grateful and vowed not to reveal the place where the Nine-Colored Deer lived to anyone.

Later, the queen of that place wanted to use the nine-colored deer's fur to make a piece of clothing. So the king posted an imperial order that if anybody who knew the nine-colored deer where to live or caught it, he could either get half of the land in the country or a bowl of gold and silver beans.

After TaDa saw the king's order, for profit, regardless of the promise to the deer, he went to the palace to inform the king and led the king to capture the nine-color deer.

Soon the king caught the nine-colored deer, and the nine-colored deer asked, "My lord, how do you know where I live?" "He told me." The king pointed to TaDa...

I'm an Explorer

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Chang, Ho Ching – 10

I'm an explorer. This morning, I visited the Mogao Grottoes. I've worn my best climbing shoes and in my favourite blue jacket for the world cultural heritage – one of the major Grottoes in China, Art Gallery of the World and Museum on the Wall. Why does it have that many awesome titles, and what is it famous for? That's why I decided to go in and discover those 735 caves of Mogao Grottoes.

I found out that there are 492 caves with sculptures or paintings and the rest are places where monks practice. Mogao Grottoes do not allow photo-taking as the lights of the camera will affect the colour of the original pigment on the sculptures. But don't be disappointed! I will tell my favourites here.

The first one is a sculpture in cave no. 148. It is a giant sculpture that looks like it's sleeping. Its hair looks 'wavy'. There's a 'mole' in its forehead. Around this cave, there are beautiful drawings that illustrate the great solemnity of the pure wasty world. This mural tells us a sutra story. In the mural painting, I can see a giant temple. There's a big terrace at the courtyard and also five mini terrace in front of it. In the middle, there are five audience halls. On the side of it, there are a total of eighteen cloister. Numerous buddhas and attendees were walking in the mural, reflecting the flourish scene back then. I've stayed there for a long time. I've been obsessed by the little details!

The second is a mural painting from Tang Dynasty. They show the beauty from Tang Dynasty. The painting in cave no. 320. It's called Celestials. In the drawing, two teams of dancers have ribbon on each of them, as they dance, they sprinkled flowers and swung their hands. Their dance moves were beautiful. The ribbon moved as they floated and flew in the air. There are clouds, faint flowers and more things below them.

Sometimes mural paintings tell us a story. One of which was about a little prince being Sakyamuni among the three princes once upon a time. One day, the three princes rode on their horses and went to play in the forest. The forest didn't have lots of animals. They saw a female tiger with seven baby tigers. The female tiger was as thin as a stick so she couldn't feed milk to her baby. As Little prince saw that they were about to starve to death, he took off his clothes and let the tiger to eat him but she didn't have enough strength to do that. Little prince went to the top of the mountain, cut his blood vessel and jumped down the mountain. He was dead and the female tiger ate him. The tigers were saved. This was a story of sacrifice.

I have stayed in the place for a long time. Even though Mogao Grottoes was beautiful, like the details of the murals and sculptures, and the amazing historcal scenes behind, it unfortunately is facing oxidation which turns the bright colours dark. Luckily, we now have some professionals trying to restore them. Also, we have a digital version of Mogao Grotoes so people can appreciate it.

I'm going to discover more grottoes here. Maybe I'll tell you more murals and sculptures another time.

Maybe That's True

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Chow, Yee Lam Tiffany – 11

‘Congratulations to the host for successfully binding this system,’ a voice rang in my mind. I looked at it in confusion, no one was around, so who was talking? The system seemed to have heard my question. He explained, ‘I am your system. As for why you are bound, it should be that you triggered a certain condition, so you are transferred to another temporal and spatial’. ‘Let me introduce it,’ said the system. ‘There are vast land and resources on this planet, and there is a lot of food. I want to go to every spot in the world to see...’ ‘Okay, stop,’ I said. ‘So how can I go back to the original temporal and spatial?’ The system says, ‘You need to find some things to get back. You are now in the Mogao Grottoes in China. It is the early 14th century now.’ After I listened, I walked around to explore, but suddenly, the system said, ‘Congratulations! You have found one of the things!’ I was shocked, because I just walked a few steps, how did I find it? The system explained, ‘Magao Grottoes is the thing that you have found!’ ‘I see.’ I answered.

I continued to walk a few steps further and plunged into the endless darkness. I was groping in the dark, but suddenly, I saw a light, I wondered if someone had already come in, and what was his purpose? I walked softly so that I wouldn’t make a sound.

After walking for a while, I heard a sound in front of me, I hid behind a stone and looked over there, there were two people arguing, one of them said, ‘How can you be so selfish? You don’t care about human safety!’ I was trying to talk to them, but their bodies fell into pieces! I calmed down and continued to move forward. This time, I saw two people were fighting, but I have never seen the way they used! I continued to walk. I saw many murals of Mogao Grottoes along the way. ‘Chinese culture is really extensive and profound! Monks came here to sculpt Buddha statues and murals 2000 years ago! It is incredible!’

Finally, I arrived at the Buddhist scripture cave. I saw there were many scriptures in the Tibetan scripture cave such as politics, military affairs, religion, history, and philosophy. There were also some books that were written in minority languages, ancient Tibetan, Xixia, Khotanm Turkic, Vyghur etc. The types of the books include Medical books, music scores, dance scores, chess classics, horoscopes, calendar calculation and religious documents.

Suddenly, I saw a person walked out of the Buddhist scripture cave, and the system that had been silent for a long time suddenly spoke, ‘Congratulations to the host, you have successfully collected all the items. This person in front of you is the one who can let you go home, please take the opportunity, no matter what he says, you must execute it. He will take you to find your way home.’

The man led me forward, and I saw a door. I walked in. After a moment, I returned to the reality and took off my VR glasses and said, ‘Is technology so advanced now?’ It’s so real! It’s just like the real thing!’ the teacher smiled meant unknown, ‘Maybe that’s true?’

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Lee, Wang Ho – 12

It was a Sunday morning when my family and I decided to go to the Mogao Grottoes. We packed our bags, checked everything, and we were ready to go. Half an hour later, we were riding the train to Gansu. After that, we rented a beach buggy and drove to our destination – The Mogao Grottoes. It was a magnificent sight. The Grottoes were built on a mountainside a few centuries ago. The walls were made entirely out of stones, and I could see many Buddha statues surrounding the Grottoes. “Let’s go in?” My dad said. We paid the entrance fee and went in. We went into each room. Some of them had paintings while others had statues of Buddhas. Even so, they all look the same to me. The same hair, face and clothes. Still, it was a spectacular sight. Suddenly, there was a rush of crowded tourists and they accidentally pushed me. I ended up barging into a room with a sign that said “Do Not Enter”. Lost for words and dumbfounded, I stood up. After I regained my senses and bearings, I looked around the room. The whole room was practically dark. I turned on the “flashlight” using my phone and scanned around. Still, nothing significant was there until I reached a lightless area where my light seems not to reach. “That’s odd, why is there no light?” I contemplated. I kept walking towards it taking baby steps but I stopped when I noticed that there was a hole in the room, and I was only one step closer from falling down. However, my curiosity got the better of me. I jumped down into the hole and heard screams and I realized it was coming out of me. Oddly, I fell out of the hole. To my surprise, I did not end up in a dark space. It was a wide and open area with lush green lands and massive trees. Then, I spotted something in the sky. It was flying, but it left a trail of smoke along the way, it was a phoenix! All of a sudden, a voice behind me and said, “Welcome.” I turned around and saw a monk. “To the world of magical creatures.” “Whoa.” I said. The monk then said this space is sealed for ordinary humans. A fox-like creature with nine tails suddenly appeared next to the monk, and surprisingly, bowed at him. Normal animals don’t do that, and mythical creatures don’t do that either. “Who are you, oh mysterious creature?” I asked. “You may not know me, but you can refer me as God.” The monk said. His eyes glowed and he suddenly hovered above the air! “You are the first one to see me, which no one has done before. Let me give you a gift.” He said and gave me a plant-like thing. He then shared “This plant is from the deepest of Mogao Grottoes which will never die. It keeps everyone away from sicknesses and natural disasters as long as you take care of it. That’s the spirit of these Grottos, they’re evergreen and ever giving”. I thanked the monk and took the plant back to Hong Kong. I wanted to plant it in Hong Kong where the spirit of Mogao Grottoes would blend in with the local ecosystem. The monk then said, “Goodbye. May I last in your heart forever.” And all of a sudden, I was awake. LEE Wang Ho Marcus P6A (11) I was in my bedroom, sitting up. My head was covered in sweat. “Whew!! What a crazy dream!” I said until I spot the plant next to me

Nine-Color Deer

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Tam, Yi Ki – 9

Mogao Grottoes is a famous tourist attraction in China. Everyone is familiar with its murals, so do you know any legends about these murals? 'Nine-Color Deer' is one of them.

According to the legend, there used to be a deer with gleaming bright fur and a pair of antlers that were white as snow. Since its hair can reflect nine colors of light under the sun, people call it 'Nine-Color Deer'. Nine-Color Deer is very kind and helpful. Even when some people went into the forest by mistake, it will provide them with directions.

One day, when Nine-Color Deer was eating grass, it heard a cry for help and found a man in the rapid river! The deer jumped into the river and saved the man. When the man was conscious again, he thanked the deer and was willing to be its servant. Nine-Color Deer refused and said, 'I don't need you to be my servant. But promise me no to tell anyone where I live.' The man nodded and promised it. Then he left reluctantly.

A few days later, the queen told the king that she had a dream the night before, in which she dreamt that there was a Nine-Color Deer in the forest. 'Its hair can reflect nine colors under the sun. I want to use its fur to make a coat and its antlers will be decorations on my bedside. If I don't have these things, I will die,' she said. The king said quickly, 'I can find it. You are my beloved and I won't let you die!'

So, the king put up lots of notices everywhere. On the notice, it says 'If anyone can find the Nine-Color Deer, I will give him half of the money of the kingdom.' The man that was saved by the deer saw this notice. He thought, 'I will be rich if I tell the king when the Nine-Color Deer is.' So he informed the king. The king asked the man to lead and the army followed.

When they arrived at the forest, they saw the Nine-Color Deer. The soldiers prepared bows and arrows and wanted to shoot it.

At this very moment, the deer asked the king, 'Did this person bring you here?' 'Yes,' said the king. 'My king, do you know that I saved him when he was drowning? He promised me not to tell anyone about me but now he betrayed me!' The man was very embarrassed. The king said to the man, 'Nine-Color Deer saved your life in distress, but you betrayed it because of wealth. You didn't thank it, you retaliated with no gratitude. Don't you feel ashamed?' The man ran away awkwardly. The king said to the Nine-Color Deer, 'I will order that all the people in the country cannot come here. I'll let you have a peaceful life.' The deer knelt down and said, 'Thank you, king.'

This story tells us that we should be grateful to everyone that helped us and repay them. Do you know any more legends of the Mogao Grottoes? Come and tell me next time!

New Tales from The Mogao Grottoes

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Wang, Qianyue – 10

I was reading in the library one day when a particular book caught my eye. It was about a place called the Mogao Grottoes. I took it off the shelf and started reading. I felt very surprised because the Mogao Grottoes was a series of 500 ancient temples, and all of them were built inside a cliff in a desert! There were a lot of pictures about the magnificent paintings inside the caves, attracting me a lot. It was about 1 month after I read the book about the Mogao Grottoes when the Summer holiday came. Everyone in my family was excited. All of us saw a fun holiday ahead. "Let's go somewhere to relax this year," dad said. We all agreed. "But where are we going?" mum asked. Dad gave her a shrug. "Perhaps we could go to the Mogao Grottoes!" I said. "What a great idea!" mum and dad said. Our conversation ended, and we did some research about the plane tickets and prepared to pack our bags for a tour. Before we could even realize it, we were already outside one of the many gates leading into the Mogao Grottoes. It looked very traditional with "Mogao Caves" inscribed on it. It looks very handsome with almond-colored temple walls as the background. "It looks fascinating!" dad exclaimed. We went inside quickly and began our tour. We walked 2 / 4 along a stone and dirt road, and visited only the temples which we considered were the most interesting looking. Some of the temples we visited had broken statues. Some of them had a smell of dirt. Some of the other temples had slightly-peeling paint. It was all so old and misty, as if it was a time machine from the past. I could feel how delicately the paintings were drawn, how carefully the sculptures were made, how hard the buildings were made. We visited quite a few temples and caves, but the only temples I could remember clearly after the visit were Cave 158, Cave 96 and Cave 257. First, let's talk about Cave 158. The light in all Mogao caves are dim, so it's a bit eerie perhaps if you're in the coffin-shaped Cave 158. When looked inside, I felt a bit scared. But after a while I learnt that the coffin-shaped design prevented the room to topple on itself when an earthquake occurred nearby. When I looked at the room clearly, I saw there a buddha, sleeping with his eyelids half-open. Dad told me it was the famous reclining Buddha. The Buddha was sleeping in an interesting fashion: even though he had a finely decorated pillow, he still put his right hand under his ear, causing him to tilt to the right, and so facing the person walking in. It looked like a position of some of the character in cartoons! 3 / 4 Next, there's Cave 96. Inside, there's the ginormous Maitreya Buddha. Mum told me that this Buddha is the third largest buddha statue in the world, and is the largest Buddha ever to be built indoors! It's so gigantic; you can only see his feet! The Buddha is in a very religious position, with one of his hand held up and the other in his lap. He looks so real! How long it took the sculptures to make this masterpiece, I don't even dare to think! 50 years? 100 years? Everyone in the room would gasp in awe at this breathtaking sight. This Buddha has been painted gold, and everyone must admit that this Buddha should be crowned King of the Mogao Buddhas. This room is so unbelievably tall, I even wonder how long it would take me to get from the top of the cliff to the bottom of it using a parachute. This is the heart of the caves, and everyone who comes here must get a glimpse at this statue. Finally, we come to Cave 257. This room is the most ordinary-looking of the three, but tells an important story to everyone. This cave has 3 small statues, with a board behind them. If someone were clever enough to go around to the back of the board, they would see a short tale with 7 scenes, each using vivid paintings to tell you the story. The story is about a nine-colored deer that helps a hunter escape from danger, and the hunter promises to keep her place of living a secret. However in the end, the traitor tells the king about the deer, and soon after he gets caught. When the deer tells its story to the king, justice comes into the 4 / 4 story and the hunter gets punished. From this story, we have learnt to help others in need, but also keep our promises. Trust is very important. After a long day, we finally headed back to the hotel. In the buzzing of the car engine, I looked back from one final look. "Goodbye, Mogao Caves," I whispered, then, turning my head back, I slept the rest of the journey.

The First Story of the Mogao Grottoes

Creative Primary School, Ching, Li Yi – 9

It was a bright, cold day in November. Kim Shi felt really drowsy for the whole day at school and decided to sleep early. In her dream, she saw the Buddha who told Kim to go to the Mogao Grottoes. Kim and her parents were devout Buddhist. They thought that the Buddha may have a mission for Kim in the Mogao Grottoes so Kim decided to travel there. Kim told her three best friends Chang (the scared cat), Ty (the bookworm) and Li (the fighter) about the trip. They insisted that they must go with her as they were really worried that the trip might be dangerous. Kim agreed and they returned home to pack their luggage and away they went. They climbed over the mountains, over the islands and finally reached the Mogao Grottoes.

They went into the Mogao Grottoes and found stunning pictures and statues but some of them were missing somehow. The four were determined to unravel the mystery of the missing art. They split up, walked around and jot down some interesting notes. Kim found a huge rock which was blocking something. She called her friends and they gathered around the rock and used their strength to push the rock aside. They all gasped. The entrance glittered and within every inch of the room laid gold and diamonds. There were also piles of fascinating Chinese novels. Kim looked all around the room and found a book. The book said, “The guardian of the Mogao Grottoes Wang Yuanlu was deceived by the expedition teams of different countries. The treasures and art in Mogao Grottoes were once stolen by a French expedition under Paul Pelliot in 1908, then by a Japanese expedition under Otani Kozui in 1911 and by a Russian expedition under Sergei F. Oldenburg in 1914.” Kim was shocked with these facts. She kept reading the book. When she reached the last page, the book shook. A portal appeared and sucked them all in. When they opened their eyes, they were outside of the Mogao Grottoes. But everything looked newer. Ty asked, “Where are we?” Kim answered, “In the past!”

They stood up and looked around. Kim saw the book and picked it up. She saw the words, “Stop the thieves”. “What does that mean?” asked Li. “We must stop the people who stole the art, the paintings and the statues.” Kim answered. “But we are too young.” Chang said fearfully. “We should at least try!” Kim replied. “Yeah! Don’t be a scaredy cat, Chang,” Li shouted with confidence. Then they saw Paul Pelliot. “I have an idea!” said Kim. Then she whispered to her friends about the plan. The friends all smiled and split up.

They gathered some rocks and climbed up the trees. Kim settled herself on a branch and waited for the right moment to throw the rocks at Paul Pelliot. Then, she shouted “Attack!” All at once, they threw the rocks at Paul Pelliot. Paul Pelliot screamed and ran away. Wang Yuanlu was puzzled, thinking where the rocks came from. Kim and her friends climbed down from the trees and clapped their hands. They cheered for the success of their plan. Wang Yuanlu was a bit angry and shouted at Kim and their friends for pulling such a prank. They stopped cheering and looked at him. Li tried to pounce at him but Ty grabbed her. Kim told Wang Yuanlu that Paul Pelliot was trying to scam him for the treasures and art in the Mogao Grottoes. They time travelled here to stop Paul Pelliot. It took a moment for Wang Yuanlu to understand what in the world was going on. After he realized the truth, he quickly apologized for shouting at Kim and her friends. They accepted his apology and warned Wang Yuanlu that some more people from other foreign countries will try to deceive him and steal valuable art from the Mogao Grottoes. They warned Wang Yuanlu that he should be cautious when he dealing with the foreigners in future. Suddenly, a Buddha came out of the Mogao Grottoes and thanked the four youngsters for being the guardians of the Mogao Grottoes. The Buddha said, “I would grant you a wish for your protection of the Mogao Grottoes.” Kim and her friends discussed for a while and said, “We wish that the Mogao Grottoes would be protected forever.” The Buddha smiled and said, “Your wish is my command.” In a flash, the Buddha disappeared.

Kim picked up the book and the portal appeared. They said goodbye to Wang Yuanlu and went into the portal. When they opened their eyes, they were back to the present. Kim was still holding the book. It seemed that the portal will not open anymore.

As they were leaving the caves, they saw that the once missing statues, art and paintings were now back in the Mogao Grottoes. These four youngsters played an important role in protecting the Buddhist relics in the Mogao Grottoes. They went back home and told their parents the remarkable journey they all had.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Creative Primary School, Fung, Tsz Kei Michelle – 11

“Just one more month and I’ll be home to visit, Pa!” I spoke on the phone. “Lin and I are still working on our history project that’s due two weeks later. Plus, I have your “special rock” with me, you always told me that it is a family heirloom that will be useful to me someday...blah blah blah...”

“Okay, but take care of that special rock, just like I did when I was the keeper of it. Passing it on—”

“Yes, yes, I know, Pa. I will take care of myself and the rock. Love you, bye!” I hung up.

“Fei Fei! Are you ready yet? We’re going to miss the train!” Lin called. I quickly rushed downstairs with excitement, as my friend and I were heading to visit one of the ancient architectures of China, the Mogao Grottoes!

When we arrived at the Mogao Caves, the whole place was covered in dust, seemed like a haunted house but with delicate paintings and amazing sculptures. Lin even found a library with antique books and the oldest dated, printed book in the world. We spent the whole afternoon reading books in the library.

“Fei Fei! I found something!”

I hurried beside Lin.

“It’s a book about souls in the Mogao caves... It says that an evil sorcerer back then had villages destroyed, killing every single villager and their families. For those who escaped the village, the evil sorcerer casted a spell, imprisoning the escapers in the Mogao Caves ever since...”

“That couldn’t be real.” I scoffed.

But when we flipped the page, a gigantic white smoke popped out of the book and surrounded us... ended up forming into a ghost!

“AAAAH!!! GHOST!!!” We screamed and ran across the room. When we ran, other ghosts started popping out and followed us, which left us more terrified. We ran left, then right and left until we came to a dead end... We huddled up together when a ghost came close...

“I can’t believe it... HUMANS!!! WE WILL ALL BE FREE NOW!!!” the ghost cheered. Followed by one and another.

“What is happening—” I asked, puzzled.

“Welcome to the Mogao Caves my friends! I am Yan and these are my friends. We are all overjoyed that you both are here to free our spirits!!!” They applauded once again.

“Free? But... My friend and I are just here to work on our history project... Wait... are you all the souls that were trapped here for thousands of years?”

“Indeed, we are,” Yan replied. She then told Lin and I her story. Yan was actually a woman who lived in 366 AD, the time when the Mogao Caves were built. The evil sorcerer back then had her whole family killed, she tried to escape but the sorcerer had cursed and imprisoned her in the Mogao Caves ever since. There were also other souls imprisoned too, they needed a special cure to free themselves so they could reincarnate. Afraid to tell, I explained why we were here again and that we have no power to free Yan and the other souls. Hearing this, disappointed looks hung on the souls, faces. Some even started weeping in tears. Seeing everyone so miserable, Lin and I felt bad... So, we decided to stay overnight and help find cure! After we settled down in a nice room the ghosts offered us, Lin and I rested from this anxious day.

The next day, we continued to search for cure. We searched the entire Mogao Caves, searched every room, every spot, every corner.

“Thud!” a book fell.

“What was that?” Lin asked. I walked and picked up the book.

“Cures For Curses” “Involving cures for the most difficult curses in the world”

“This book is perfect! There is definitely a cure for Yan and the other souls in this book!” I exclaimed in delight.

We flipped a few pages and found a page about cure for the souls.

For those who wish for cure to this curse—

Find a rock with ancient words.

Break the rock and let light spread—

Spirits will now have a future ahead.

“A rock? There could be thousands of rocks in this universe! When can we find the right one?!” I shouted, frustrated.

“Ancient words, special rock... Fei Fei, how come this sounds so familiar?” Lin hesitated for a while. “Do you think it may have something to do with the rock your father gave you?”

“You are right! How come I haven’t noticed?” I quickly ran to my bag, grabbed the rock and broke it. We all peered inside with excitement waiting for light to spread, but disappointingly, nothing came out...

“I’m so very sorry everyone...Lin and I tried our—”

Murmuring came from the crowd. I turned back and saw light coming from inside the rock. It automatically rose, bursted into tiny pieces flying to every soul’s body as they slowly floated up into the sky.

We quickly ran outside to catch the amazing scene. Souls floated freely in the air, jumping and leaping in happiness.

“Thank you, from the bottom of my heart!” Yan said before she floated up, slowly disappearing into the wind.

Proudly, Lin and I headed home. Turns out, this was an unexpected way to spend our adventure!

The Trip to the Mogao Grottoes

Creative Primary School, Lau, Tin Lam Denise – 10

Last summer, the Ming family went on a trip to China. They had gone through lots of different adventures but the most unforgettable one was the trip to Mogao Grottoes.

When they arrived China, it was already night time, so the family checked in to their hotel near the Mogao Grottoes caves. After the night, the Ming family went to find their tour guide of the day — Shang Lo. When they saw Shang Lo, the family greeted him with a nice warm smile. Shang Lo asked, “What are your names?” Ming Lam, which is the youngest replied, “Hello, my name is Ming Lam. I love history, that’s why I’m here on this trip.” “My name is Ming Lan. I am Ming Lam’s older brother,” Ming Lan said. Finally, Dad said, “I am Ming Lun and this is my wife Choe Kun.” “It is a pleasure meeting you all. There is a ten-minute walk until we could arrive to the Mogao Grottoes caves, so let’s go now,” Shang Lo said.

After a while, the family and Shang Lo arrived to the Mogao Grottoes. “There are a lot of caves here but we are only going to the one that has the longest history,” Shang Lo explained. As they walked to one of the caves, Shang Lo said with a scary voice, “I heard rumors about snakes with powers inside the caves.” “What kind of powers?” Ming Lam asked. Shang Lo thought for a moment and said, “Powers to close the caves and kill people. But we don’t know which caves they will be in, so we need to be very careful.” After Shang Lo said that, they were already in the cave. Just when they were looking around, they heard a loud bang and suddenly the cave was pitch black. “Oh no!” everyone shouted.

Suddenly Dad said, “In a movie I watched, four explorers were also trapped in a cave with a magical snake. They dug holes to escape from under the ground and managed to survive.” Mom said, “We could try that.” “But we don’t have anything to dig holes with,” Ming Lan said. Then Ming Lam shouted, “Mommy! I can’t see you!” Shang Lo pulled out a flash light and said, “Let’s make our own shovels to find our way out before the snake kills us!” Shang Lo picked up some branches from the ground and started teaching the rest how to make shovels. After a while, everyone picked up their shovels and started digging as the snake kept hissing. They dug and dug.

After a very long time, they were finally half way through. “We need to dig faster,” Shang Lo said. The snake kept trying to get its head through the hole they dug. It was really scary and horrifying for the Ming family and Shang Lo. Suddenly Ming Lan shouted, “I see it, I see the sunlight!” Everybody gasped when they saw the sunlight. “Ssssssss,” the snake hissed while the Ming family and Shang Lo were looking at the sunlight. Ming Lun said, “We need to stay focused, or else we will all be the snake’s lunch!” So, they continued digging and digging once again.

A long time had passed, the family and Shang Lo finally got their way out. After they patched up the hole, Ming Lam said, “I never thought that I would be so happy to see the sunlight!” Choe Kun nodded and said, “Yeah that was so scary yet exciting!”

After this scary yet fun adventure, the Ming family and Shang Lo went back to the hotel. They all waved and said goodbye to Shang Lo then went back to their hotel room. Once they arrived to their room, Ming Lun turned on the television. “Today we found out that the Mogao Grottoes caves were haunted by the snakes with the abilities to kill us humans,” the television host announced, “We are going to shut down the Mogao Grottoes, until we remove all the magical snakes from all the caves.” “Finally! They are removing the snakes from the caves!” Ming Lam said with a relief. “That means we can come back whenever the caves reopen!” Ming Lan said. The whole family cheered, “Yay!”

When the Ming family arrived home, they were all so happy that they were alive. Then the phone rang, Ming Lun answered, “Hello?” “Hi! It’s Shang Lo, your tour guide. I just wanted to inform you guys that our company is going to give your family a free trip to the Mogao Grottoes caves and the hotel stay because you guys helped China catch the magical snakes.” Choe Kun took over the phone and said, “Oh wow! Thank you and your company! But when will the Mogao Grottoes caves reopen?” Shang Lo replied, “Next year on the 4th of August. So, it’s right in the summer holiday. See you then, bye!”

When the Ming family heard the news, everyone cheered and was both excited and shocked. Ming Lam said, “This is so exciting!” Ming Lun replied, “Yeah!” After the phone call, they heard the doorbell ring. Ming Lun opened the door and saw their grandma. Ming Lun said, “Mom! We just came back from our trip.” Choe Kun continued, “Yeah! It was so much fun. We even got a free trip for finding the magical snakes. Do you want to go with us next time?” Grandma replied, “Of course! Bye!” Then she left.

The Ming family had a great trip. Not only did they help China find the magical snake, they also got a free hotel stay and trip to the Mogao Grottoes caves and also their grandma got to go with them. They all had an amazing time.

Save the Secret Caves of Mogao Grottoes

Creative Primary School, Lian, Yu Chi Linus – 9

Brrr! It was a dark and chilly night. Two children named Anson and Scarlet had read all the books they could find, played all the games that they could think of and were still bored.

Anson had spiky black hair, an oval face with a pair of sharp blue eyes. Scarlet had long, straight red hair, a round face with sparkling green eyes. Unlike Anson, she was very quiet and thoughtful. Anson and Scarlet were twins of nine years old. Anson was proud that he was two minutes older than Scarlet and called himself the big brother.

“Mom and Dad are at work and grandma is asleep in the living room,” Anson thought. Suddenly, he got a playful idea. “Scarlet, let’s explore the attic!” he suggested. Scarlet got a bit worried and replied, “What if we get scolded.” “Gosh! Scarlet, you worry too much.” Anson interrupted.

“Fine, if you want to stay here! Go ahead!” Anson said rolling his eyes as he fled upstairs. Scarlet unwillingly caught up with Anson. The attic was dark and cold but once the twins got there, they both stopped dead in their tracks because there was a brilliant light in the middle of the attic.

Anson and Scarlet ran excitedly towards the light. They found a chest, opened it and took a script that glowed with a blinding light. The script was a bamboo scroll with masses of unknown characters upon it. The moment they unrolled it, a portal opened up and sucked them in.

Scarlet screamed at the top of her lungs while Anson yelled, “Yikes!” as they teleported through a portal. When they opened their eyes, they found themselves in a dark cave filled with scripts and pictures related to Buddhism. They looked around and saw a beautiful golden Buddha statue in front of them. “Wow! How magnificent!” cried Anson with amazement.

As Anson took a few steps forward to take a closer look, he accidentally stepped on a lever. The gems on the statue immediately projected different holograms. Scarlet exclaimed “I recognized one of the holograms! I read it before in a book! We are in the Mogao Grottoes.” “The Mogao what—oes?” Anson said. “The Mogao Grottoes! O, Anson, I think you should read more.” said Scarlet.

In the first hologram, they saw a gang of thieves riding a horse—drawn cart. The second showed the thieves stealing valuable treasures including the Buddha statue and made a big fortune. The third showed the destroyed Mogao Grottoes and the last one showed the thieves causing chaos everywhere. The holograms were telling the future of Mogao Grottoes.

Anson and Scarlet were astonished. “We must stop them!” they exclaimed yet puzzled on what could be done. Suddenly, Anson noticed a colorful light around the statue. They walked closer and saw in the palm of the statue was a bright ruby ring. He told Scarlet to put it on. As she placed it upon her index finger, a bolt of shining red light appeared and dashed forward. “Run after it!” Anson shouted. As the bolt of light disappeared, they found themselves inside a maze. Anson said “What? A maze! Gah!” “Calm down or we will never find what we came for.” Scarlet tried to comfort him. They walked and walked; they came to one dead end then to another. Anson got impatient “When can we get out?”. He kept asking Scarlet and the conversation became more and more heated. Without looking, Scarlet almost bumped into a girl. They were shocked to see someone else in the maze and together they asked “Who are you? Why are you here?” “I am Kate.” The girl replied tossing her short, wavy, golden hair. “I am here to save the Mogao Grottoes.”

Kate joined them and together they walked for a long time. Anson noticed a loose stone near the side of the maze. He could not resist pushing the stone back in place. Suddenly, the ground beneath them gave way, Anson and Kate tumbled into a ditch. Scarlet saw her brother and her friend in trouble. She quickly looked around and found a pile of vines and platted them together. She lowered the rope into the ditch. Anson insisted Kate to climb up first. As Anson was half way up, the ditch began to crumble and the rope started to break. “Anson, climb quickly!” Kate shouted. “It’s ok, you guys just go on without me!” Anson called back. “I am not going to leave you behind!” Kate replied.

At that moment, the vines pulled Anson up and wrapped around his, Kate's and Scarlet's wrists and turned into three armbands. Anson's was orange and engraved with the word "courage"; Kate's was yellow engraved with friendship and Scarlet's was pink engraved with wisdom. As they touched the engraved words, a shimmering white Pegasus, a stout black dragon and fiery phoenix flew over to them.

"Magnificent creatures!" they exclaimed. They petted the legendary creatures and flew off on them. A few minutes later, they were back near the caves of Mogao Grottoes. They saw the thieves rummaging through the caves. The magical creatures roared fiercely. Swarming with fear, the thieves fled at the first sight of the creatures. With all the damage, the caves already became unsteady. "Run!" Anson shouted. The moment they got out; the caves collapsed burying everything inside. Tears rolled down their cheeks. The creatures bowed and turned into light and returned to their armbands. As the three friends said they goodbyes, Kate said, "I have a feeling we will meet again and we will make things right!" In an instant, the portal took them home.

Years later, Anson and Scarlet graduated from university and visited the Mogao Grottoes. In the shining sun, they saw a young lady with golden hair digging in the ruins. "Kate!" They shouted and ran over to hug her. After the reunion, they looked over and caught sight of the familiar palm of the golden Buddha, echoed by the shimmers in their armbands.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Creative Primary School, Mok, Aquila – 10

It was one peaceful morning at the British museum, the relics retrieval team was discussing inside the pantry, Karl heard from the curator that the Mogao caves were poorly damaged by bombs after the World War III, so are the dinosaur fossil spots sites nearby. Karl was an experienced explorer and dinosaur bone collector, he travelled across the globe and managed to escape the worst chaos including WW3. His eyes immediately lit up as the manager said they needed to send volunteers over to save the sites promptly. Karl was determined to go and strongly believed that the bombs dropped during the war might have revealed a fossil or two. Mogao caves? Why does that name sound so familiar? That's it! His childhood friend's grandfather who studied the history of those caves, what was the name again? Chang Li, that's it! Chang Li happened to be a descendant of the "Guardians of the Mogao Caves". He knew Chang Li was the only person he needed. When the two finally met again, both knew they were destined to fulfil this mission. In two days, the team was all primed and ready to set out. The expedition team travelled for months, by train, by sea and by camels, just like the ancient traders. Along the way, Karl and Chang Li had lots to catch up, they talked about their good old times and had endless debates on who was the worst teacher, which club was the most popular, what was the best school lunch, who was the most popular old boy and what was the cruellest way to prank the matron.

The two finally arrived, the magnificence of the caves and the abundances of artwork made their jaws drop. The curator was not lying, lots of caves had survived the bombs. To Karl's delight, there were also dinosaur remains. As they explored the caves one by one, there were countless artwork depicting gods from all religions, made by thousands upon thousands of men, which took centuries to build. They first walked into Cave 285, one of the earliest built caves. There were 3 partially damaged Buddha statues in meditating posts and a skeleton inside a nearby chamber; who might have been a monk that passed away while meditating or a deceased body from the war. Karl examined the caves one by one as Li admired countless paintings engraved on both sides of the endless corridors. All of a sudden, a spectral voice spoke to them that made their hair stand up. Karl froze for a second but Li was confused as he found that voice familiar. Karl snapped him back as they headed to the next cave. Soon they entered Cave 158, they found a gigantic Buddha statue laying sideways on a long bed of rock. There was also another Buddha statue in a regular standing posture, the remaining walls were filled with different drawings of the Buddha.

Chang Li was desperate to find Cave 17, the library cave and hopefully reveal secrets within it. However, meandering through the boundless historical site itself was a challenge, due to extreme weathers in the middle of the desert. The two felt hopeless after months of exploration until one day, Chang's grandmother, Shana appeared in his dream and showed him a hint of where to find the Library Cave. This time, they nailed it. Karl picked up a random scroll on the floor and opened it up. He was shocked to find out that it was the first book ever printed in history. The marvellous place was filled with artifacts and scripts written in many languages. The pair filled their backpacks as much as they could. All of a sudden, they felt a severe ground movement, the walls and ceilings were torn apart, the only ray of light inside the cave was blocked by shattered rocks. The boys starved for 3 days and felt almost hopeless because there was just no way of getting out. Suddenly, a voice spoke to Li, he immediately knew his grandmother Shana and great grandfather Shu Hong were trying to save their lives one more time. Along the way, they picked up historic artifacts which were extremely valuable as the war had destroyed most traces of humanity. The expedition was a great success, the pair only brought back treasures in quantity of the tip of an iceberg and still made a fortune. Several months later, the final batch of fossils that Karl retrieved were delivered to the museum. Karl was delighted to learn that his fossils belonged to a new species, he was proud to name it *Exelnoomoosoraus*. Years later, Li and Karl were catching up at a local coffee shop, even though it had been years, they still could not hide the grin on their faces. They could never get enough of the Mogao and hungered for more treasures. After a long debate, the two decided that the best way to preserve the caves was to leave them untouched and let history uncover itself. They nodded with gratification and continued to take sips of their coffee, as they lie in tranquillity knowing that the mythical Mogao Caves will forever remain safe.

Fast Backward

Creative Primary School, Yu, Lok Ching Diago – 12

As a British traveller, Peter has never been to China. For the destination of his first China trip, he picked Gan Su, where the famous Mogao Grottoes is located. One Christmas holiday, he walked into the Grottoes and was stunned by the spectacular view. He was especially surprised by the artworks and Buddha statues. He supposed there were not sophisticated building tools 1,000 years ago. It was difficult to believe how they were built. Appreciating them, he did not notice when the Mogao Grottoes closed, leaving him in the mysterious cave.

While Peter was observing an art piece, there was a beam of light at the end of the tunnel. He walked over out of curiosity. The closer he went, the clearer he saw. A wooden, dusty door appeared in front of him. Behind the door, there seemed to be a big mystery waiting for him to explore.

He put his hands on the door gently. Just then, a voice was heard. “What lays in front of you is the secret passage towards the Qin Dynasty. Only the selected kind ones are allowed to visit this secret passage, including me, a monk who discovered Mogao Grottoes. As you are being chosen, your mission is to secretly murder the evil Emperor Qin Shi Huang. However, if you go through the passage and do not return within the same day, you will become one of the buddha statues here.” The next minute, Peter’s mind came clear, the voice faded out right away and the cave was once again quiet.

Peter thought to himself, “As a ruler of China, Emperor Qin Shi Huang is well-protected by loads of guards. How can I possibly murder him secretly?”

Peter thought this idea was completely insane, but deep down, he always imagines himself as a superhero who fights for justice. He learnt about Emperor Qin at school but he never imagined himself as the assassin to kill Qin.

As if he was able to read Peter’s mind, the monk spoke again, “In order to kill him, I offer to help. But you must bring Emperor Qin into Mogao Grottoes, where the power of kindness from the cave will kill him.” And his voice vanished once again. Just then, Peter came up his plan.

He slowly opened the door and stepped in. Suddenly, he lost balance. The next moment, he was dragged towards the doorway by a mysterious force. He was magically sent from 2021 to the Qin Dynasty.

He was in an ancient market packed with household ladies buying groceries, students with scrolls on their back and someone practicing Kung Fu. Of course, phones and other modern electronic devices were nowhere to be seen. Walking down the street, he noticed people shooting weird looks at him. They were all staring at his clothes. A young man who dressed in guard’s suit even ran to Peter and wondered, “What are your clothes made of?” At that time, Peter was aware that he was wearing modern clothes. He immediately asked the young man to exchange his plain clothes with him so that he would not stand out in the crowds. The man agreed as he was curious of the fabrics.

He asked the man about the palace’s location, and soon he arrived in front of it.

In the palace, Qin sat on his throne and laughed, “When the Great Wall of China is built, I will be the emperor with the biggest achievements in the entire human race. Ha ha!”

Just then, Peter secretly sneaked in as a “guard”, ran in. He said worriedly, “My majesty, there is an Egyptian King in a cave who bad mouthed about you being brainless and cold. Would you come with me and take him?”

The arrogant Qin instantly fell into this trap. He stood up furiously and yelled, “Who dares to insult me? I shall kill him with my own hands!”

His servants told him it could be a trap and he might be tricked. However, Qin was too angry to listen to all of them.

A few hours later, Peter and Qin arrived in front of Mogao Grottoes. Peter had a cheeky smile on his face as he knew that this despot will soon be killed.

He asked Peter, “Where is he?”

Peter said, “Your majesty, he is deep in the cave. You may need to move forward a bit so you can catch him yourself?”

Peter was really nervous. He knew that there was no way to kill Qin unless he set his foot in Mogao Grottoes himself. He thought, “Come on! Go in the cave!”

Unluckily, Qin stepped back and just said, “Then why can’t I call him out and demand him to surrender?” Then he started to shout, “I am the greatest emperor! You, come out, now! I will destroy you with my sword!”

Peter was extremely worried. He started to tell Qin a made-up story about how the fictional Egyptian King was actually both deaf and blind. Just then, Qin started to be impatient and suspicious.

“Really? Then how did he shout?” he said suspiciously.

At that moment, Peter did not want to make himself in a bigger trouble as it was almost midnight. He decided to take a more aggressive move.

He lifted his leg and tried to kick Qin’s back. However, Qin did not lose his balance but dodged instead. He was shocked. Then he pulled Peter’s leg into the cave as defense. In fact, he had been secretly practising Kung Fu all these years due to the fact that many assassins tried to kill him. Just then, Peter turned into a buddha statue in the Mogao Grottoes as it had already reached midnight.

The Spirit of the Mogao Grottoes

Creative Primary School, Yuen, Hei-Yin Kayla – 11

“It’s rumored to be haunted and it wasn’t much fun,” said my friend Abbey, who was describing her recent trip to the Mogao Grottoes. I didn’t participate in this conversation with my other best friends because I, Sally Brown, was going to visit the Mogao Grottoes along with my pesky sister and over-enthusiastic mother for this Christmas break. And I was not looking forward to it.

Eventually, the dreaded day arrived. The car trip to the airport was fine. When we arrived at the Dunhuang Airport, Aunt Catherine greeted us with open arms. My cousin, Glory, grabbed me by my arm and started to discuss with me how fun the Mogao Grottoes would be.

The next day, we headed straight to the Mogao Grottoes. It was actually fun! The Mogao caves looked more like a palace from the Qing Dynasty. Glory said it used to have different colors of velvet, gold, brown and silver. However, over the centuries the colors started to fade. Inside, all I saw were Buddha statues, Buddha art and more Buddha. Then, I went to the library and relaxed there till our tour was over. When we went back to the hotel, a mysterious voice cried, “Help, help!” I decided to ignore it and enjoy the ride back to the hotel.

As I was getting ready for bed, I thought of the mysterious voice. I decided to ignore it again and flopped down on my bed. Just as I drifted off to sleep, a bright light flashed before my eyes. In front of me was a ghost! Yet, the ghost looked harmless and I wasn’t frightened! The ghost then told me why she was here. She was a former queen who once ruled a place called Alexandra. She had lost her crown and came here when she relocated the crown here. Also, she needed my help retrieving it. Her parents had chosen her to protect the crown and rule the kingdom, even though she was only thirteen. They died after because of a disease. Her life became harder and everyone was always throwing their problems at her. Just as she was starting to gain her subjects loyalty, she was ambushed by her guards in the library. They declared themselves the king and took the crown away. However, they shortly lost the crown due to their clumsiness. Then she threatened me to compromise and I agreed.

The next day, I sneaked off to the library. As I entered the library, I whispered, “Utah? Hello? It’s me, Sally. Where are you?” Before I knew it, Utah was in front of me! I started to speak but she rudely stopped me with a wave of her hand. “About time! Come, we have much to do but our journey will only take about an hour or so.” Utah levitated away to another room. It was hard to keep up with her but I eventually caught up. We went in so many directions, I couldn’t tell where we were going! We climbed up stairs and hallways that were hidden in plain sight. I saw symbols on the walls, cobwebs everywhere and some unrecognized objects. Then, Utah stopped in front of a wall, she started looking for something. She pressed on a tiny button and a hidden door revealed itself. Which was strange because ghosts usually couldn’t touch things. When the door opened, dust flew everywhere. The door made a creaking sound, I was beyond my words. Utah ushered me to hurry into the room, quickly following behind. When we entered, the first thing I saw were people. But these people had been turned into stone, vines surrounded them, their faces looked horrified. Surrounding the vines were little black wisp that circled. “Who are these people?” I asked anxiously. “These are the people before you,” Utah answered coldly. “They have failed me. Their hearts were filled with greed, so I could not retrieve my crown. But you will. Stop blithering and follow me.” As I stepped onto the long narrow bridge, I felt as if though something was watching us. But I quickly brushed that feeling off and followed Utah. On the end of the bridge, I saw a golden crown floating in midair, it was decorated with jewels and had an odd symbol on it. Unexpectedly, Utah pushed me! “What are you doing?!” I asked, panicked “This is the reason you are here. You see, I could retrieve the crown myself. But to get the crown you must offer a living being with a pure heart. You are the only one that had succeeded, I am grateful for that. Now with your help, I can retrieve what was taken from me so many years ago!” Utah responded; her eyes looked harsher than ever. I started crying, knowing my life would end in a few seconds. I inhaled my last breath, then, darkness.

Pain—that is what I remember. But yet, I feel like I’m alive, I could feel my heart beating. I saw somebody ripping out the vines that surrounded me. It was Utah! I was so glad I cried, but my tears were joyful. Afterwards, I fainted, for a long time.

When I woke up, I could see Utah smiling at me. But she was a human! “You’re a human!” I shouted. “Yes. After I saved you, I miraculously became human. I’m sorry I betrayed you and I promise I will make it up to you. But.....”

She trailed off, “But?” “What will I do now? Who will I live with?” I smirked convincingly, showing Utah I already knew what to do.

Rumble! Me and my sisters rush down to the dining table. We each grabbed a seat; Utah grabbed the closest one to the food. Utah’s a quick learner, she adapted to her new life with us well. Ever since Dad left, our family always felt like it was missing something. Utah was the final piece to our broken family. And I’m pleased that she’s the final piece!

The Secret Mission

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Chiu, Lok Man – 9

“Sam. Please travel to Dunhuang, China. We have a secret mission and we have sent soldiers over. As one of our “star” main generals, you are chosen to lead this investigation. We are plotting to arrest a criminal syndicate which has organised and committed a series of thefts in Mogao Caves. We will form a working team with China. I’ve already bought a plane ticket for you and your plane is about to take off in two hours.” Donald, who was the supervisor of Team A of the FBI in America, handed me the puny ticket. I felt a chilly draft blow across my skin, and a deep, resonant growl was whispering right at my ear. The only thing that I could feel was pressure....

I boarded the overnight plane to Dunhuang, China at midnight. I wore an undercover shirt and bulletproof gear for the sake of my safety. Oops! One thing was forgotten! I forgot to ask Donald who the criminals were and their particulars! I had no time, but fortunately, Donald, who seemed to have read my mind, sent me a text message about the criminal syndicate led by a UK criminal named Sammy Smith, and his photo.

Next morning, I landed in Dunhuang and wore my protective sunglasses. I was sun-drenched and the air was super humid. Plus, my sunglasses had a tiny secret function: it could blow cool air at any time!

I thought I had got myself well prepared, nevertheless, a chill went down my spine. With no time to think further, I whizzed swiftly to the airport lobby to meet up with my lads. Some of them were green and inexperienced, therefore I needed to brief them everything about this case and the strategy that we would adopt within such an exceptionally limited time.

After that, I had to find out the current whereabouts of the evil Smith. The useful information told me that Smith would not stay in the same place for more than two days. Thanks for the superb technology! We attempted to figure out Smith’s hiding spot using the fantastic Google Earth and spotted that he was hiding in Mongolia! How were we supposed to go there? All of a sudden, one of my team members said, “We can fly to the Gobi Desert by helicopter.”

True! We had three speedy helicopters and each could carry fifteen soldiers, together with our food and supplies.

It took us two hours to reach the Gobi Desert. We parachuted down and I whisked out my phone. Smith was hiding in a deserted hut in the middle of nowhere of Mongolia! We planned to rest in the creepy Gobi Desert for a lengthy night and then capture Smith the next morning.

As the golden sun peeped through the sky in the morning, we knew it was time to start our adventure. Everybody boarded the helicopters again. I checked Google Earth and made sure that Smith was still there. He was there! We set the massive helicopter to full speed and began our exhilarating journey!

After hours of searching and right before our helicopters ran out of petrol, we managed to ascertain the hiding spot of cunning Smith. It was close to one of the tiny villages in Mongolia and even luckier, I had a tourist guide friend named Johnny who agreed to lead our way to Smith’s hiding spot.

We refuelled the huge helicopters and travelled towards the dinky village at full swing. With Johnny’s assistance, we found Smith’s hut within seconds! We put on our bulletproof uniforms which were specially tested by the FBI. We were all set!

We decided to tiptoe secretly into the hut together, and arrest him. We wanted to capture Smith red-handed alive! We all chuckled heartily in the hope that our plan would succeed.

Having said that, I couldn’t help thinking if our plan might be too risky.. Perhaps Smith would have powerful weapons! But I then thought, No worries. We FBI were all well trained. Thirty-seven soldiers could definitely beat one person, right? We were all ready to sprint into the hut.

Oops. I made a farting noise. Despite how teeny it was, Smith sniffed it and zoomed out to check what's happening. Oh no, he noticed us! We were in humongous trouble. Smith, who was standing in front of us, was a muscular guy with sharp eyes. Fred whispered to me, "Did you know? He was a professional English athlete and the champion of the 100 metre races of the Summer Olympics in 2012 and 2016 in a row." Smith stared furiously and heard us, he ran at his full speed and lost sight in a minute.....

I told my fabulous team to dash back to the helicopters and chase Sammy. Helicopters were incredibly useful. We found him! Our helicopters followed Smith from high, and he was still visible with the naked eye.

You couldn't imagine. Smith, who was indeed a terrific runner, ran from the desert to downtown! But still, Smith was getting exhausted and came to a halt in a shopping centre. Smith might consider he had escaped from our pursuit. Without Smith's notice, I told fourteen soldiers to follow me while the others guarded the entrance of the shopping centre. We hopped off, snuck down the escalator and soon enough, we spotted Smith buying a drink at a local convenience store.

Leaving the store with a relaxing smile on his face, Smith turned right to the nearby bank. My team snuck from behind promptly and arrested Smith at his great shock. Smith got caught!

We handed Smith to the local police station and left the rest of the investigation work to the local police. In the meantime, we passed the stolen items from the Mogao Caves.

We took the helicopter back to our headquarters in Washington D.C. and got praised by our organisation. But little did we know that another case was coming, and only the FBI could crack that mysterious case.

The Wizard of the Mogao Caves

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Chiu, Yin Hei Trevor – 10

"Whoa, be careful there, Joe! One slip and you might break your arm, you know." The strong dude called Bob said.

"Right, I don't want to break that arm, cause that is my sword arm." Joe replied.

"Yeah, man, we NEED you." John said.

They kept on walking, with the help of the lampposts in the caves, they could see everything very clearly. The caves were gloomy and weird. There were tons and tons of Buddhist stuff and weird drawings about Chinese culture. The statues were also creepy since they could see them in every room they were in. They saw a HUGE buddha on a HUGE bed.

"Um, what is that? I thought I saw a flash of green light, grabbing a red stone." Joe asked.

"That is our clue. It must be the wizard of the cave. I remember the prophecy." Bob said

The prophecy is:

Three shall go into the Mogao caves,

They shall find the old treasure,

Guarded by the green wizard of redstone,

Three shall slay it and bring the treasure to camp,

They walked and walked and walked. And then? We walked and walked.

After three hours, Joe asked, "I am so hungry and tired, can we make our tents now?"

"Sure, man," Bob replied.

The fire crackled by their feet. "You know, we have been making progress in the Mogao Caves. We are close to the treasure. I can tell because I can sometimes smell some rusty odours."

"Me too, it is making me feel weird. I am afraid to admit it but you are the only one I trust." Bob replied with a terrified face and a whisper. "And I haven't told this to anyone. Before the quest, Mr D told me that a weird wizard guards the treasure we are looking for. He was a god, right? Mr D knows everything so there is no point arguing with him."

The wind blew so sharply that Bob thought that it was the wizard's magic. "You know what, I will go to sleep, man." John said sleepily. "Sure, why not? I said I'll take first watch, man.."

"Wait, I heard some weak moaning. Let's go wake Joe and check it out."

"Psst, Joe, wake up and get the tent. The wizard is near, I think. I saw a blinding flash of red." Bob said.

"Awn, can't a guy get some sleep? I am tired!" Joe replied with a scowl on his face.

A while later, they got on their feet and started to walk towards the wailing. Suddenly, the wizard appeared on the walkway and zapped Joe. He turned into a cute little pink pig. He had little pink ears, four stubby legs and shrieked "Reet!"

"Oh my god, who did that?" Bob squeaked.

"Slow and ignorant, just like all I have zapped with my ultimate ray. Hahahaha. Puny little children, you will not be able to get your hands onto the treasure today since this is the day I've been waiting for. Ten years of useless waiting will pay off now! Hahahaha." A raspy whisper came from their back.

They both drew their swords, ready to impale the dude who zapped Joe. The wizard appeared in front of Bob and John. They gasped. The wizard had a dry face with long talons on his fingers that she called "fingernails".

Bob attacked first, but the wizard disappeared. Then, the wizard appeared in front of John. John stabbed the wizard but he disappeared too.

"I understand. It goes invisible and walks to the next target!" John cried.

With one signal from Bob, both of them slashed and the wizard disintegrated into green dust and Joe returned to his own self.

"I am never, ever going to do a quest that involves a wizard" Joe said.

"Agreed, wizards are too creepy." Bob and John replied in unison.

They continued their descent. The only light they had was the light from Bob's imperial gold blade. After one hour of walking, they finally found the treasure. It has a wooden box with golden encrusted edges. It had a golden padlock with a key on it. It also had diamond handles. They already knew what was going to happen to camp if they brought it back to camp. They were going to be very popular.

"Let's bring it back to camp now!" Joe yelled. He was even happy, even to talk properly.

"Well let's open it first to see what is inside." Bob said.

"Why is there a green glow around the chest?" John asked.

"I don't know. Maybe that is the reaction if no one touched the chest for the millennia.

"Oh. Let's open the chest now!" Bob said. He was acting like the commander of the three.

When they opened the chest, they saw the unbelievable. Mr D was in the chest with a devilish grin.

He said, "I work for the wizard. Hahahahahahaha!"

They felt they were sucked inside the box.

"In fact, this box is a trapped chest. And also you are in a dream!"

"Dream, dream, dream..."The echo was horrendous.

" Make it stop! And, we are not in a dream!" Bob screamed.

But it was too late. They were sucked into the treasure chest.

Will this be a dream, or is this reality?

Transporting Trouble: Adventure in the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Chung, Preston – 9

Tom and Charlie were best friends, and had known each other since kindergarten. They usually played in the park together as soon as they had finished their homework. This was one of those days. The two children were playing football when Tom suddenly kicked the ball a bit too hard, and the ball went under a bench. He reached his hand into the space under the bench, but strangely couldn't touch the surface of his bouncy round football, his hand touching a hard surface instead!

Tom felt curious, and muttered to himself, "What can this rectangular thing be? It feels like a tissue box of some sort..."

"Tom, where are you? What are you doing? Come back!" Charlie shouted.

Tom immediately replied, "Coming!" and pulled the object out of its hiding place. The object looked like a futuristic machine with dozens of complicated controls and pulsating bulbs sticking out of it. He showed it to Charlie and said, "I wonder if this is a machine that lets you travel to wherever you want. It looks like the machine in that cool sci-fi movie that we watched together!"

Charlie answered, "Well, let's find out!" and pushed a green button on the machine. "I wonder what this does," he said.

A second later, the machine seemed to reply to him. A twirling, swirling vortex appeared from a hole in the machine and sucked the duo into a winding multicoloured tunnel... The boys who were spinning around felt extremely dizzy and wanted to vomit, as the sensation was like going on the world's craziest roller coaster ever. They couldn't communicate with each other, because they were in a vacuum.

After a split second, Tom and Charlie flew out of the vortex and landed on a hard stone floor. Charlie exclaimed, "Wow! That was nauseating!"

Tom agreed, nodding his head. The two children looked around at their surroundings, and discovered that they were no longer in the park! They were in a vast cave covered with ancient Buddhist manuscripts, colourful sculptures of warriors and paintings with majestic gods and spirits sitting in countless temples and shrines. It was like being in a royal palace, only that the palace was in a cave. Tom said, "We must be in one of the Mogao Grottoes! I learned about this at school in my History class."

But before the duo had time to marvel at the wonderful sight, the whole cave trembled like a china shop with a bull inside it. DRR! A part of the cave crashed to the ground from the ceiling, blocking the exit. DRRR! Another part crashed to the ground from the ceiling, crumbling into dust. Tom and Charlie were trapped!

The two children desperately tried to find an opening to escape, running around and kicking rocks to see if they were loose. Tom said, "Oh no! If we don't escape quickly, we will not be able to breathe due to the lack of oxygen!"

Suddenly, there was a tinkling sound, and a man wearing an evil grin on his face holding a drilling machine materialized in front of Tom and Charlie. He cackled, and said, "My name is Conquerado, and I am from the future! You children can do absolutely nothing to stop my schemes. After I teleport these paintings and statues to somewhere safe, this cave will collapse with YOU inside it and be erased from history! I will be able to earn lots of money selling this valuable stuff! I..."

Tom whispered to Charlie, "He is getting distracted talking! We should do a surprise attack!" Charlie nodded and crept behind Conquerado. He silently picked up a broken piece of the statue, and used it to hit the head of the man. Conquerado clenched his fists tightly. His veins nearly popped out of his skin. He put on some metal gloves and aimed them at Tom and Charlie. Blinding green laser beams repeatedly shot out of the gloves.

The duo jumped out of the way, dodging the lethal lasers. The lasers blasted an enormous hole in the wall of the cave instead.

The children immediately ran toward Conquerado, knocking him onto the ground. “We must find a way to keep him down!!” hollered Charlie. This gave Tom an idea. He grabbed a rock and threw it at the ceiling and jumped aside, pulling Charlie with him. The cave ceiling was already vulnerable due to the drilling, and the rock was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Another piece of stone crashed to the ground, then the entire ceiling fell on Conquerado, eliminating any possible chances of his survival.

WHOOSH! A familiar machine appeared. It was the travelling machine! Tom knew what to do. He pressed the green button again, and he and Charlie felt the familiar sensation of being sucked into the portal. BANG! The duo had crash-landed back on the bed of Charlie’s bedroom! The two children looked around. They weren’t in the Mogao Grottoes anymore!

Charlie’s mum who was watching her favourite movie in the living room heard the commotion, burst into the room and said curiously, “I thought you two were playing at the park!

Tom stammered, “Um...We...We came back from the park just now,” and winked at Charlie. Charlie’s mum nodded unconvincingly and left the room. Charlie whispered to Tom, “Phew! That was close!” They both had enough adventures for a day. Or a week.

THE END

EPILOGUE (Thirty-two years later)

“Catch the ball!” said Matthew to his friend James. His dad was Tom, the famous writer who wrote an amazing story about travelling to China with a push of a button. Suddenly, he discovered a strange machine on the bench. It was like a rectangular object with mysterious buttons. He felt extremely curious, and pressed one of the buttons...

The Cave's Cure

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Lai, Yau Chai – 10

“There was a cave far far away, where they kept those potions which can heal everything...” Great-Grandpa, one of the brave archaeologists to search the Mogao caves in the 1900's, would tell the story again and again to his great-grandkids, Daniel and Alex. The twins were still seven years old, and loved great-grandpa telling that story. They listened with awe when he did.

It was the summer holidays and Daniel was at home watching a film. When the vampires appeared, he covered his eyes and turned it off. He was scared of everything, even insects, and people in his class called him scaredy-cat. He was determined to change that, so he could be brave and people wouldn't call him names anymore. Then, he remembered that the potion in Great-grandpa's story can cure anything, which he believed included bravery, and that made him want to go on an adventure to the cave.

He asked his sister, Alex, who was very smart and wasn't easily scared, to go with him and to help him with the challenges that he would encounter on the way. Insects? Traps? He shivered at the thought of encountering these. His sister agreed, and as he thought, she made a checklist of what to bring because his sister was, well, too neat.

As they set off, they encountered a dark, misty wood with pairs of glowing orange shining through the bushes. Were these the eyes of strange creatures? Daniel didn't want to find out. They hurried on and took the other road and ended up using more than an hour to get back on track.

His sister scolded him, “You shouldn't be scared! They are just owls hiding from sunlight! If you weren't, we'd be on the mountains near the caves already!

Daniel sighed. He just couldn't help shivering. Again, they walked and walked and they reached the edge of a great canyon. The ground lay 1,000 metres below.

Alex said, “Another dead end! Let me choose the route from now on.” While dodging cliffs and trees, Daniel wondered how dangerous it was to drop down.

After what seemed to Daniel a month, he finally went to the top of the cliff and saw a hangbridge that took them to the other side, and down to the special yellowish-greystone brick wall of the caves.

Meanwhile, Alex was still struggling with going up because she didn't train parkour with Daniel. “Hey! Give me a hand.” she said.

Daniel sighed and pulled his sister up. He decided to rest before he went on the bridge. Looking down, he saw an amazing sight: tall trees with red leaves, grass making a plain for cows and sheep all lying in front of his eyes. He was amazed by the sight, and couldn't wait and see what was going to be in front of him.

He stepped tentatively on the planks of the bridge and he heard Alex shout, “Hey! Wait for me!” Daniel forgot that his sister had still been panting after the last attempt to climb the mountain.

Alex was puzzled. She asked, “I thought you'd be too frightened to cross!”

On the other side of the bridge, Daniel saw a high wall and a sign that said the caves were on top of the wall. The wall was at least 30 metres tall, and Daniel thought, How am I going to get up there?

He was about to turn around when his sister laughed and said, “If your great-grandfather managed it, you can too!” There was no way he'd let his sister beat him, so he raced up, using his excellent parkour skills to go as fast as he could, even though he was scared he would fall. Still, he continued, not mentioning slipping a few times and dangling on the wall. Finally, breathing as heavily as a cheetah on a hunt, he reached the top, while Alex was still halfway. He rested for a while, then remembering this was not a race, but his sister was just trying to help him to NOT be a scaredy-cat. So, he helped Alex up by helping her find secure footholds and holding her up.

When they got up, they ate two thirds of their remaining food, since they were very hungry and were almost at the caves.

Finally, they peered into the cave's mouth. Colourful tiles and golden Buddha statues adorned the walls. Dust filled the air, and silence echoed. A lever hung next to him. He thought the lever might activate some traps or actually, the way to the curing water. He backed up so far, he almost fell off the cliff. But then, his sister pulled the lever, and a part of the cave became a door. Daniel walked to his sister and this time, nothing could stop him. Water! There it was. It looked so cool and refreshing. Before he realised it, he was drinking the water but quickly stopped himself. No change yet.

Then, he realised: the water was not the cure, but the adventure was. He now understood what his great grandfather said, and they travelled back to their house. Going back was a lot easier than going out, because Daniel was no longer scared of the rocky climb or the rickety bridge, and the animals that lurked in the woods.

Finally, they got home. It took a while for Daniel's friends to get used to his new personality, and at last he understood that he had been really scared of a lot of things. Now, he was a lot more easy-going, and laughed more easily. And most importantly, his sister didn't tease him so much for being so silly.

The Mogao Mystery

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Ting, Tsz Woon – 11

The bright sun shines down on the rock floor. The tall mountains are full of lively green trees swaying in rhythm to the light breeze. In front of me is the most breathtaking structure I have ever seen, the Mogao Grottoes. The tall red building stands tall and proud, the maroon roofs with precise craftsmanship held up by poles. I glance at my watch that says 1074 AD. I can't help but feel puzzled about what disaster is going to strike this marvelous landscape.

Since you don't know what that means, I'll fill you in. I'm a time traveler, I get sent to different places and time periods against my will. Through my thousands of years of this, I've learned to retain my memory, and I've figured out the details. And no matter how drastic the places are from each other, there are two common threads: There is conflict, and I will die during it. I've been soldiers in wars, servants to kings, I was even a dinosaur when the asteroid caused dinosaurs to go extinct. I remember that one the most vividly, because it was the most terrifying: a gigantic ball of rock hurtling at you a billion miles per hour. It was a sense of inevitability and dread, to the point where the build-up was more painful than the impact since I knew what was going to happen.

I walk into the temple and am blown away by the beauty of the art in the caves. Paintings of men and women, though my attention is all on an alluring sculpture. It is a queen sitting on a deep black throne surrounded by guards draped in a cloth in a very attractive shade of turquoise. I am confused because there is no hint of conflict here, just peace and quiet. Especially because these places are for worshiping, and it's supposed to be quiet, and everything is normal. Trust me, sometimes dead silence is stranger than ear-hurting noises. But now, there's nothing off.

Then I hear something that makes my eyes widen to the size of plums. Speaking. The Buddhist monks that inhabit these caves are only allowed to speak 2 words every 100 years, and apparently I landed straight on the 100-mark. I can't hear it that well, but I hear "doom" and the monk says it in a very worried tone. I run to the sound, and they are taken aback by my presence. One of them physically flinches and falls to the ground. I see a monk with a worried expression on his face, brows furrowed.

"What's happening?" I ask. He leads me to a different room and points to the tapestry on the wall. It's a king sitting on a throne embedded with jewels, and there are monks under him. That's slightly weird, but nothing big. However, there is something that sets it apart. He's wielding a sword triumphantly, and on the tip of the blade is a monk.

"Attack us," the worried monk grumbles.

Almost on cue I hear blade slashing. A man with shoulder-length hair and a mustache busts in. He's identical to the man on the tapestry with a couple differences. I'm astonished, but he takes a glance at me and suddenly he is startled. "Who are you?"

"I could ask you the same question," I retaliated, staring at his blade warily.

"I am Jalauka, son of Ahsoka," he says. "I am the sworn enemy of the Mogao Monks. Now since you do not look like a monk, I shall spare you if you leave right now," he said with a stern face.

"Uhhhh—" I bolt out the exit, ushering the monks ahead of me. One of them takes the lead and guides me to a weapon room. I grab on to a staff, and start launching rocks at Jalauka. I hear a monk get his foot caught in a doorway and trip, then I hear the terrifying sound of Jalauka's guillotine-esque sword come down on the monk's neck with a loud scratching noise that makes my arm hair stand.

I lose track of time as I keep on sprinting. I don't know how long I've been running for, but it's definitely been a while because my thighs are getting sore. I start to lose focus until the scratching noise snaps me back to reality. I turn around, I see one of the monks limp, and another has the sword above him, ready to come crashing down. There's this feeling I can't put into words. I feel helpless, which is ironic because my job is to help people, but not only can I not help the monks, I need help.

Then suddenly, it's like time slows, as I make a split second decision. The feeling is that I've been running from Jalauka, when I should be protecting others from him. I'm ready to run until I remember my true purpose here: To

end conflict, and to die. I'm not supposed to live this battle. My duty, my job is to protect others, even though it costs me my life.

I jump—tackle Jalauka to buy me a couple seconds. I am ushering the monk to run before I die instantly with one swing. I don't know why it feels so different this time, I've done this over fifty times, so why am I getting emotional? What's so dissimilar? Maybe because I failed my job, letting two monks die already. Maybe it's because of how sudden it was this time, I only lasted an hour. Maybe it's because this place is so beautiful, and the fact that something so pretty has such a deep conflict already has me choked up. I don't know. But I do know that this will hit me harder, and cut deeper than the dinosaur one ever will. As I warp through a wormhole and I start my next journey, I feel a single tear roll down my cheek...

The Secrets of Old

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Wan, Yat Hei – 11

Gabrielle had been travelling through the sandy desert for more than three hours. She was hot, she was sweating, and twice she had seen mirages of a fountain. Gazing at the horizon, she saw an oasis.

Is it a mirage? She wondered as she trekked forward. The oasis was real! She drank a few ravenous gulps and peered at a dune a hundred metres away. Almost instantly, she knew that it was exactly what she had been looking for.

It was the opening of a small grotto. She stepped curiously onto the threshold. Inside was a cluster of Buddhist wall murals depicting different moments in Buddhism and shining bronze sculptures of the Buddha. She longed to take them back with him to a museum, but knew that it was illegal. Tearing her eyes from the statues, she glanced around. There were flaming torches mounted on the walls of the caves. Suddenly, an eerie voice made her jump.

“I am the ghost of the Mogao Caves. I am not forcing you to find its secrets. You may leave if you feel you do not want to.”

She started to struggle. Many generations of explorers before her had claimed that they had heard a disembodied voice before they vanished without a trace.

If I follow the voice, it may help me uncover the secrets here, but I may die. If I don't, I'll have come here for nothing. Easy choice, isn't it? She thought sarcastically. But eventually, her curiosity took over. With a rush of anticipation, she whispered, “Yes, I do!”

A map shot out of nowhere. Gabrielle pounced and caught it in mid-air. Unfurling the fragile piece of parchment, she saw a detailed picturing of the Grottoes and an arrow, leading her. At the bottom it said in tiny words: *Ultimus sum ad specus Mogao attingendum. Magno pretio labefaciet ac secreta velata.* She started walking in the direction of the arrow and suddenly she noticed something moving on the map. It was a pair of footsteps labelled Gabrielle Miyazaki.

“Wow!” she whispered, glowing with discovery, and moved on, checking the map every so often. She descended down intricately decorated stairs, past monumental illustrations, lit up by torches flaming on the walls, and twice she thought the human-like statues could move.

An hour later she arrived at a heavy emerald-and-ruby door. It was perched on the end of the map. She breathed. Through or back? If she went through she would discover the secret but be faced with dangers mankind had never seen before. Back she would be safe.

Hesitantly, she opened the door a crack. There seemed to be something glittering ominously at the end of the hall beyond. Taking a careful step forward, she started advancing— then heard footsteps echoing around the room. She looked backward but there was nobody. She stepped forward again and suddenly heard a hissing sound reverberating in the wide corridor. Glancing at her foot she jumped at the sight. Bright green acid was rapidly filling the hole her foot had created: a trapdoor. However, the acid level remained at ground level. She thought fast. It had been a piece of wood. Looking again, there were lots of these wooden tiles paving the ground, while stone pieces formed a line at the perimeter of the hall. She quickly ran to the side, the floor disintegrated behind her: but she had made the stone path. She tread carefully, for the track was narrow. Her head bumped softly against something. There, right in front of her, was another door.

She opened the door. Light suddenly flooded the room to reveal thousands of rusty metal pieces strewn across the floor. She sprinted forward but the next door was locked. Apparently they were keys. She glanced up: the lock had patterns of sparks on it. She started searching feverishly. Suddenly she jumped: the clinking of keys had stopped, for everything had vanished! Her heart thumping, she looked down: she had trodden on a key with patterns of fire on it! Instantly she sprinted forward and the door burst open at her touch.

There was no door. Instead, a portrayal of a glowing, fiery phoenix opened its beak and said, voice thundering, “Deliver the code.”

Gabrielle whipped out the map but it was gone.

However, being the careful person she was, she had memorised the password. Calmly she whispered, “Ultimus sum ad specus Mogao attingendum. Magno pretio labefaciet ac secreta velata.”

The wall cracked in the middle, splitting the phoenix. Then the two halves slid, with an ominous hiss, aside.

The Chamber of Treasures was nothing like Gabrielle had thought, even beyond her wildest dreams. Pile upon pile of diamonds, rubies, and glittering stones lay in mounds. The wall was decorated with trails of jade and bronze, giving her an impression of a giant wearing a necklace.

But she only had eyes for the ancient documents that lay in the centre of the room. She reached for it just when the reek of gunpowder drifted towards her.

“Don’t you move,” said a gruff voice.

She revolved slowly on the spot. Behind her stood a man with bulging muscles and hideous tattoos, holding a gun that was pointed at her heart.

Suddenly she understood: It had been this robber all along, luring her into the depths of the cells and ambushing her. It had been him, the ‘ghost’ who had taken her here.

The robber stopped abruptly as a huge chunk of rubble descended from the ceiling and exploded. He gave a howl of rage and started running as the heavens collapsed upon them. Gabrielle seized the documents and charged for the doors. Behind her came a scream.

She charged out past the key-room, past the hall of acid, past the doors and up the stairs, jumping steps that exploded as the ceiling crumbled, trusting her sense of direction—

She burst out into the sunlight, just in time. The sands below gave a mighty groan as the Mogao Caves were buried forever.

The Last Stand of the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Wong, Long Hei Adrian – 10

Huang Gao was a governor of the Tang Dynasty. He achieved this by ranking in the first place of the Tang Imperial Examination. He progressed through the ranks until he became the Governor of Gansu Province.

The Tang Dynasty was weakening in power. They had lost Mongolia and retreated out of Korea. But the Umayyad Caliphate was growing stronger by the day. They had just beaten the Byzantine Empire in the war between them. The Caliphate had taken the great city of Constantinople, and controlled the Bosphorus. They went on to take protectorates of the Tang Dynasty and expanded their influence.

One day, the Tang Dynasty received a piece of intelligence from a spy: the Caliphate was arming men along their border! The Emperor ordered that troops be sent to Gansu province and fortify the area. However, the Dynasty was low on manpower and they couldn't send any more soldiers. Despite this, Huang Gao chose to defend against the Muslims at the Mogao Grottoes. He was scared: he only had a small force of a thousand men but the Muslims could call on men from Anatolia to Tibet! He thought, "the Mogao Grottoes is a good place to defend because his soldiers could hide in the caves, and I have the high ground to put my archers."

Not long after, the Muslims arrived. They faced wooden barricades, high wooden towers, and a stone curtain wall. The Muslims decided to siege down the Grottoes, as they thought they had far more numbers. Huang Gao thought, "I have far fewer men and less grain! I may most likely lose this battle. But I will never give up!"

Some soldiers tried to debate against Huang Gao. They said "There is no way that we will win this battle! We have far too little of a force to combat the enemy!"

Huang Gao replied with "If you are so scared, go ahead and escape! The art and literature here is just too ancient and valuable to be thrown away with that decision. Besides, if we run like cowards, the enemy will continue after us and invade China. They will massacre our families, the peasants, and the nobles! We have to hold this point!" The soldiers were convinced, and they never refuted Huang Gao's commands again.

At the Muslim camp, the main General of the Muslim army, Callid, an old, wise commander, decided to starve out the Chinese. However, An Shidi, a young, reckless, eager-for-glory General, wanted to take the grottoes in a swift charge. Callid said, "We should just let the Chinese starve to death!"

An Shidi shouted, "No! That's too slow, we need to act fast to take charge of the Grottos!"

"Who is the commander here, Shidi? Starve them and we will win this battle! Just do what I say!" Callid roared back.

However, the Muslim army made more siege weapons to siege down the Grottoes. An Shidi was not planning to follow Callid's plans. An Shidi planned a surprise invasion of the Mogao Grottoes at night with an army of Muslims that were loyal to him. They readied some ladders to climb up the stone walls of the Grottoes.

Huang Gao had no idea when the Muslims would attack. He trained the soldiers he had, and commanded the infantry to hide in the caves of the Grottoes, while his archers patrolled the walls every night and day. There just simply weren't enough soldiers to assign to him. He equipped his soldiers with the best equipment available, and sent some soldiers to farm for food. He was scared, scared that after the Grottoes had fallen, it would make way for the Umayyads to conquer the entirety of China!

That night, the Muslim soldiers climbed the ladders and up onto the walls. The Chinese archers began to call for more help from the sleeping Chinese soldiers. All the while, they tried to push down the ladders so no one could climb up the walls. Huang Gao heard the call, then ordered his soldiers to fight back the Muslims, and personally fought with his men. He yelled "Men! Let us stand in the face of danger; put up resistance against these dogs; Die as heroes and be remembered forever!

Men that had never witnessed such bloodshed had to fight. Chaos was everywhere. Huang Gao thought: This is pointless! Why must the enemy fight for territory, which is non-living, and sacrifice for it with human lives?

The attack was relentless. As time went on, the soldiers crowded near the walls and fought for victory. The Chinese couldn't hold back the Muslims anymore so they retreated to the inner part of the caves. Arrows rained overhead, the sound of swords colliding filled echoed all around the caves, and men were everywhere. As the Chinese retreated, the Muslims became a horde that only aimed to take the grottoes.

As the Muslims climbed up the slopes of the caves, more Chinese soldiers came out and fought. Seeing this, the Muslims panicked and tried to fight back, but the Chinese had swiftly encircled them in one maneuver. Huang Gao saw An Shidi and began to duel with him.

The duel became a dance of swords. As one General struck his sword out, the other stepped back and dodged. The Generals moved side to side, ready to lash out a flurry of strikes against the opponent. After a while, An Shidi lost the duel and fled. The Muslim soldiers saw their General flee and also routed and started to escape. The retreating Muslim army withdrew from the siege, and ran back to their home base.

Huang Gao was happy and ecstatic. He had successfully defended the Mogao Grottoes and the art and literature inside it!

He went on to train up more soldiers, as he believed that the Muslim army would return again. The soldiers rejoiced, as they had won against a major power. But they too knew that the day would come when they must fight once more.

The Emerald Spike

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chan, Yuen Kay – 12

“We’ll never find it!” cried Annie.

A lace of clouds masked the gibbous moon at midnight in winter solstice. The biting breeze with an arid smell of the desert froze Lisa Watson, Annie Jenkins and Mike Hunter to the bone. They stared at the ancient Mogao Grottoes— dancing on the cliff with its body as a nine-storey wooden temple, with its arms stretching over 1500 meters long, with its eyes: 735 grottoes facing East. Cold sweat was trickling down their back as they needed to look for the lost bunny in Mogao Grottoes.

The rosy toy bunny was bought in the morning during their history field trip, but Annie had misplaced it in one of the caves.

“Calm down Annie, just try harder,” murmured Mike.

Instead, Lisa, being indifferent, took out a mirror to check on her make-up. Annie’s mouth twisted into a snarl toward Lisa. No sooner had they heard a screeching sound from cave 158 than they tiptoed inside. A 15.6m long Buddha sculpture was sleeping across the whole hall. Annie frightened, collapsing in a heap.

“LOOK!” roared Mike, a bookworm crazy for Chinese History. “A Nirvana Buddha was constructed during Tang dynasty! I kn—”

“Shut up!” interrupted Lisa.

They looked at where Lisa was pointing.

“My bunny!” jumped Annie.

Not until Annie lifted up the bunny did she realize a strange tunnel, leading to somewhere mysterious...

Bang! A body was lying on the floor. It was the stubborn Mike. His head hit the cave 736.

“Why 736? Aren't there only 735 caves? questioned Annie.

‘AH! My bunny is glowing?’ howled Annie.

BOOM! Rosy mist cropped up. The bunny vanished in thin air...

A mysterious, tall, old-fashioned man stood before their eyes. He was wearing an amber-yellow robe with a dragon symbol, covering himself with a charcoal cape, putting on a vermilion hat dangling with nine emerald spikes, but one was missing. Mike freaked out. He was the Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty!

The Emperor looked at them, without a squeak. A piece of torn paper was swinging down...

Find my lost Emerald Spike from her, shone

at the first daylight

of the longest night.

To my original life,

I might return,

and you shall leave unconcerned.

If you fail,
Mogao Grottoes won't be alive,
And none will survive.

“That means tonight—the longest night of the winter solstice. We have to find the emerald spike. Or we will die!” Mike stuttered.

“NO!” Lisa shrieked, turning to Annie. “IF YOU HADN’T LOST YOUR BUNNY, WE WON’T HAVE BEEN HERE!”

Lisa and Annie started howling.

“You’re selfish! Only care about making-up with your dumb mirror!” Annie exclaimed, snatching Lisa’s pouch, dumping her mirror on the ground.

Lisa shivered with anger and stomped away.

“WAIT!” yelled Mike...

Annie and Mike were completely clueless at where to start. Mike focused on the murals: the rich were dancing in the fragrant banquets; warriors were galloping in the battles; monks were murmuring in the Buddhist chant.

On the other side, Annie stumbled upon the change of the sculpture colours. Before Tang Dynasty, pale was the colour that faded out secretly. During the glory of Tang Dynasty, vivid was the hue that made the caves glow. After Tang Dynasty, dull was the shade that marked its decay.

The more caves they saw, the more dizziness they felt. They started seeing moving murals and sculptures—fairy maidens flying above their heads, the crowd chatting with them, musicians performing arts. Mike and Annie thought they were going insane!

“We’re never going to find it!” grumbled Mike. “We have been searching hundreds of caves! It’s almost dawn. We couldn’t even see the shadow of the emerald spike!”

Mike shocked Annie. He had never given up easily.

“Calm down Mike, just try harder,” comforted Annie.

Suddenly, they bumped into a body. It was Lisa, standing inside cave 96—the nine-storey wooden temple.

“Lisa!” hugged Mike with his short arms.

“Follow me,” said Lisa. “The emerald spike is here.”

A 35.5m high Buddha, as tall as Mount Everest, was sitting in front of them. The biggest Buddha sculpture was built by Empress Wu Zetian. Gazing at the Buddha, Mike shuddered at the thought of her evil deeds in history.

The emerald was between her eyebrows. Annie thought only Lisa could find it because makeup was her basic instinct. Annie wanted to thank Lisa but she had already climbed up the Buddha. Shortly after reaching her shoulder, Lisa silently took out two lipsticks and STABBED into her eyes. The Buddha roared, and turned into the real, ruthless Empress Wu Zetian! In a fraction of a second, Lisa pulled the emerald off and tried to escape. Unfortunately, Empress Wu caught Lisa’s neck, and shot out a blaze of fire from her mouth. Annie and Mike trembled.

“NO!” they wailed.

All left was Lisa’s pouch. The emerald spike hit the ground with a ding sound. Annie’s hot tears were pouring down her cheeks.

A light of dawn seeped into the cave.

“ANNIE! WE DON’T HAVE MUCH TIME!” shouted Mike. Mike dragged Annie out of the cave. If they didn’t make it on time, Mogao Grottoes would shatter into pieces.

Mike and Annie took to their heels with torn shoes.

A glimmer of light pierced through the top window into the cave 736. The Emperor Taizong was still waiting for them. Annie immediately put the emerald spike to the place.

“We did it!” Mike exclaimed.

Nothing happened.

“Shine the light to the emerald,” yelled Annie. But the daylight wasn’t shining upon the emerald. “Use the mirror to reflect the light!” Annie commanded. Mike passed her the “dumb” mirror from Lisa’s pouch, holding back his boiling tears.

BOOM! Rosy flashes engulfed the cave.

Mike and Annie appeared outside cave 96. They found Lisa was alive. Annie saw the Buddha become a statue again. Everything returned to normal. Mike and Lisa were leaving.

“Wait for me,” chased Annie, grasping the rosy bunny and the mirror.

A Lesson To Remember

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chong, Yi Sum Mary – 11

The morning sun rays broke over the horizon. May rubbed her blurry eyes and jumped excitedly like a puppy. She had been waiting for this moment for donkey's years. It was the first time she was going on a school field trip. There were still three hours before the trip began but May was already wide awake and in her seventh heaven.

When May arrived at the campsite, her classmates started laughing at her, "Who would ever wear such a baggy, old t-shirt on a field trip? May would!" Short-tempered May, offended by her classmates, stalked off furiously, muttering. No sooner had May gone into the Mogao Grottoes, a magnificent treasure trove of Buddhist art, than she found herself lost in an unfamiliar place, alone.

May's stomach was gripped with anxiety and apprehension, like a volcano erupting inside of her. She desperately tried to find her way back, but she couldn't. May looked around the new environment and started exploring in the caves.

The wandering wore May out. Her hands hung by her side like noodles and her legs could no longer support her. No sooner had May decided to flop on the filthy floor than something caught her eyes.

A dazzling and aesthetic sculpture winked at May and greeted her with a gracious smile, whispering to her to come forward and take a look. May was stunned by the beauty of the sculpture and inch by inch, her body was drawn to the sculpture like a magnet. Little did May know, a memorable lesson was awaiting her.

May was absorbed in the sculpture. It was fascinating how the details were drawn and every image in the sculpture organised itself into little stories about a person. Then May noticed that person move. She stepped back immediately and felt the heebie-jeebies in her body. The person moved from right to left, and then towards May. May wanted to run away but her legs were shivering. All of a sudden, the person jumped out of the sculpture and stood right in front of May. May jumped out of her skin and shook like a leaf. She screamed.

"Don't be afraid, May. I am Siddhārtha Gautama, also known as Buddha Shakyamuni. You are in The Thousand-Buddha Caves. Buddhist monks made this place because they saw a vision of me above the cliffs." While Gautama was gently talking to May like an angel, the surroundings changed in the blink of an eye. The cave was crowded with pilgrims of Gautama all over the world. They heavily engaged themselves in worshipping Gautama, creating sacred art and literature of him in the cave.

May was astonished and eventually able to ask, "What? How do you know my name? Am I dreaming?"

"Young lady, you are not dreaming. I am here to punish you. And how do I know your name? Well, I know everything, which is also why I know that you have violated the precepts of not lying and stealing of Buddhism, at a total of nine hundred and eighty-nine times. Sinners should go to hell."

"But I don't want to—" May moaned.

"But you don't want to go to hell," Gautama finished her sentence. May nodded in fear. "I knew you would say that, so I will give you one chance. After all, one of my teachings is showing kindness. True to my word, I will show kindness to you and you may not suffer in hell."

"Yesterday, you lied to your parents and acted against a precept of Buddhism—" Gautama said and formed a bubble shape with his hands. In the bubble were her grumpy parents. "If you don't want to go to hell, you have to enter this bubble and—"

"Please don't!" May pleaded like a poor beggar.

"There is no choice," Gautama said, "you will either suffer in hell or face your worst nightmare. Now, go in there, do not lie like you did yesterday, and be quick, before I change my mind of sparing you!"

May sighed. She knew that she must bite the bullet. She closed her eyes and jumped inside the bubble. She opened her eyes. In front of her were her parents screaming their heads off.

"May, for the hundredth time, come back home before five o'clock in the afternoon!" her father roared like a hungry lion.

“May, oh May! Listen to your father, please! We were so worried about you! Where have you been so long?” her mother wailed like a maniac.

“I—” May hesitated. She knew that if she told the truth, her parents would go ballistic, but if she lied to them, it would be the end of her. She let the words slip out of her mouth, “I went to Kitty’s house.”

“Kitty’s house? Again? May, this is—” her mother’s voice was now as loud as thunder. It was as if she had swallowed a microphone.

May closed her eyes. A gust of wind blew May back to the Mogao Grottoes and then she was face to face with Gautama.

“What did you learn?” The question suddenly popped out of Gautama’s mouth. May looked puzzled. Gautama continued, “May, lying isn’t just about going to hell. The direct consequence of your lying is that your relationship with your parents will be broken.”

“Look at this,” Gautama pointed at one sculpture. “That was when I said: Honesty is always one of the best keys to make a good relationship. May, remember this and don’t make me see you lie again.” Then Gautama vanished into thin air.

May turned around and saw Gautama sitting with a smile in the sculpture. May touched the sculpture and said, “And since you know everything, can you tell me how to get out of here?” Silence greeted her question. May went out of the caves and looked.

“May!” her friends ran towards her like bunnies and hugged her. “Where were you?”

“In the Mogao Grottoes.”

A Mysterious Date with The Buddha

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chow, Cherlin – 10

Darkness settled over the dunes, with the stillness that accompanies silence. A spirited wind coursed through the Mogao caves, leaving sand in its wake. Millennia passed. Over time, sand filled every crevice, and the wind howled no more.

Until the year 1900, the caves were well-buried. It was thus pure luck when a monk named Xijin rediscovered them. On this night, Xijin was left behind by his peers as they traipsed over dunes, towards a warm fire and hearty supper. Although Xijin was a monk, his heart belonged to archaeology. On this trek, he was determined to find hidden caves in the region. Legend said the caves had been visited by Buddha himself!

Clutching his belongings, he squeezed himself through a promising gap between two rocks.

As he stepped into the space, the entrance collapsed, leaving him in darkness. Briefly bewildered, his instincts kicked in and he rummaged in his bag. Coughing, he lit his torch and gasped in amazement. Slowly, he traced the light along walls covered in magnificent Buddhist artwork that had not been seen in millennia. The walls were covered in intricate murals. They told vivid stories of ancient times when people worshipped the Buddha. The vibrant images brought history to life.

With a start, Xijin remembered that he was trapped in the cave with few supplies. He could not remember his last meal. Suddenly, his stomach lurched, but not from hunger. An earthquake shook the walls of the cave. Rocks tumbled down and one particularly large one struck him on the head. Xijin fell to the ground in a crumpled heap, unconscious.

Groaning, Xijin opened his eyes. He could not see! His breath quickened. He realised that his head was sore, his vision blurred, and his torch had long-since flickered out. Over the sound of his heart drumming in his chest, threatening to break through his ribs, he gingerly squeezed his way out from under the stones that had fallen.

A shimmering, indistinct light appeared in his vision, and he heard a voice say, “Xijin, The Great Buddha wants to see you. Begin walking West, towards the light. You will find what you seek in that direction.”

Xijin gasped at the voice, which washed over him like icy water, chilling his bones. Was he hallucinating? He touched the painful lump on his head thoughtfully and winced. Standing on shaky legs, he decided he had nothing to lose. Despite barely being able to see, he followed the fuzzy glow. He often stumbled and fell, grabbing the walls to support and guide him. Following the light became a meditation in and of itself. Nothing else mattered, except reaching the destination.

Abruptly, the twinkling light began to fade, and panic set in. Blinking in puzzlement, his heart slowed when he realised the surroundings had not darkened. His eyes widened when he realised that the temple was lit by the Great Buddha’s body, himself! Xijin stood, dumbfounded, with his mouth hanging open. He pinched his arm and the Great Buddha smiled benignly at his astonishment. Then, he spoke.

“Xijin, I bestow upon you the honour of being the one to tell the world about these caves. You, my special one, have discovered the Mogao Caves, filled with long-lost art and precious literature. You will spread the word to worshippers, to appreciate the history of Buddhism, and to provide a place where the previous generations’ hard work and talents will receive respect forevermore. Do as I say, and you shall be rewarded.”

Xijin stared at the Buddha, and replied, his voice quavering, “Great Buddha, I will do as you command me. However, I am but a mere monk, and I have lost my vision. Oh, what I would not do to be able to see your divine presence!” Xijin’s eyes filled with tears. When he wiped them away, his vision had miraculously returned! He thanked Buddha profusely for his benevolence.

Xijin, now able to see, could not stop staring at his surroundings. He stood at the feet of a colossal Buddha figure, larger than any he had ever seen. Xijin trembled in awe as he paused at its base, staring at the marvellous workmanship. He moved further into the holy space, admiring the fine architectural details that covered the ceiling and walls of this sacred temple.

All around, there were life-sized sculptures of Buddhas and monks, each exquisitely carved from their eyebrows right down to their toenails. Their expressions, too, were delicate, each one different from the next. Xijin could not stop admiring the divine craftsmanship that had created these splendid masterpieces.

He lowered his torch and uttered a cry of delight, spotting piles of ancient books, documents and literature scattered around the room. Reaching down, Xijin was soon engrossed in the long-lost manuscripts. He smiled at the fluttering pages, imagining the faces of his peers when he told them of his discoveries. With a jolt, he realised he had turned his back to The Great Buddha. He stood quickly and noted the Buddha patiently watching him uncover the caves' marvels. With joy, Xijin said, "Oh, Great One, I will do as you command, and spread the word about these wondrous caves and their treasures within!"

The Great Buddha nodded and declared, "For honouring this place, you shall be granted the power of levitation." Xijin stared at The Great Buddha with incredulity. He felt his body lighten. His view drifted downwards to see his feet lifting off the dusty floor. He was, indeed, levitating! His eyelids fluttered, and Xijin fainted from shock.

A bright, dusty band of sunlight shone through the window onto Xijin, revealing that he was no longer in the cave. He was safe in his room, surrounded by a myriad of hushed voices. As he regained consciousness, his memories floated hazily to the forefront of his mind, causing him to come alert. He looked down and saw that he lay, floating, above his bed.

It had not been a dream after all.

The Buddha's Calling

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chung, Hei Kiu Osanna – 11

The night was cold and dark and the monastery was quiet. The only sound was the rustle of robes when Shifu patrolled the rows of cells, making sure all the young monks were asleep.

“Come on,” whispered Shangkung to Jetchi, the only friend he managed to acquire in his years of monk life.

“Shh, Shifu is coming our way,” Jetchi hissed. The two young monks flattened themselves against the wall and crept along it, carefully avoiding the path of Shifu.

“Follow me,” Shangkung put a finger to his lips and crouched low. He moved swiftly through the labyrinth of dormitories and halted at the kitchens. He can see the large entrance of the monastery.

“What are you doing? Go before Shifu finds out we’re gone!” Jetchi urged him.

“Alright.”

The two boys sneaked out of the monastery, eager to enjoy their newfound freedom.

Shangkung still couldn't believe that he managed to escape the monastery. He was very happy with his freedom now. “Rascal!” He heard the street vendor yell behind him in fury. Shangkung laughed out loud, knowing that the vendor wouldn't be able to catch him in the crowd and bit into the steaming, sweet red bean bun he had stolen.

Shangkung ran through the busy streets of LuoYang and ducked into an alleyway, while Jetchi was sitting cross legged on a broken straw mat on the dirty ground.

“How was lunch?” asked Shangkung, licking his lips for a last taste of the delicious bun.

“I ate pork for the first time,” Jetchi said, grinning.

Shangkung returned the smile and lay down on the straw mat beside Jetchi. He closed his eyes and defied the white-hot glare of the afternoon sun. Gradually, Shangkung fell asleep amidst the bustling sounds of the city. He dreamed. There was a massive, golden staircase that led to the skies, Shangkung let his eyes wander up the steps and saw a huge Buddha sitting high amidst the clouds. Immediately, he knelt down reverently, his palms and forehead touching the ground.

“Rise, Shangkung,” a deep, calming voice reverberated from the skies.

“Oh, great Buddha, why have you called me?” Shangkung asked, awed by the Buddha's presence.

“I want you and your friend Jetchi to journey immediately to the west, where you will find a special oasis. Provide shelter for future travelers and I shall bless you,” the Buddha commanded.

“Majestic Buddha, I obey you,” Shangkung replied.

“Beware of the dangers of the journey, young monk,” the Buddha warned before Shangkung woke up.

“Jetchi!” Shangkung shook his friend awake.

“What?” Jetchi said drowsily.

“Get up! The Buddha spoke to me, we have to journey west to an oasis,” Shangkung said, impatient.

“Don't be silly, let me sleep,” Jetchi protested.

“Fine! I'll go without you!” Shangkung said angrily, stood up and walked away.

“Wait, Shangkung, I'm coming with you,” Jetchi called out after a moment.

Shangkung smiled to himself and said to his friend, “Well, hurry up! We have a journey to go on!”

“Are you sure we’re going in the right direction? All I see is sand,” Jetchi complained.

“We’re going in the right way. The sun is setting in front of us, see?” Shangkung pointed at the ball of fire that was sinking into the sand dunes.

“What’s that?” Jetchi nudged Shangkung. Shangkung stared at the horizon, a brown stripe that wasn’t there a moment ago was eating up the sky by each second.

“I don’t know,” Shangkung replied worriedly. “Get behind that tree.”

Shangkung crouched behind a scraggly branch and, on a better thought, tied himself to it with a strip of cloth. In a few heartbeats, the desert became a ferocious monster, sand and stones were flying in every direction, Shangkung squeezed his eyes shut and covered his face with his sleeve. He knew he was going to die; he just wished his death would be quick. By some miracle, when Shangkung finally opened his eyes, everything was still again but the landscape had changed a lot. Shangkung stood up and shook off the sand on his clothes, his arms covered in small scratches of red.

“Jetchi!” he shouted. “Jetchi, where are you?”

“Jetchi!” Shangkung called again, desperate.

“Shangkung,” a deep, calm voice said, it seemed to be coming from above.

“Jetchi?” Shangkung asked, but he knew it wasn’t Jetchi.

“Jetchi is dead, young monk,” the voice said again.

“Buddha, help me!” Shangkung cried, threw himself to his knees and gazed up to the skies, tears rolling down his face.

“Continue your way, Shangkung, I will bless you,” the Buddha replied serenely.

Shangkung wiped away his tears and staggered along the desert, with the pain and grief of losing his only friend weighing down his heart.

“Welcome to my humble abode,” Shangkung said to the man who looked so tired he might faint.

“Thank you for offering me shelter. I am forever in your debt,” the man replied gratefully. Shangkung laid out a straw mat for the man to sleep on and left the room or more accurately, cave.

Shangkung went back to his own room and knelt by the small statue of buddha at the corner. He began to pray, meditating in his own world.

“Shangkung,” he suddenly heard a voice penetrate his meditation.

“Jetchi?” he asked, recognizing his friend’s voice immediately.

“Hello, my friend,” said Jetchi.

“It’s been four years since you passed. How are you still here?” Shangkung asked, surprised and elated.

“I’ve been reborn as a spirit, Shangkung, and I’ve committed my soul to this oasis. Whoever passes near will be guided here by me and if they meditate here, they will have their chi become purer and more powerful,” Jetchi explained.

“I’m so glad to have your presence here, Jetchi,” Shangkung said.

And so, more and more travellers find shelter at this sacred place and they meditate and worship the Buddha in this hallowed spot we now know as the Mogao Grottoes.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Ho, Ava Ho – 10

As my footsteps echoed along the concrete floors of the British Museum, my eyes flitted across 50,000 manuscripts and scrolls containing ancient wisdom, handwritten manuscripts of the Tripitaka and I was mesmerised by the ancient wisdom being showcased in the Mogao Grottoes Exhibition. However, I felt an inexplicable sadness weighing down on my heart.

From across the room, the words 書經 lit up mysteriously, I approached the legendary Shang Shu. The scroll scintillated, as if it wanted me to touch it. My heart beat louder every second I stepped closer to it, my hand stretched towards the enchanted scroll. A cold tingling touched my fingertips and I pulled my hand back in fright.

I was too late. In a bolt of lightning, my world turned white and I was sucked into a spinning void.

Year 700.

I struggled to open my eyes, but I immediately gasped when I realized that I was in a place filled with sand and stones until I figured that I was standing before the legendary Mogao Grottoes. It was clear that I had arrived during a period where Buddhism was flourishing and Dunhuang reached its creative peak.

A kindly-looking monk approached me and bowed. "Do not be afraid. I am YueZun. This is our heritage. Impressive?"

I nodded eagerly.

"What you saw in the British Stein Museum has already been taken away from the Mogao Grottoes, from you and from the Chinese people. These cultural artefacts have already lived for nearly a thousand years." The monk looked downhearted.

My heart felt heavy. "Monk YueZun? Please, tell me how I can help!"

A warm smile stretched across his face. "You are courageous, young one." His smile immediately vanished from his face, "First, prevent Kashgar from destroying the caves. Second, stop Abbot Wang, the traitor who sold Shang Shu and other precious artefacts to other countries. Hold onto the ShangShu in your hands tight, and you shall time travel to the future."

I pressed both hands together as in prayer and performed a small bow, but when I stood upright again, Yuzun disappeared. I held up the magical scroll in my hands tight, in a flash of light, I was pulled into the blinding white portal.

Year 1006.

I gasped in horror when I stood in the very same spot before the Mogao Grottoes, but this time, everything was chaos.

"Help! Help! The nearby Buddhist kingdom of Khotan had fallen to Kashgar! And we are next!"

"Stop!" I cried, catching the attention of the panicking crowd.

Everyone looked stunned and stood frozen to the spot.

"Come on! We haven't a moment to lose! Who is with me?"

"I am !" came a brave voice. "Me, too!"

Together, with thousands of Buddhist monks, we constructed clay out of sand and water, then sealed the caves to prevent it from being raided, destroyed by the Islamic conquerors.

Satisfied, I touched the scroll once more and was pulled into a time void.

Year 1907.

I blinked furiously, I heard soft snores rose from what looked like the shadow of a bed. Was I in someone's chambers? Why, of course! Abbot Wang's!

"WAKE UP!" I barked, stomping my way over towards him, "I have a grave message for you from the past, present and future!"

Abbot Wang bolted up right with terror. He was about to call for his guards, when I put my hand onto his mouth and shoved the glowing scroll in his face to silence him.

"Hold your tongue!" I continued. "You are the discoverer of the hidden Library Cave, one of the greatest discoveries of all time, aren't you not?"

Abbot Wang whimpered and nodded meekly.

"Then, how *dare* you even consider selling these priceless, precious pieces of our history for a few gold coins?" my voice raised in a scream.

"But... but...I didn't..."

"Oh, don't you but me! I know that you are in talks with British archaeologist, Aurel Stein, and that you're considering selling Shang Shu for a handsome sum!"

The man covered his pale face with his hands and wept with shame.

But my heart was not moved. "China's heart aches because of your greed. If you hadn't been so much of a gold-digger, our statues, ornaments, silks, and invaluable manuscripts that contain the very history of China wouldn't be on display in the British Stein Museum in 2021!"

"Wha-what?" stuttered the bewildered man.

"You heard what I said," Narrowing my eyes and prodding him in the chest with my index finger, I rebuffed, "Mark my words, you had better think twice before your thinking of handing over these treasure to French explorer, Paul Pelliot in the summer of 1911 and Russian explorer, Sergei F. Oldenburg in 1914."

"Yes, madam..." Abbot Wang cowered, mumbling, "S-sorry..."

"So stop betraying your people by selling the stolen Magao art, PROTECT THEM!"

"O-Of course ! I'll give you my word."

I maintained my stern gaze until the very last moment before vanishing and hurtling forward in present time.

Year 2022.

I swept my gaze across the Mogao Grotto exhibit once more and a smile stretched across my face as most of the artefacts were missing.

"I guess Abbot Wang did keep the promise, then!"

But it still bothered me that there are still some remaining chinese artefacts in the museum. I frowned while sighing in sadness.

My eyes lit up. Of course! I would write a letter to The British Museum Director, Hartwig Fischer and to him to return the remaining artefacts to China and restore the Mogao Grottoes. I have also learnt that it is important to preserve our heritage at all costs and we should feel pride for our history !

The Quest

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Ho, Ming Shum Anna – 9

It was the start of the summer holidays, and my parents were packing for the trip to the Mogao Grottoes in China. I was so excited and didn't help my parents pack at all. After the plane trip, I rushed off the plane like a speeding bullet. Suddenly, a gush of hot air slapped my face and I started to choke and cough as I accidentally inhaled a breath of dust. It was very hot! Even though the walk to the mountains was hot and tedious, it was worth it. My jaw dropped as I stared at the magnificent temple.

I sniggered a bit as I saw that the door handle was a ridiculous dragon head with a hook through its nose. My mother's brow furrowed in anger.

"Honey, don't do that! It's rude to the ancestors and it is not nice to laugh at it," she lectured me. I rolled my eyes childishly and ignored her. However, I felt queer as I touched the handle, almost as if it was sending an electric shock up my arm. After that, I was reluctant to go into the temple, while my little sister, Charlotte, was practically bursting out of her skin.

I shivered a bit as I stepped into the dark and scary temple. I pretended to be very interested in the floor, but I simply couldn't ignore the call of my sister.

"Hey, Anna! Come and look at this picture!" I finally looked up from the floor and looked at what my sister was so interested in. Indeed, the picture was very funny. It was a picture of a very fat emperor sitting on his throne, sneering at some prisoners begging for mercy. I couldn't help but giggle. However, as I did that, the emperor seemed to stare at me and his eyes started to glow. Before I could even scream, me and my sister got sucked into the picture!

When I opened my eyes again, I saw that I was in a begging position, and in front of me was the emperor I saw in the picture! Next to me, Charlotte was also shivering with fear.

"Bow before me!" yelled the emperor. "Either death, or save Li Bai from the horrible dragon in the mountains. He went to the mountains to get inspiration, when he carelessly dropped into a pit with the famous dragon inside. "

"Li Bai...?" I murmured. Li Bai was long gone! Unless...

"Yes, Li Bai! Are your ears stuffed with cotton? Or are you still stuck in the 4th century? This is already the 7th century!" the Emperor fumed.

"Y-y-y-y-yes, your Majesty!" I stammered. Making the emperor angry was the last thing I wanted.

Pulling my sister's hand, I hurried towards the exit.

"Wait!"

I turned my head around, and saw that the emperor was holding an old scroll.

"This map will guide you and lead you to the mountains," said the emperor.

"Well, good luck!"

I took the map and thanked him. Then, without turning back, I went out of the palace and began searching for Li Bai.

I found out that there was a test. I needed to go through the Cave of Temptations. Lastly, I had to, well, what else? Battle the dragons.

I went into the Cave of Temptations. I read the instructions on the map carefully, and found out that I had to go through the cave and retrieve the Sword of Justice, while not touching any other treasures. Easy! I thought. I had no interest whatsoever in treasure. However, it was much harder than I thought it would be. One thing was that Charlotte was so fascinated in an amethyst necklace that she would not continue. The second thing was that even I was reluctant to leave a magnificent sapphire amulet.

Taking a deep breath, I dragged Charlotte towards the exit. There, I saw a sword lying on the floor. The Sword of Justice! I gasped and picked up the sword. It shined brightly and gave me courage.

I took a very deep breath. I told Charlotte to stay there and continued walking to battle the dragons. My palms were cold and clammy, and my heart was beating as fast as a cheetah running. Besides, I had my weapons to protect me—

“Roarrrrrrrr!!!!!!!!!!!!”

The blood in my veins froze and I didn’t want to venture any further. But, I wanted to find a way to get back to my parents and save me and Charlotte from death.

I bravely went out of the exit and out into the sunlight. I saw Li Bai trapped in a cage and an emerald green dragon guarding him. It was the dragon with its face as a door handle that I laughed at! I tried to creep around the dragon and slay it from behind, but I stepped on a twig and made a loud crunching noise. Upon spotting me, the dragon began charging at me

“Hey! Dragon! Look over here!”

I saw that the one who called was Charlotte! The dragon heard her and whipped its head around. I took the chance and jumped onto its back and slayed the dragon.

As soon as the dragon dropped down dead, the cage opened and Li Bai was free! He thanked us and began to recite one of his famous poems – Quiet Night Thought.

I suddenly began to spin and found myself on the plane!

I learned not to make fun of our ancestors’ traditions and respect them even though you might think it is silly. Instead, we should think that the ancestors’ traditions are very special and inspiring and always respect them. This journey was exciting, yet scary, but I enjoyed it very much!

A Spine-chilling Mystery – Revealed

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Jap, Hoi Man Catherine – 10

The navy blue carpet spread wide and the blazing sun cast its golden rays on the land. Mustard yellow sand extended across the land for miles and miles, but the striking building that caught people's attention was Mogao Grottoes. The maroon poles of the temple, the curly top at the end of each roof and the traditional design of a Chinese temple made it stand out from the monotonous sand and soil.

Jason was an experienced tourist guide for the famous Mogao Grottoes for decades. There were many historical paintings, priceless sculptures and fascinating literature that were created from the 4th to 14th century. Many legends and secrets about the caves had been passed down from centuries and Jason's dearest wish was to validate whether these legends were true.

As he was sauntering back home, pondering about all the myths and legends, he suddenly heard a cry from afar.

"That's weird," he thought, "I have never heard such a sound before."

His conscience told him to go back home and ignore the sound, but his burning curiosity got the best of him, and he was dying to see where the whimpering came from.

"It sounds like a baby's cry," he muttered.

He followed the sound and it led him to a small, dark hidden cave.

"I have never seen this cave before," he thought with a quizzical look on his face.

Nonetheless, he walked inside the cave which was deep, dark, and mysterious. It was just tall enough for Jason to pass through. Not only did the whimpering echo throughout the cave, but it now sounded like a ghost's cry. He began to feel frightened by the haunted cries and the dark cave. When he was still pondering the matter, he suddenly heard a 'hi' from behind him. He peered around, and gasped when he discovered a little girl sitting in a corner. She looked like she was 5.

The girl's skin was as pale as moonlight, but something about her skin made her different from other normal girls—she seemed almost ghoulish, her body translucent and you can see through her. Her mouth curled into a smile and her eyes twinkled, brighter than anything you can imagine. She just wore a simple long white dress.

"Hi, I am Vicky! What's your name?" she said in a soft, angelic voice.

Jason was petrified. His eyes bulged out and his body froze in shock.

"Ummm... who are you exactly? I am Jason!"

Jason stuttered, he had a thousand questions he wanted to ask but just managed to state one simple question.

At first, Jason was frightened, but as they started to talk more and get to know more of each other, they started to become friends. Jason still had many questions about why the girl was translucent, but he kept that to himself because he didn't dare ask her. The girl said something that left Jason feeling puzzled and perplexed. She had told him, "You are the chosen one!" but he didn't understand and wasn't sure what that meant. After several days of talking, they got along very well, and Jason didn't fear her anymore.

One day, the girl told Jason, "I am going to show you a secret about this place, Mogao Grottoes. It will be beyond your wildest imagination. You will be amazed at what you will see, but whether you choose to believe it or not, it is up to you. I have only one warning for you: after I show you this letter, I will disappear, and all will return to normal because time is frozen right now."

Jason agreed. She pointed towards the wall and touched it with one finger. A letter instantly appeared.

Jason read out, "Dear reader, you are the chosen one. I am a member of the Ancient United Famous People. This group includes all the artists behind the great paintings and literature. At that time, we knew we were soon going to die but we wanted our legacy to be passed down from generation to generation, so we came together and discussed. After many discussions, we finally formed a plan which was to build the Mogao Grottoes and let future people discover and learn from it. We put guards there, but human eyes were just not capable of seeing them. Those guards were called the Spirits of the Ghosts. Their jobs were to show themselves to only people who had brutally destroyed some treasures of Mogao Grottoes. They would haunt those thieves forever and eternally torture them in different ways. This was the true story of why Mogao Grottoes was built—to let future people know about the famous paintings and literature and to warn people not to steal any treasure of Mogao Grottoes. Thank you, dear reader. Treasure what you have just read out. We will meet again. Some time one day."

Immediately after he finished reading the story, the girl disappeared in a flash of light. Perplexed and baffled, he gaped. He had trouble comprehending the story.

"Is it really true? Should I believe the story?" These kinds of thoughts raced in Jason's mind.

Finally, he decided to tell his son about this and let this story pass from generation to generation. Today, it has become a legendary story to tell when people visit the Mogao Grottoes. Most of them obey the rules and do not steal. Is this story really true? Whether you believe it or not, it will one day be discovered and proved to be true.

The Final Arrival: Nirvana

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Kong, Ho Yan Alisha – 11

“Stop daydreaming Andy! We need to move to the next spot!” whispered Tom.

“Sorry, but I just can’t help it! This tour is so boring. It’s the opposite of what I had imagined.” Andy said. Teenagers Andy and Tom were on a school educational trip to the Mogao Grottoes. They had thought that the trip would be interesting and they could learn more about history, but it turned out that the tour guide was pretty dull and the tour was too slow for them.

“Please move forward and now we are going to look at the Maitreya Buddha in cave 96 constructed in 695 under the edicts from Empress Wu Zetian ...” the tour guide said in a monotone voice like a robot.

Andy, the more mischievous boy, grinned and suggested, “How about we leave the group and explore the caves ourselves?”

“Umm, wouldn’t it be too risky? What if we got caught? What if...” Tom was hesitant.

“Oh come on! It’s still better than listening to the guide, right?” Andy argued.

“Fine, I’ll come with you.” Tom agreed reluctantly, touching the new bracelets engraved with Chinese words he had bought from a night market.

They sneaked away from the tour and excitedly explored the caves. Soon, they reached the “Thousand Buddha Caves” where replicated small Buddhas, flying apsaras, and celestial beings were depicted in the ceiling, and they were enraptured as they stood below huge grottoes carved out of stone so many hundreds of years before by hands of those long dead. From cave to cave, they used flashlights on their phones to see the incredible murals.

Half an hour after they left the group, the floor suddenly seemed to crack. A huge layer of dust fell from the cave roof. Earthquake! Now little bits of rocks were falling from the ceiling. The boys’ legs trembled and sweat dropped from their chins. The roof seemed like it was about to collapse. After a few minutes, with a large crack, a piece of stone toppled from the side wall, revealing a space behind it. After a few more rumbles, the ground became firm again and no more rock fell. The earthquake was over, but it had created something new; a crevice in the rock, just large enough for a person to walk through. As the boys dusted themselves off, relieved to be still standing, Andy spotted the opening.

“Tom, look! Just now that opening wasn’t there. Let’s go inside,” shouted Andy with excitement.

Without waiting for Tom’s response, Andy pulled Tom down to examine the dark space. A few feet inside the crevice was the start of a descending staircase. Throwing caution aside, in single file they entered and started to descend the dark stairs with only the lights from their phones.

The walls on either side of the thin staircase were gloomy and devoid of art. The thought of being the first two people to discover this passage thrilled them and they couldn’t wait to arrive at the bottom of the staircase, which seemed to wind deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth.

Finally, they arrived and found themselves in a chamber and with the help of their flashlights, they found some flaming sconces. Suddenly, the flaming sconces were lit up one by one naturally, until the whole room brightened.

Then, the two boys spotted an old man with a long beard meditating with his legs crossed. Suddenly, Tom’s bracelet began to shine.

“Finally, it led you here!” exclaimed the old man, opening his eyes.

“What do you mean? There was an earthquake and we found a staircase down here,” Andy explained.

“You!” The old man pointed at Tom, “You have his bracelet. The bracelet on your hand belonged to a respected monk, Zhi Kong. He passed away many years ago and he was supposed to go to the final stage of a monk—Anupadhisessa—Nirvana, but his spirit was trapped in one of the murals here. Zhi Kong told me that there would be a boy in the future wearing the bracelet which belonged to him before and that boy could help him.”

Tom scratched his head and asked curiously, “How could he tell you if he was trapped in a mural?”

In reply, the old man said only, “I am Dun Wu.”

“Are you a ghost? Your friend passed away many years ago. How can you live for so long?” Andy interjected. Shivers ran down their spines as the thought of seeing a ghost appeared in their minds.

“No time to ask questions. Be quick to release Zhi Kong!” Dun Wu commanded.

Tom and Andy were understandably puzzled. And also, they were just two ordinary boys, how could they save Zhi Kong? They really had no idea about it, but the bracelet seemed to know what to do.

The bracelet’s magical force suddenly jerked Tom forcefully and took him before a mural with a gigantic devil attacking people with a butcher’s knife. The devil was stepping on something—a person—a monk! The monk looked like he was in pain: he was wincing and his face was all twisted. He was wrestling with all his might but he just couldn’t get away.

“Zhi Kong!” the two boys exclaimed in unison.

Now, the bracelet was shining as brightly as a star. Having examined the bracelet carefully, Tom found some words on it. “Fang xia tu dao, li di cheng fo(Put down the butcher knife and become a Buddha),” read Tom slowly.

In a flash, the mural cracked and a wisp of smoke was released and whirled around the room.

“Thank you for freeing me!” said a mysterious voice.

When the smoke faded, they couldn’t see anyone, but they all knew it was Zhi Kong. When they turned around to find Dun Wu, he had also vanished.

They looked at each other and smiled, this would forever be a secret that only both of them knew. DunHuang is really a place full of mystery.

The Blanket on Her Shoulder

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Kwan, Chui On Charlotte – 11

Every conclusion of the school year, on the streets nearby the Gifted Arts Academy, would walk a pretty girl, carrying various gleaming trophies. She was particularly famous for her awesome masterpiece.

“Annabeth, the Musee Du Louvre is such a fantastic place, always providing you with inspiration! Let’s visit it again!” beamed her parents.

Annabeth shrugged half-heartedly since she was getting fed up already. So this time, even when Annabeth had stood in this museum for ages, her mind was blank. Annabeth twitched the edges of her blue blanket on her shoulder to overcome the boredom. She loved this nineteenth-century, old-fashioned cashmere blanket so much that she wore it on her shoulder every day, which made her feel protected and cozy.

Suddenly, an occult voice whispered, “ hold me tightly, I’m taking you to a mysterious ‘Art World’.”

Without ado, Annabeth touched it, which instantly curled around her tightly, lifting her higher and higher towards the sky. She felt gusts of strong wind blowing past her ears, whistling loudly and powerfully. The next thing she knew, lying on the foot of the cliff, she faced the unusual brownish-yellow sky and the sand that was sweeping across. She narrowed her eyes and tried to focus on the mighty temple in front of her. The eight-storey building seemed as though it was carved straight into the cliff. Its pale yellow roof was made of glazed tiles, the four corners of each one lifted upwards to the sky. The floors were supported by several reddish-tan coloured pillars.

“ Oh wow, this is so...amazing...that’s... art,” she stuttered, at a loss of words to describe it.

“Welcome to the Mogao Grottoes,” the blanket introduced.

Curiously, Annabeth crept into the temple. As soon as she turned the first doorknob of the corridor, her eyes sparkled. Intricate, colourful and brilliant murals appeared on the ceiling and walls. There were paintings about landscape, animals, architecture... Each life-like mural was like a summarised story, reflecting on the different dynasties of China, like the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties. The characters’ expressions were rather peaceful.

“They lived happily, didn’t they?” Annabeth asked the blanket thoughtfully.

The blanket nodded by patting Annabeth tenderly on her shoulder. During this warm interaction, the beautiful dyes of Annabeth’s velvet, blue dress gradually faded, the softness disappeared and what was left was a ragged, brown robe. Just as she was gazing at her clothes, with her jaw dropped in shock, a thick puff of smoke floated into her nose. Then, the whole building became stuffier and stuffier.

At that moment, Annabeth heard a gruff voice ringing in the corridor.

“Take away all the Buddhist statues and scriptures. Be careful. Each statue is worth billions of dollars if we sell them to Europe! Continue setting the murals on fire. Quick! Quick! ”

“What are they talking about?” Annabeth wondered, her mind racing speedily. “Wait—what? Wasn’t that the breaking news which had happened in the 19th century? Robbers indeed tried to steal the sculptures and ruin all the paintings in the Mogao Grottoes! But where am I now? My blanket took me to the past?”

Unnoticeably, smoke began filling the air, aggressively sucking in oxygen. Fire danced everywhere, flying past and missing by inches. At that instant, Annabeth thought of nothing but the burning murals and really couldn’t bear to watch their splendid colours fade. Annabeth felt more and more anxious, as if her own life was contained in the murals. She looked around the room, “No water, no sand, no blanke—huh, blanket?” Annabeth looked at her blanket, “ Sorry, that might hurt you, but I know you have magic and you are the only one who can help.” Without any hesitation about her own safety, Annabeth waved the blanket over the fire, fanning it continuously. Such a loud flapping noise attracted all the thieves to rush into the room. Their eyes and Annabeths’ met and were glued on each other, feeling stunned. Everyone gasped, shocked by each other’s presence. “ KILL HER!” They bawled. Robbers charged, brandishing their swords.

In a flash, a silver knife had already thrashed and pierced into Annabeth's delicate, vulnerable skin, straight at her chest. A searing pain spread across her throat. Annabeth's eyes widened with agony and she plunged into eerie, dead silence.

She knew she was dying.

Suddenly, the blanket zoomed out of Annabeth's grip. It swooped gusts of windstorm at the robbers. Brownish sand flew everywhere, all towards them. Leaving only a strangled cry of astonishment, they stumbled backwards, crashed onto each other and toppled down the cliff like a domino set. When the room was back to normal, like nothing had happened, Annabeth gave a thankful smile to the blanket tearfully. The murals and the blanket were safe eventually. Her eyelids drooped down, lower and lower...

It was a nice and fresh morning, the sun was shining all his light into a fancy room in a five-star hotel in Paris. The soft wind blew through the window, patting one's head. A pretty girl, wearing a blue, velvet dress, awoke. Opening her eyes slowly, she rubbed her eyes, feeling confused, "Am I still alive?" As her eyes darted to the blanket, lying on her bedside, her face lit up, she murmured, "Thank you, my friend..."

She stood beside the window and twitched the edge of the blanket on her shoulder. An idea kept repeating, "Make a mini-sized Mogao Grottoes." She really did. And not only did she make a detailed model of the Mogao Grottoes, she also restored the exact part of the Buddhist statues, scriptures and murals that were ruined by the thieves. Except there was a little girl with a blanket on her shoulder, standing in the first room of the corridor.

Today, a copy of this artwork is displayed in the Museum of Art, attracting billions of visitors for admiring the whole version of the Mogao Grottoes. And dear readers, I bet you know the artist of this wonderful artwork? Yes indeed, it's the girl—Annabeth!

Bowerbird's Last Bow

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Li, Lok Yee Rachel – 11

I did not want to go to the Mogao Grottoes, although they date back to over one and a half millennia ago, and they are home to an uncountable number of ancient literature pieces and artworks. I considered refusing the assignment, due to my history with anything called a cave or a grotto. In the past few years alone, I had nearly drowned and been lost in dark caves more times than I could count. However, when I was told that the oldest printed book in the world was located at the Mogao Grottoes, my speluncaphobia gave in to my love of ancient history.

Therefore, armed with little more than a pen, some rope, and an unsharpened sword, I was sent to west central China. Luckily, my friend May was also coming on this trip. She was much more competent than myself. The only reason that I could join any of the missions was that I had bested Bowerbird's leader on my first. Bowerbird was the name of a scheme organized by an unknown criminal organization. Its goal was to seize as many famous landmarks as possible and dominate the travelling industry.

We took a plane to Gansu Province and landed a few miles from the Mogao Grottoes. From there, we took a bus. Then, a small group of people from our organization joined us, so that we could pretend to be normal tourists. It worked, and we arrived without anyone ambushing us. I was starting to think that it might work – that we might be able to surprise the people sent to capture the Mogao Grottoes and arrest them without a hassle.

When we finally arrived at the Mogao Grottoes, I was awestruck. First constructed in 366 AD, it was a place with rich history. The Caves of a Thousand Buddhas contained the largest collection of Buddhist art, but out of the fifty thousand documents found there, there were also many texts of several other religions and in multiple languages. Easily, it was one of the most magnificent places I'd ever been to, and it was hard to believe that they were all carved out by hand. On the inside, there were numerous stunning murals and more spectacular sculptures than stars in our galaxy. Unfortunately, we couldn't explore all of the caves but May promised that we could complete our tour when we were finished with Bowerbird.

I never thought that I could be so intent on protecting 1700-year-old caves. It was because I wanted to see all the caves, and I was not going to let Bowerbird control them. I sharpened my sword, which was a souvenir from the first time I defeated Bowerbird's leader, determined to stop the train in its tracks.

We decided to use the element of surprise to our benefit, so we hid, waiting for the team that would be sent to take the Grottoes. Our plan was for me to talk to the leader of Team Bowerbird while my team surrounded them. As we were waiting, we concocted a few other backup plans, one of which included challenging a person from each side to a contest.

Finally, eight hours after we arrived, we were greeted by the small team sent to take the Mogao Grottoes. We stayed still until the leader ordered everyone to put their hands up. Then, I stepped out and said politely, "Hello there, I notice that you want to seize this tourist attraction and archaeology site which is over a thousand years old.

Unfortunately, I doubt that it's legal, so kindly put away your guns."

Recognizing me, the team's leader snarled like an angry lion. "I see you're messing with us, as usual. Ever since your first assignment, you've been stopping me from doing my job. You broke my reputation! You're going to lose me my job! This is my last mission, and if I don't succeed, I'll be demoted to the same rank I had when I first joined Oviraptor!" He was spitting with rage. I made a mental note of their name.

"Get out your guns and shoot her!" the leader roared. His team raised their guns and aimed them at me. I was terrified. I felt like a cockroach, seeing the giant shadow of an enormous shoe, and watching helplessly as it sank down.

"What are you waiting for? Do it now!" screamed the leader, losing every bit of restraint he had. He grabbed a gun and aimed it at me. He pulled the trigger, but nothing came out. Looking murderous, he nearly strangled one of his own men and demanded to know why there wasn't any bullets in the gun. His victim was quaking in fear as he explained that all of them had only three bullets each and they had used them all because they were ordered to shoot insects on their way to the Grottoes.

"I'll tell the boss to fire all of you," grumbled the leader bad-temperedly, turning to go. However, he had barely taken a step when a policewoman handcuffed him. Evidently, May had called the police when she saw the group approaching.

A month later, I found out that the leader of Bowerbird was sentenced to twenty years in prison for threatening me with firearms. I felt like a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders. Finally, I could wander about freely without any fear of attack, at least for a while. After losing one of its leaders, we guessed that Oviraptor would be out of action for a few months.

May kept her promise. Once I was out of danger from being murdered by the leader of Bowerbird (we learnt that his name was Jack Sloane after his arrest), she borrowed a plane for our visit to the Mogao Grottoes. It was as if I'd time

travelled back a millennia, through a tunnel to the ancient world. Being back to the caves again was just like reliving an old memory, one that would never be forgotten.

Travelling to the Past and Beyond

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Lit, Chloe – 11

As darkness settled upon the tired city, people were hurrying onto the last trains and rushing home to make it just in time for dinner. The whole city was falling into slumber, except for one sitting in the library, absorbing the magnificent light of books. This one was an enthusiastic monk, who was sitting on a chair in the corner of the library, reading about Buddhist culture. He was a curious monk who had always wanted to get to know more about his culture. Currently, this monk was reading about the Mogao Grottoes, a group of caves which were built in the times of 366 AD, the caves that are currently home to Buddhist art. These caves are located in Dunhuang, China – a place the monk dreamt to go when he was given the opportunity to.

The monk was so absorbed into his book, he didn't even notice his surroundings. In front of the focused monk appeared a spectacular blinding light. Once the light slowly faded out, a dark figure could be made out, one dressed in clothing that looked from the Northern and Southern dynasties in the 4 to 14th centuries. "Where am I?" The figure coughed to catch some attention from the monk. Slowly, the monk looked up, staring at the dark figure who had interrupted his reading session.

"Who are you? Why are you in the library at this hour?" The monk said, as he got off his chair.

"I could ask the same. Why am I here?"

"I'm not sure, but you seem to be from the era I'm reading about."

"Oh, that's odd. What are you reading about?"

"The Mogao Grottoes. You look like you might know lots about it, do you?"

The ancient man furrowed his brows. "Hmm, that doesn't make sense. When I went to see it yesterday, it was just half built. Is this some sort of trick, or have I time traveled into the future? What year is it, for you don't look like anyone from my era?"

"Wait, the only way this could have happened was if you time traveled, but I thought that only exists in books? Well, I guess weird things do happen, it's the year 2021 by the way."

Just then, the ancient man saw something sparkling in the corner of his eye. As he crouched down to take a closer look at the object, it disappeared. The ancient man stood up again, only to see a big portal in front of him. *This portal will lead you to the Mogao Grottoes in the period of time where it was still under construction, step in?* The two looked at each other before stepping into the portal together at the same time.

A light flashed in front of the pair's eyes, and in a second they were exposed to the work-in-progress Mogao Grottoes. A mechanical voice greeted them, *I see you have time traveled, what would you like to know about the Mogao Grottoes?*

The ancient man took this opportunity to talk about the Mogao Grottoes. "How about I show you around? After all, I know quite a bit about this."

The monk considered for a moment, he said, "Alright then, lead the way!"

The pair walked for a while, as the monk noticed something.

"If you don't mind, I have a question. Why are the caves built on a cliff?"

"Oh, that's because the Mogao Grottoes serve as a temple for Buddhism activities. Temples are a place of worship, which is why the environment is to be kept quiet and clean, free from the interference of secular life."

The ancient man walked in through the entrance of a structure and the pair ended up in a big empty space. The workers were busy setting down the statues, so they didn't quite pay attention to the two of them.

"Here, as you can see there are statues in the Mogao Grottoes. Currently, the most famous one should be the Buddha statue. If you look at the walls, wall paintings are what you see. Mogao Grottoes is actually a group of caves, 492 caves to be exact. I believe we are in an art cave, which is why there are statues and paintings. Of course, along the journey, what you see isn't the end of it. The caves are not complete, so there's more to come. There are also different texts and manuscripts in the library cave, we could visit it quickly if you like."

The two left the art cave and went into the library cave. As they walked past manuscripts filled with texts of different languages, the monk asked, “There’s so many different manuscripts here, are they all Buddhism texts?”

The ancient man stopped in his tracks, he thought for a second before answering, “Ranging from Christian to Zoroastrian texts, some of the texts from those cultures are also kept here.”

The two were about to go towards a third cave, but a metallic voice stopped them. *The portal is ready, step in to time travel back into the present. I hope you learnt more about the Mogao Grottoes.*

The monk took one last glance at the work-in-progress Mogao Grottoes before stepping closer to the portal. Of course, he didn’t forget to wave at the ancient man who stumbled into the present by accident, if it wasn’t for him, the monk could’ve never had this meaningful journey into the past. The monk knew he shouldn’t bother the ones in the past, so he bravely stepped into the portal. A gust of wind hit the monk’s face before he was transported back to the library. He stood there stunned for a second, before the book he was previously reading gave a small “bonk!” when it hit the monk’s head. The monk rubbed his head, feeling embarrassed.

“Not only was I able to travel into the past, but also to learn what’s beyond the printed text on books. This really is a journey *travelling into the past and beyond.*”

An Adventure Through a Card

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, So, Clara So Yui – 11

The warm, bright sunshine was beaming through my window as I was reading ‘Around the World in Eighty Days’. While I was flipping through the pages, something in it caught my eye. It was a glittering card, the vibrant, radiant sunlight making it shimmery as crystals. Why was it there? On it was a picture of a red building. I stroked the card in bewilderment. Strangely, I couldn’t take my eyes off it, as if it were putting me into a trance, hypnotising me. Suddenly, a vortex of a million stars was somehow pulled out from the card, and it swirled and whirled and twirled in front of my eyes. I got disoriented. Everything went pitch black. I was losing all my senses...

The darkness lightened, gradually I could see again! Where was I? Observing my surroundings, I realised I was in China, without a person in sight! It looked like I was on the Silk Road, and according to history books and websites, it was a network of trade routes connecting China and the Far East with the Middle East and Europe. Right at that moment, I saw the red building! As I strolled closer to it, thinking it looked boring, I noticed a plaque with ‘The Mogao Grottoes, 366 A.D.’ written on it. So that was it! The Mogao Grottoes. I strode towards the entrance. It turned out the ‘entrance’ wasn’t really quite an entrance of, say, an old museum. Actually, that was no entrance at all. There, I saw pitch black caves. I had an eerie feeling. But, maybe they say curiosity kills the cat, it was certainly winning over my fear.

I edged to one of them, ventured into it—and screamed! I had caught a glimpse of a shadow. Standing outside, I let my eyes get used to the dark. I realised it was the shadow of a buddha statue, with priceless murals behind it. Forget about the outside, the inside of the Mogao Grottoes was as precious as diamonds. I made a mental note not to judge an object or a person by the outer appearance, but to look inside first.

When I came out of the cave, I noticed that beside the cave hole, there was a tiny number ‘1’ carved on the wall. So I jogged along the isles of caves, often seeing ancient artifacts in them. I was gasping for air by the time I reached the last cave, as there were a lot of caves—four hundred and ninety-two ones, so I stopped breathlessly in front of the last cave.

I then remembered reading, on an informative website, that the Mogao Grottoes served as a marketplace for more than a thousand years. It was always a weary traveller’s stop and religious shrine on the Silk Road. It was inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites in the year 1987. Thinking about time and place, how do I get back home, or will I be stuck here forever?

I started to explore the place again. I randomly got into Cave 3, which had a mural in it. The mural seemed to fascinate me, there was a Chinese dragon in it. Again, I was bursting with curiosity. I approached it, stretched out my right arm and felt the dragon with my fingers...

All of a sudden, a geyser of boiling hot water from nowhere shot on the mural, the heat of it burning my fingers. Mist swirled around the place, and I couldn’t see a thing. In milliseconds, my eyes widened, my arm shrank back, and I felt myself jerk backwards. After some time, when the water and mist had disappeared, I blinked, and... gasped! Right in front of me, was a magnificent creature, with strong claws, a snake-like body, and sharp teeth. The dragon! I shrank into a corner. What was going on?

‘I am the dragon of this mural. People believed that my kind was a symbol of authority, and that we had control over water, so this is why I’m here, and don’t be afraid, I know you want to return home,’

‘H... how did you know that?’

‘I can hear your thoughts, but I prefer to speak,’ the dragon smiled. ‘I’ll get you back home.’

‘Thanks, but how?’

Mist sprayed from the great beast’s mouth, and a scroll floated in front of me.

There was something written on it:

‘Cave two hundred and fifty seven x Cave two hundred and eighty-five = ?

A portal in a particular cave, the

Very clues near statues, murals, or

Even in scrolls.

Simply there'll be hints in the caves above.'

'People back then were skilled in astronomy, mathematics and much more, so that's why this is a math problem. Come back after you solve it.'

I went to Cave 257. There was the Maitreya Buddha statue. Just then, I saw a piece of scrap paper with 'clue: 48' on it right next to the huge statue! Then I dashed to Cave 285. There were murals of apsaras. I noticed that in one of the apsaras' hands, there was 'clue: 2'. It was ' $48 \times 2 = 96$ '!

Then I went back to Cave 3 and told the dragon the answer. Smiling, he gestured for me to follow him. So we went to Cave 96—the cave where there stood the Great Buddha statue. The dragon roared, and a handprint with the words '*Place hand here*' appeared on top of it.

'Place your right hand here, and a portal shall be activated. It will transport you to anywhere you should go. Now I shall say farewell,'

'It was nice to meet you.' I said with mixed feelings. I took a deep breath, and pressed the handprint.

A spinning kaleidoscope of stars appeared. I was back home, card in hand. Was I seeing things? A dragon appeared next to the building! I smiled and put the card in my safe. I will never forget this adventure.

The Revelation of the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Tam, Hong Yan Janna – 11

Qing was an average Chinese girl, with short ebony curls and a shy smile, complemented with a cornflower blue Qipao. However, she had a dream like no other girl did, as all they dreamed about were charming husbands of whom they would work for in the future. But Qing was different — very different, an independent soul who wasn't someone who followed orders if she had the ability to do it her own way. She wanted to become an explorer and see the Mogao Grottoes — a famous place in her hometown, Gansu — but her mother always refused with tears in her eyes. Qing found it most confusing — there wasn't any harm in going there, was there?

Her mother finally let the cat out of the bag when Qing was seventeen. It all started when news of a certain Wang Yuanlu found the Library Cave spread far and wide. "Please, Qing, go to the Mogao Grottoes and bring Wang Yuanlu back, for he is your father, but I can't go since Amah needs me," her mother said, gesturing at Qing's grandmother. Then, she swiftly drew a picture of Wang Yuanlu with her ink brush and handed it to Qing, who put it in her sack with food and water, then set off, walking along the cobbled streets and the narrow, deserted alleyways of her village.

Darkness reigned in the Mingsha Mountains as Qing stumbled towards its eastern foothills. Her mother's voice echoed through the midnight sky, but fatigue drowned it as her eyelids drooped and she drifted off to sleep. A blazing light which she recognised as the rising sun awoke her, and her eyes fluttered open. But it wasn't — a glowing tunnel bright as the morning shone around her, and a booming voice resonated through it, "Arise, Wang Qing, and follow the path your father took." Qing felt herself trembling as she got to the end of the tunnel and looked up at the majestic architecture of the Grottoes. But there was no time to lose; she had to find her father — and fast. *I'll have to go to the living quarters — the northern caves*, she thought. But how? Her father found the Library Cave; perhaps she could look there. Qing gathered up her courage and started to climb the stairs towards Cave 17 — the Library Cave. She stepped in and saw an array of Buddhist scriptures, ranging in rolls of thick and thin. Then Qing looked closely at the murals — Buddhist subjects were painted most, but there were some with mythical animals and there was even one of the victories of General Zhang Yichao over the Tibetan Empire. But still no sign of her father... *Am I seeing things?* she thought. *Why would there be this mural of the daily lives of monks?* But Qing was — at the back of the room was a mural of monks meditating, walking around town barefoot for offerings and some even worshipping a buddha. The Chinese written on the side of the mural meant "Ordination is the sacrifice to be made" and as Qing put her finger on the word "ordination", the hidden door behind the mural slid open as Qing stared with wide eyes and her mouth open, unable to believe what she saw. As she stepped inside the room, she immediately knew where it was — the northern living quarters. Qing looked from her left to her right, then from her right to her left. "Excuse me," she said to a chanting monk after a tap on his shoulder. "May I enquire where Wang Yuanlu is?" Everyone else stared at her and the monk.

"Follow me, young lady," croaked the old monk as he beckoned Qing to follow him. "What's your name?"

"My name is Wang Qing, and I come to request my father to return home," said Qing.

"Well, Qing, that means you're on a quest," said the old monk with a twinkle in his eye. "You don't have to know as long as you feel compelled to do it — the impossible, the important. See here, we are already at your father's chambers," said the old monk. "Goodbye and good luck, Wang Qing!" Qing waved him goodbye and gulped as she knocked on the door. This was the moment of truth...

"Who is it?" questioned Yuanlu as he opened the door.

"My name is Wang Qing, and I believe you're my father, Wang Yuanlu. Mother asked me to find you with this," Qing handed him the picture her mother had drawn. Yuanlu gasped.

"Come in, my long-lost daughter, and I shall explain to you over a cup of tea," said Yuanlu and Qing followed behind him. Yuanlu felt connected with the girl almost immediately at first sight.

"I'm sorry, Qing," said Yuanlu when they were both seated, "I left before you were born because of my own interests in Buddhism. Your mother, who was pregnant at the time I left, refused, but I persisted. We had this terrible argument and I left, telling her I would return someday. But oh, 17 years had passed without meeting this beautiful, intelligent daughter of mine, I feel terrible deep down inside. I'm sorry, Qing, I really am. But once I enter these doors, I'm forced to stay here forever."

“Please, Father. I understand how much Buddhism means to you, but we all need you — especially Mother. You promised her you would return, but she’s been waiting these 17 years for you to come back! Even I need you — I’ve always wanted a complete family myself! Please, Father, do consider it,” begged Qing. Yuanlu saw the hope in his daughter’s eyes — oh, how would he have the heart to refuse?

“I’ll have to stay here, Qing, but there’s no harm in coming back to visit every week for an hour or two,” said Yuanlu and Qing nodded. They left for the village and the practice continued. The Wangs may be separated physically, but they are never separated by heart.

Secret Within the Caves of Mogao

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, To, Man Kiu – 12

The humble saint crouched in the corner of the cave, dimly lit by flickering torches that hung beside sophisticatedly framed illustrations and meticulously carved sculptures. These artworks seemed to be the only things accompanying the man, who was frantically scribbling words on a piece of parchment – or so he thought. Bony fingers snatched the parchment.

“What’s this? A cry for help?” The demon scanned the parchment, dismissing it.

“You may have reincarnated, Mara, but you’re not going to be stronger than you once were,” The saint challenged the demon.

“We’ll see.” The demon hissed and with his fingernails, he pinched the paper and tore it into three pieces before thrusting them onto the cave floor and, the shredded parchments, they caught on a breeze and snuck away from the cave.

A single piece landed gently on the floor and met a young yet curious girl who hurried and scooped the parchment up, and mumbled the words to herself.

“In the Mogao Chinese Buddhist cave,
An imprisoned saint you need to save.”

Curiosity got the best of her and the next moment she found herself hopping off a shuttle bus and arriving in front of the ancient structure — the Mogao Grottoes. She waited until sunset, when the sky would take on a golden tint and when the crowd would have departed, she snuck to the entrance of the caves and to her surprise, two familiar silhouettes stood there – her two younger siblings.

“So, Sister Xiaoli, you’re the third one,” Xinyi said.

“Third one — what?” Xiaoli replied, confused.

“The three parchments – haven’t you read it? It said, three heroes would save an imprisoned saint by reciting an ancient poem, written in the parchments,” her brother Xinyi continued.

“The saint is in danger as we speak – we have to act now. C’mon,” Shenfei interrupted her siblings.

They ventured into the unknown darkness of the cave.

The moment they set foot in the cave, it felt as if they had been brought to another dimension. The cave was hot, yet they felt cold all over with terror. That moment, the girl noticed a faint, dark shadow flashing before her and quickly vanished; she ignored it.

The three looked around in the room: dark, daunting, deadly. Perhaps because it’s under the demon’s curse. They looked at the paintings on the wall. The artworks were so precisely created and so intricately detailed; they seemed so realistic as if they were alive and moving – the characters in the painting slowly shifted their gaze towards the teens, as a warm smile grew on their faces. Their hands moved around gracefully like a butterfly and slowly pointed towards their right. They stared at the painting, mesmerised by its magic.

“They’re guiding us to the saint,” Xinyi recited his clue aloud. “The paintings have come alive, to the chamber they will guide. We have to follow it.”

Without hesitation, they entered the next chamber and found themselves presented with numerous overbearing statues, intimidating them with their size as they glared down towards them. Xiaoli felt it again: a similar sensation of the cold, threatening shiver when she met a dark shadow at the entrance, trailing behind. The statues appeared to also

be aware of this shadow. A deep voice sounded from the statues in unison, echoing around the chamber, “Are you the three saviours for the saint?”

Hesitating, they blurted out, “Yes, we are.”

“Read the parchment each one of you holds. Your final clue will be announced to you.”

They all frantically searched and fished out their parchments from their pockets, unrolled it and realised their previous clues had vanished. The parchment crumpled up. It rustled and shook in their palms as black inky texts appeared on the parchments, one letter at a time, and read, “Call it Māra. Use its name – now! Summon the demon and ask this question: what is greater than darkness and death?”

The mysterious source of voice continued, “Follow the instructions we have given you. Free the curse and free the saint.”

Xiaoli nodded and started, “Demon Mara, come—”

The cave was rapidly filled with a black mist before she could finish and flooded the room and every corner was extinguished of light. Amidst the darkness, Xiaoli noticed the same dark shadow like an eagle circling in on its prey. The dark shadow landed in front of them and transformed into the malevolent beast they have been searching for – Mara.

“Who has summoned me?” The dark, raspy voice demanded.

Shenfei took a deep breath, and blurted out the words of the riddle, “What is greater than darkness and death?”

Mara chuckled, “You know nothing of darkness, gullible foolish humans.” He laughed. “Nothing is greater than darkness. Darkness is everywhere, your eyes just can’t see it.”

“Māra, you are blinded by darkness. Your negativity has covered all the light in the world within your eyes. Light is greater than darkness.” Shenfei said. “Lord Buddha, share your love and light upon this cave and all things within.”

Light then poured in through every gap in the walls. The statues and carvings on the side moved slightly, rumbling, and opened their mouths, speaking the words “Light can dispel darkness, but darkness cannot dispel light.” The light glistened like butterflies, gleaming and fluttering in every edifice of the cave, destroying the darkness within. The demon slowly withered like a dying rose in the light, shrieking and screaming until the last drop of his darkness was brought away.

The saint’s chains crumbled on the stone floor as dust. The saint stood once again as a young man.

“Thank you. I was imprisoned here for the past thousand years and my cries for help were finally heard. You strangers are a blessing and I am eternally grateful.” And with that, the saint floated away and into a mist. He turned back and smiled gently at them before disappearing. He was home, at last.

Mogao Magic

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Tong, Tsz Yan – 11

Juliette scanned the monument standing in front of her. She thought of her father's uncanny face when he told her and her little brother about the magical road trip to an ancient temple in China. She wanted magic, not boring caves such as the Mogao Grottoes. Shuffling, she dragged herself towards the stairs. How could a road trip go so wrong?

As soon as they got into one of the caves, she was panting and gasping for air. "Juliette, stop being so dramatic," said her little brother Leo, who fancied Chinese history, "Let's go and check out that silk road painting!" The tourists indulged themselves in the historical masterpieces, but Juliette had completely no interest in the history of the silk road, so she wandered around the grottoes to check out the more eccentric masterpieces. There were lots of buddha statues with multiple limbs and wall paintings with many colours. She studied a painting, and it was a scene where two characters were fighting. She touched the paintings gently with one hand and traced along the delicate lines of the characters. They were perfect— wait, no. A crack. And it wasn't there a second ago. Juliette leaned closer to inspect it. Suddenly, there was a deafening gush of wind, and Juliette was off the ground.

Juliette opened her eyes, and she was kneeling on the floor. She used a hand to steady herself and get up, then fell back again at the sight of a huge Buddha bigger than ten elephants, lying on a stone bed with his eyes closed peacefully. Juliette gave out a yelp and tried to move herself away from the statue. Suddenly, his stone eyes stirred. Juliette watched in fear as the eyes of the Buddha creaked open. Juliette was too shocked to scream or run. This living statue could crush her as if she was a concussed fly. It sat up. Juliette gasped: when the Buddha sat up straight, his head scraped the ceiling, so he had to use an elbow to thrust himself upward slightly so that he wasn't wholly lying down but was still able to move mildly without touching or hitting the ceiling. And then, it boomed, "What brings you here to Mogao cave 158, child?" His voice was deep and intoned, but kind.

"I...I don't know!" Juliette explained frantically, "a second ago I was checking out a... a crack! A crack on a painting that nobody noticed, and... and then a gush of strong wind blew me here." The Buddha looked confused but shrugged. Juliette was dumb-founded about how the Buddha would believe such an unreasonable thing. She gathered the courage to ask "Um... Mister Buddha,"

"Call me Śākyamuni," the Buddha said,

"Okay, Mister Sa—— never mind, can you tell me how to get out of here?"

"You'll have to learn about the history of this place first." Perfect, Juliette thought, oh how exceptionally perfect. She sighed. As long as it gets me out of here.

"Tell me about the history of this place."

She awoke in the middle of nowhere. Around her were ochre hills of sand. Obviously, it was a desert. The sandstorms were strong. Luckily, the wind was merciful. Juliette only trotted through a few mild sandstorms. Over the horizon, she saw a monk. He had orange robes and was bald. She asked, "Mister, where are you going?" The monk looked surprised when he found out what Juliette was wearing, which was a normal shirt. Still, he answered, "I'm a humble monk, Lezun. I have arrived at Dunhuang to build caves where I will draw and carve all the myths and legends I can remember. Hopefully, the people of the future will find out the artwork and gain the precious knowledge." Juliette suddenly understood, like an old man awakened from a deep, deep slumber, that this was the creator of the mogao grottoes, and that the Buddha was using a special way to bring her home. A flash of light flickered before her and the monk was gone.

Now, she was in a cave. She saw the same painting that she found the crack in, but the colours weren't as timid. She heard two men speaking and hid behind a pillar. "Dear me, ain't this a beauty! The scene, it looks as if it's a real battle!" said one. "Oh ain't we lucky that the Taoist priest informed us about this ancient beauty! I heard that he told the Qing government abou' this too, but they didn't care!" Remarked the other. Juliette came out of her hiding spot.

She needed to know the information in order to get home. “Who are ya?” shouted the men. “ I mean you no harm, I just want to know what happened,” said Juliette. Then men exchanged glances. One started, “A taoist priest found out about the mogao grottoes and he told us, Western explorers, and the Chinese government about this. The government didn’t care, but we came here to study them. They are gorgeous!” Another flash of light brought Juliette somewhere else.

This time, Juliette was in a room, and she saw a French man and a taoist priest, which is indisputably the one mentioned from the last scene. The French man bellowed, “I want these six thousand relics from your caves!” “ I told you, that would be 500 taels of silver,” said the priest. The French man sighed, “Those relics are worth no money, nothing can be worth such fine beauty. Here, take these 500 taels of silver and go!” Again, Juliette organized the information. A French man paid 500 taels of silver to the priest to remove 6,000 relics from the caves. The flash of light shone once again. Juliette had an outburst of joy— she was going home.

The next moment, Juliette could feel herself lying on something soft. She opened her eyes to see the ceiling of her bedroom. “Mom, Dad, I’m home!” she cried.

Memories of a Manuscript

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Tung, Wing Kiu Elizabeth – 9

I looked up and saw lots of humans staring down at me. I remember thinking ‘What are these strange moving creatures?’, but now I know. They are a nefarious, inventive and wonderfully interesting species. And they are my creators, the ones that breathed life into me.

When I was created, I did not understand people at all. I was surrounded by people talking in Chinese and I was so young that I thought that everyone in the world would talk in the same language. Eventually, I had learned enough of the spoken language to understand this species. And from then on I knew lots of things about this particular place named China. I thought China was a weird name for any place.

One day, I overheard that they were going to take my friends, the other books and I to different places. Some of the books moaned and complained. Some of them wept. Some of them were ecstatic. We all felt differently. But one thing was for sure, we would be separated from one another.

Early the next morning, the humans were very excited and were all smiles. Along with some of my fellow books Gung Ho, Xiao Ming and Zi Tong, the gigantic creatures forced us into an extremely stuffy sack. The sack was tied to a camel that was not only exceedingly sweaty, but also tremendously smelly. “Phew!” exclaimed Xiao Ming, “I have never smelt anything this retched and it’s even making my pages curl”. “This is nothing” said Zi Tong, “I used to live next to a pig farm, on a summers day the smell would turn my pages yellow”. My travelling companions and I swapped stories as our bumpy journey continued.

Eventually, the humans forcefully pulled us out of our small sack, our journey next to the insanitary, putrid camel was finally at an end. I heaved a huge sigh of relief, it had not been a pleasant experience being stuck in a tiny stuffy bag for a week and my friends and I were happy to be in the fresh air at last. I opened my eyes and the crimson sun shone down on me. I had expected that I would be taken to a different place, but not as different and exotic as this.

After a good night’s sleep I awake in a cool dry cave surrounded by many other books and scrolls. I asked the book to my left where I was but received no answer as the book was snoring and deep in sleep. I turned to the right and repeated my question but the scroll sharply rebuked me and told me that ignorance was bliss so I should stop asking questions. I was very frightened but after being told off I did not dare ask any more questions for the rest of the day.

The next day I talked to the bookshelf, it sounded really old but wasn’t as grumpy as the scroll. It told me that I was in one of the most beautiful caves in northern China. She said that I was very lucky that I was not one of her kind, when a bookshelf rots it will be dragged out and broken up for fire wood. I felt sorry for her and told her that I hoped that she would not rot so early.

Occasionally, some people would come to the cave and admire my friends and enemies. First of all, there were the rocks. They looked like people and were very colourful, but they were not real people. I mistook them for real humans, but then when I tried to talk to them in Chinese, they thought I was just showing off my language skills and they felt very offended. “Who do you think you are talking to, Book!” demanded one of the statues, “I have been here for more than a century, show some respect”.

Devastated, I left them to complain about me to the metal statues. This was a mistake, soon the metal statues hated me too. Fortunately, I was on a bookshelf with lots of other books and I managed to hide from their prying eyes.

After a while I had made some good friends and a couple of enemies with the other books on the bookshelf.

As time passed less and less humans would come to visit us in the library until the trickle of visitors dried up completely. I felt so alone with only the sounds of the other books snoring and the wind whistling through the caves. One day the sound of crashes and screams reverberated in the air and then they stopped as quickly as they had started. The time passed in endless darkness.

Light! suddenly a beam of light shot from the doorway and roused me from my dreams. For the first time, after what seemed like an eternity, I could hear the sounds of human voices. Rapidly the beam of light opened up to reveal a group of strangely dressed human being. They inspected all the books in the cave and I soon found myself in a yet another sack.

I was swiftly transferred from the sack to a strange looking oblong box surrounded by papers and strange black tubes. My journey away from the caves was just a bumpy and rocky as my original journey but had the advantage of being far less smelly.

Finally I arrived at my current home. I was respectively unpacked by a man wearing white gloves and was housed in my own small room made from glass. My room was one of many in an enormous man made cave. Every day visitors would come to visit me, the Diamond Sutra, but I remained undisturbed behind the walls of glass.

Surrounded by foreigners my soul aches to return home. I wish to hear the melody of my own language and to be surrounded by a civilisation of 5,000 years. Most of all I miss my friends Gung Ho, Xiao Ming and Zi Tong.

All For Dad

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Wong, Chi Ching Ankie – 12

“Dad’s missing! Dad’s missing! The guards must’ve taken him for revenge! Dad’s missing, Kyle!” Kyle was woken up by his brother, Karl, who was frantically shaking him while screaming so quickly, Kyle could barely make out the words.

Kyle jumped out of bed and rushed out to take a look. It was true. His dad was missing. The only thing left in his room was a piece of paper. One which wasn’t a normal piece of paper, but from his early ancestor, who he could trace back to Gautama Buddha’s own apprentice. It was a map, which only his family could read. This map could tell you where his family members were, including his father, and it would soon prove its own purpose for Karl and Kyle.

“No!” Kyle shouted while reading the map. “How could they have taken him so far away for such a short span of time? They’re—they’re in the Mogao Caves!”

Karl snatched his bag and grabbed the ancient sword that had been hanging on the wall in the house for centuries. Kyle was angry about his brother for disrespecting his ancestors, but it wasn’t the right time. He dashed back to his room, slung his bow and arrows in his back, and wore his bandolier, then ran to the teleporter their father made in the garage. The brothers rushed into the neon blue cylinder tube and, with a push of a button, they were there — the Mogao Caves.

“Good afternoon, young men, would you like a tour around the Thousand Buddha Grottoes? This place is made out of 500 temples, and is an oasis located at the silk road—” a robot monk said, doing as it was programmed for.

“Kyle, over there!” Kyle snapped his head to where Karl was pointing. Then he saw it, on top of the mountain, beyond the Mogao Caves. Kyle heaved a short sigh of relief. At least they could see that their father was alive. But one problem is always followed by another.

Their father was stuck.

He was stuck on the top of the mountain, with nothing but himself.

To make matters worse, there were guards around him, not letting him have even the slightest chance of escaping.

“Hello monk, do you know the quickest way to get up to that mountain over the tall trees?”

“—some of the finest examples of Buddhist art, which spans a period of 1,000 years. It’s best known of the Chinese Buddhist grottoes and is one of the three famous ancient Buddhist sculptural sites of China—”

“Nevermind,” Karl shook his head and started walking towards the Mogao Caves. “So we are in Gansu province in China.”

“Affirmatively. To be more exact, 25 kilometres southeast of the center of Dunhuang—”

The duo ignored the robot and started their way to the cliff. The mountain was tall and it took them two hours to reach midpoint.

“Karl! Look, the guards are moving Dad into one of the caves!” Kyle started to run back down. The sun was setting and it could be dark anytime soon. They had one life to save, two vulnerable lives exposed to danger, and an unknown number of fights to come.

The sky was becoming dark, with no signs of moonlight lighting up the night. Karl knew; Kyle knew; everyone knew about the ancient danger. Everyone knew that whoever was stupid enough to come out at night under the full moon would be burnt to crisps by the egregious Dark Monk. But they had something more important: saving their dad.

The stars faded and black paint colored the sky.

BAM!

The Dark Monk had found them. He was as tall as the mountain, with his hands replaced by two guns, footsteps breaking even diamond, and armor made out of titanium. He was the shade of the moon.

The sound of firing guns was so loud that it had torn your eardrums apart. One of its bullets just missed Karl's head by a centimeter. BAM! Another missed his left ear by an inch. He ran at full speed, dodging bullets while trying his best not to ruin the caves while saving himself and his father, though the library cave had been destroyed, wall drawings and ancient scrolls were burning away.

"What do you want?" Kyle shouted above all commotion.

"You. Him. Anyone." The gargantuan monk boomed.

He summoned a swarm of dark monks. Normal humans, but with red eyes. One took a blow on Karl. He barely dodged it but managed to attack back with his sword. He defended it with his sword, which made a deafening clang. Karl tried attacking his chest, which only ended up making a small dent in the enemy's sword. The enemy dodged it, ran towards Kyle and attacked his right shoulder. Karl threw himself forward, just managed to save his brother. His enemy saw a chance and attacked his chest, but Karl dodged and turned to his back, trying to take a blow behind the enemy. He turned around, and took the blow on his sword. Karl took another attack on the enemy's foot, who dodged it, did a side roll and attacked Karl's foot. Karl jumped up just in time and was about to attack on the enemy's head when the enemy suddenly crouched and dodged the hit.

Kyle was able to find a way towards his dad under the chaos around him. The guards were too busy trying to fight off the robots that they left Dad unguarded. After Karl had saved him from a lethal hit, he used all his strength to run towards Dad, ignoring the helpless cries, piercing screams and deafening clangs. Once Kyle reached Dad, he scooped him up and pressed the neon blue button on his bandolier...

—

The father and his two sons swung the door open, like three soldiers who just fought a war. What confused the neighbours most, was why they were exhausted before noon. Well, they would never know, would they?

The Unbelievable Choice in Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Yip, Tsz Kwan – 9

Peter was in awe. Just like the other tourists, he stared at the wonderful architecture, amazed. Peter saw sculptures, statues, paintings... all kinds of flabbergasting things. Although all the historical architectures looked appealing, one painting attracted Peter the most. It was a picture of a smiling Buddha with a praying gesture. Eager to take a closer look, Peter leaned forward. Suddenly, the Buddha started to glow, so bright that Peter had to squint. Slowly, Peter retreated. But as he got further away, he felt a gust of strong wind blowing him towards the Buddha. And then... *whoosh!* Peter got sucked into the painting.

“Oooof!” Peter landed hard on solid ground. Waiting for the dust to go away, he opened his eyes and looked around cautiously. All the other tourists were gone! Peter could only see workers in old-fashioned clothes, digging and building a weird looking structure. Besides that, there were only rocky slopes and Mogao Grottoes was nowhere to be seen.

Soon, a worker noticed Peter. He walked over to him and muttered something under his breath. Peter thought he should seize the opportunity to ask the worker the time. “Hello... May I ask what time it is?” *No answer.* “Okay... then what is this sculpture?” Peter asked again, pointing to the building. *Still, no answer.*

After a short period of time, Peter realized that this worker didn’t understand a word he was saying. Suddenly, he recalled something that he studied for Mogao Grottoes. It was built long ago... in 366 AD! Now that Peter knew, he was so terrified that his legs started to shake frantically, and large beads of sweat were rolling down his face. “How could I be back in time? And how on earth am I supposed to go back to the future?”

Feeling helpless, Peter sat down on a small, dusty slope, thinking of how he would live in such a horrible place. Suddenly, the smiling Buddha’s face flashed into Peter’s mind. “*Would it be the very special Buddha picture that brought me here?*” he pondered.

Immediately, the Buddha picture appeared and glowed brightly, just like before. The light and dust blinding him, Peter heard a faint voice. “*Good job. Now, you will go to the time when Mogao Grottoes was completed. There, you shall find everything a tourist could ever wish for.*” With that, Peter was teleported to another place.

Peter’s head hit painfully onto the ground, but this time, it seemed harder than before. He got up stressfully and explored the area around him. The floor was no longer made of sand and soil. Instead, it was covered with bricks. When Peter lifted his head, he saw the tall, majestic architecture standing in front of him, exactly like the one in the future! At once, Peter’s heart was pounding against his chest. “Am I back in the future?” He wondered aloud. But something was wrong... it was still so early, where did all the tourists go?

Soon, Peter remembered what the Buddha said. Slowly and carefully, Peter stepped into Mogao Grottoes. The only light was the sun shining through small windows. Peter was excited — this could be his only chance to explore the history of Mogao Grottoes, with no other noisy tourists. He might even find some historical treasures! Instantly, Peter searched his dusty backpack and found a torch, a notebook, and a pen. His quest was about to begin!

Peter found a narrow staircase leading to the second floor. Holding his torch, he hurried up the stairs and found himself in a gloomy hall. He wandered around curiously, looking for some clues that might lead to something exceptional. All of a sudden, something caught Peter’s eye — a small mouse scurrying across the hallway. *Squeak, squeak!!* Peter gazed at the mouse, and a sudden thought struck him. *What if the mouse knows the way?*

He started to follow the mouse, but it ran faster and faster... until Peter broke off into a run. The mouse dashed into a tiny mouse hole, the size of a tennis ball! Peter gasped. “Hey! Little mouse, wait up! I can’t fit through that hole!” Magically, the mouse heard Peter. It scampered back out of the mouse hole, carrying a small sheet of parchment. Taking the yellowish paper, Peter read aloud, “*Here is all the information of Mogao Grottoes, containing the most original map that leads to all the secrets and hidden treasures, mysteries, and so much more. Written by Wang Yuanlu, the founder of Mogao Grottoes.*” He turned the paper over. Everything was there!

Peter went to the top level and found something amazing. In front of Peter stood the finest examples of Buddhist art, spanning a period of 1000 years. The statues, structures and models were gigantic. Peter sketched them on his notebook carefully. "This is priceless treasure!" He exclaimed. At the same time, Peter realized that the mouse hole was the place where the founder of Mogao Grottoes chose to hide the secrets.

The little mouse who followed along nodded and smiled at him. Finally, Peter understood his mission. The Buddha wanted him to find the secrets and save the mouse! If that was the case, Peter felt a strong urge that he must take this mouse home... it's too cruel to leave such a smart and adorable creature in this old and dusty place!

Like before, the glowing Buddha picture reappeared. In a split second, Peter pocketed the parchment and scooped up the mouse. *Whoosh!* To Peter's relief, he returned to the future, in the new and polished Mogao Grottoes, packed with noisy tourists. It was great to be back! When he turned to the Buddha picture, it winked at him. Peter beamed and opened his cupped hands. The little mouse peeped its head out, and Peter stroked his fluffy head. When Peter and his new pal saw the small mouse hole among the tourists, they shared a secret smile.

Apsara Acapella

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Yung, Yi Kiu Belle – 11

The caravan of camels plodded across the dusty desert, carrying loads on their backs. “Halt!” shouted Yakshim, a monk who was fleeing from the Monastery of Jaipur. “YAH! I command you to transport me and my followers to China,” he said to the merchant who was shivering with fear. Yakshim was a corrupted monk who had robbed the palace. He also abducted twelve young girls and twelve craftsmen to be his slaves. On the way, he captured six pilgrims who were travelling homeward.

Soon, they saw the silhouette of an oasis in the distance. It disappeared as they came nearer. It was a mirage!

After a tiring journey, they finally reached an oasis. Everyone jumped out to drink the refreshing water and climb the palm trees to pick the dates. What a discovery! Yakshim saw a grotto and entered. To his astonishment, he found numerous caves as he ventured further. That night, they stayed there. The next morning, Yakshim was shocked to see that the merchant and camels were gone.

Yakshim was a hideous monster with bulging eyes like a pair of purple sparks. His yellow teeth were sharp like a shark’s. They held their noses as they walked near Yakshim whose body stank like a skunk and his breath reeked of rotten radishes. He was a brute with no conscience, no scruples, no anything.

Yakshim ordered the young girls and men to perform different tasks. The girls had to grow vegetables, clean the caves, and cook vegan meals. The men had to decorate the caves with colourful paintings, carve statues, and the pilgrims had to write books on Buddhist teachings. The poor slaves worked from day to night and were beaten up by the cruel monk. Dejected and distressed, they longed for freedom and hoped someone could rescue them from the drudgery.

Sita, the most beautiful girl among the slaves, was a singer and dancer who used to entertain the Rajah, the Indian King. She taught the girls traditional Indian songs and dances.

“How could we sing without the sitars, flutes and drums?” they asked.

“We could roll our tongues and purse our lips to make music,” said Sita.

One day, a newcomer arrived, a handsome young man holding a basket full of drawings and paintbrushes. “My name is Mang, I’ve been painting the landscapes of Dunhuang when the evil monk caught me. He commanded me to paint pictures of Buddha to brighten up the caves,” he told the slaves. He showed them the beautiful drawings of the desert wonders: spectacular sand dunes, the magnificent Mingsha Mountains, the crystal clear Crescent Lake, the blazing sunrise and the flaming sunsets.

“They’re gorgeous!” everyone exclaimed. Mang was upset when Yakshim made him paint statues of Buddha on the walls and the ceiling. As agile as a monkey, Mang seemed to clamber up the walls easily. The girls admired him and kept offering to do him favours.

One day, Mang let them in the secret. “Actually, I possess a sack of magic powder given to me by my Master. The magic powder could make me fly high and low.” Everyone was eager to try out the magic powder. Shaking his head and wagging his fingers, Mang refused.

The girls pleaded with Mang every day. “We want fun because it’s so boring here.” Touched by their tears, Mang agreed to help them to fly.

“Seraphims and cherubims have wings. How can we fly without them?” the girls asked.

Winking warily, Mang said “You’ll see.”

Presto! The girls were lifted in the air and felt as light as feathers, swishing and swaying, sashaying their sashes.

Suddenly, they heard a booming sound. “YOO! What’s the hullabaloo?” Yakshim hollered. Quickly, the girls untied their sashes and descended to the ground.

The girls made a plan to escape while Yakshim was sleeping.

“Fly to freedom! Fly from boredom!” “Fly to reunite with our fathers and mothers!” “Fly to reunite with our brothers and sisters!”

Alas! A sandstorm arose and they were engulfed in dusty clouds. They were swept in different directions, battling with a whirl of sand. Coughing and choking, sneezing and wheezing, the girls felt desperate. The prickly sand stung their faces like tiny daggers.

“Help! Let’s return to the grottoes,” they wailed. They pulled their sashes, struggling to fly in the opposite direction.

Sita was sitting on top of a dark cloud, waving farewell to them. “I’ll miss you. I’ll be back in India soon.”

Meanwhile, the slaves were plotting to get rid of Yakshim. They tied him up while he was asleep and Mang splashed the magic powder on his head, hands and legs.

Up, up, up he soared. Awakened, Yakshim was shocked to find himself in mid-air. “YAH! YOO!” he screamed, flinging his arms and kicking furiously.

The slaves doubled up with laughter. In no time, Yakshim vanished in the billowing dust clouds. That night, the slaves celebrated their victory. However, they missed the girls and dreaded they would encounter any danger. To their amazement, they heard the sweet sound of singing as the girls flitted into the caves.

“We’ve decided to stay here forever. Where’s our cruel master?”

“He’s gone forever.”

“He’s become a feast for a brutal beast.”

The grottoes were filled with music and laughter. “We’re a blessed and blissful family.” “Let’s live here forever!” The girls found that the ground was too damp for their liking and moved to sleep on the ceilings. There they remained to adorn the walls of Mogao Grottoes.

New Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Preparatory School, Fung, Yat Hei – 11

About 1600 years ago, pilgrims dug many caves, and spent time putting treasure, writing scrolls and building sculptures. They believed in Buddhism and painted a lot of images of the Buddha. One morning, a pilgrim named Granham found out that he does not have any food because he was very poor and lacked money. He went out to work, which was digging caves with an empty stomach. He haven't eaten for two days. His employer was in a really bad mood that day. When he saw Granham digging a hole, he growled, "Would you please speed up? You've been working for an hour and you only dug 1 metre! Stop slacking around!" After an hour, the employer decided to fire him. As Granham left, he realised that he was unemployed and will not have any money. After 2 days, he cried in desperation for food. Suddenly an idea popped up in his head. Since he worked in the caves before, he knows every path and shortcuts inside. He could steal the treasure and sell it!

That night, he was busily planning his evil plan. Legend says one of the treasure holds the secret of Buddhism. Although he did not believe in the Buddha, he still wanted to steal it and sell it. He put on a mask and snuck out. There were two guards guarding the cave, and he used his shovel to hit them on the head. The guards fell down and fainted, while Granham snuck in quietly. He started to regret what he had just done, but he still continued the mission. He knew that it was a bad idea but he told himself that if he turned around, he will starve to death. So, he thought he is dying either way. After some paths and shortcuts, he finally reached the treasure room. He looked around the room and found out that all the treasure inside worth a fortune. There were Buddha sculptures made of gold, some books made out of clean white paper, and some coins next to the Giant Buddha statue. He climbed down the rock wall. Suddenly, his pants ripped open, and echoed through the room. He chuckled to himself, "I guess I haven't bought any new pants for 2 years." He knew his humour came in the most inappropriate times, but the word inappropriate was like the understatement of the century for the situation he was in right then. He slid down the giant Buddha sculpture to get the treasure. He looked around the room and laid eyes on the jewellery first. He shoved a handful of diamonds inside his leather bag. Then, he spotted some books laying beside the rock wall. There were scrolls, books and bamboo strips. "Hmmm," he thought. "So I wonder where is the legendary treasure. It must be a book. Maybe it's in another cave!" He decided to look for it. He noticed that one of the scrolls were sticking out. He pulled it out, and had trouble reading the scroll. WATCH OUT – the scroll says. Suddenly, a chest fell down from the roof and almost hit Granham. Granham opened the chest. It was the legendary treasure! He knew it was a book. The guards started to wake up, and walked in the cave immediately. Granham realised that he was in deep trouble. The guards called for more backup since they thought Granham was holding a dangerous weapon. In fact, he has left his shovel outside the cave. He panicked and ran into a hole next to the giant Buddha statue. The guards came in with bright fire on their torches and warned Graham to come out. One of the guards spotted Granham's leather bag sticking out of the hole, and said that if he doesn't come out, he will throw a torch into the hole and burn him alive. He was kind of spooked out but he believed that the guards would not burn the treasure. He waited and waited but the guards did not leave. He realised that he had to get out one day, because he was losing oxygen in a small hole like that. The guards slept on comfortable hay in front of the hole while Granham was cramped in a tiny space and scared to death. He threw his shoe out to see what will happen, and heard chopping and dicing. The shoe was thrown back into the hole, sliced into tiny bits. On the next day, the guards were still there. He decided to bet his life, and ran out with all his might. The guards instantly chased after him. Because he have not eaten for so long, he was weak, and the guards slowly surpassed him. He threw down his heavy load of jewellery and only took the book. One of the guards tripped over the leather bag and fell down. It gave Granham a speed advantage. He ran out of the cave and is kind of relieved to see the sun again. He thought he'd never make his way out of there alive. A few seconds later, the guards caught up and continued chasing Granham. He ran and ran, waking up all the pilgrims in the village. When the pilgrims had known what happened, they started chasing Granham too, while saying "Stop thief!" He paced around frantically. Even if he can go back home safely, the villagers will still hand him to the guards. He ran into a cliff, while villagers and guards climb up slowly. He realised that he had nowhere else to go, and decided to die by falling. He'd rather die in peace rather being burnt alive. He jumped down with the book and was never found again.

Until now, explorers say that there is a missing piece of Buddhism that may not be revealed ever. They claim that they could not find it. It will remain a mystery forever. Perhaps one day, they would find the book and will know the entire story.

Dunhuang Grottoes

Diocesan Preparatory School, Han, Michael Jude – 10

The Mission to Uncover the Ancient Caves

It was finally time. It was the year 2599, there were almost no more dangers known to mankind, Earth was finally a dream planet, wonderful things that you could only see in fictional stories thrived. Then, the government of the planet allowed 18 people to lead an expedition to discover ancient caves in Dunhuang. Before the explorers embarked on the journey, a legendary seer rumored to be 1000 years old, warned the explorers of the danger of an imposter attempting to hunt them down. The imposter's purpose was to guard and protect the spirits of the dead, for it would not listen to the creators of the grotto, and had a murderous desire to slaughter people who passed by the caves instead of simply driving them away. The imposter refused to listen because he found waiting only to drive people away who come too close to the grottoes was too dull, so he decided to take it one step beyond and murder innocent people near the ancient caves. After hearing the news about the imposter, four explorers were too frightened to continue with the journey and turned around. The remaining 14 traveled together to the ancient grottoes.

When the expedition team voyaged to the Dunhuang caves, they entered through one of the caves leading deep into the mountain. They soon came upon Cave 17, also known as the Library Cave, which contains all of the ancient manuscripts of the builders of the grottoes. One of the explorers accidentally stepped on a hidden button which, revealed a dark and mysterious tunnel leading deep underground. The surveyor was startled by the howls of the dead. He was scared and spooked, and out of panic, stepped on a button. The other seekers searched for secret entrances. They were relieved when an entrance was revealed to them and organized a plan to gather courage and enough lanterns to travel down the tunnel. As they went down, the door shut firmly behind them. The explorers knew that it was the spirits of the dead builders.

The explorers kept venturing forward, and soon enough, they finally saw the light. To their surprise, it was the ancient builders' graveyards. Legend has it that on the first and second day of November, the spirits of the dead builders of Dunhuang Grottoes would come back to life to haunt anyone that comes close to the caves in an attempt to protect their treasures and manuscripts. There were still more tunnels leading deep underground, and the explorers sensed they were very close to bedrock level. Suddenly, the Library Cave tunnel roof collapsed, blocking the way to the surface. Luckily, there were pickaxes and shovels on the ground, most likely left by grave builders during construction. The explorers could utilize these tools to dig their way back to the surface. One of the tunnels led to a giant Buddha shrine, which held power to summon Poseidon, god of the seas. All that was needed to summon him was an ancient artifact made by one of the earliest builders of the Dunhuang Grottoes.

Then, the imposter finally revealed himself. A tall and skinny man with red and blue hair, blood dripping from his eyes and mouth, and a creepy smile sprawled across his face. With a violent swing, the imposter chopped off the heads of several explorers, leaving only ten alive. The remaining tried to fight back with their tools while one went back to find the ancient artifact. This particular explorer had to dig in the graves because the artifact was buried with the monk who created the legendary item. The item looked like a tiny yellow man with green and blue eyes, short arms, and curly legs, and holding a magical staff in his left hand. After some treacherous work, the explorer brought the artifact up. He tactfully avoided the imposter's attacks and suppressed the anxieties caused by the spine-chilling howls of the dead builders. Poseidon came to life with the artifact carefully placed and lightning striking the ancient shrine. With a deafening shriek, the imposter was gone, and Poseidon disappeared. However, a deep voice that befitted the voice of the water lord boomed, "You are welcome for saving you. Do not worry. You will not have to return the favor." After mining through rocks blocking the exit, the remaining men re-emerged from underground with their mission finally complete.

Legend has it that the entrance to the graveyard remains sealed after the explorers left. However, the imposter and the spirits continue to haunt anyone that comes too close to the grotto

Mogao and Grottoes

Discovery Bay International School, Jayal, Mrinalini – 10

Hundreds of years ago in the northern part of China, there was a cave in the middle of dense woods. A troop of soldiers were resting there after a very long day at the battlefield, some of them were injured yet full of energy.

Amongst them there were two brave soldiers, Mogao and Grottoes, they were very good friends and fearless soldiers, “Mogao , Grottoes, how did you both get so close ? ” asked a soldier.

Mogao was very good at horse riding and Grottoes was good at archery. Both grinned at each other and started their story.

“When we were young, we both used to live in the southern part of China. There we would practice our hobbies in the afternoon. Grottoes used to go to the woods daily to practice” Mogao said.

“One day I went to the same woods. I did not practice archery but I did practice horse riding. The very first day I went into the woods I went deep inside while riding my horse. I was really not expecting to see a panther coming towards me. I was so frightened I turned numb and could not move ,but unexpectedly an arrow wounded the panther. The arrow was shot by none other than Grottoes. When I got my voice back, I thanked him. And you know, when a person just saves your life you cannot help but become friends with him and after that day onwards we were friends. We had a short conversation about our names and hobbies after that.”Mogao said.

“This is not the only reason we both are friends,” said Grottoes. “I was not the only one who saved someone’s life,” he added. “After a few years we both were chosen as warriors. In one of the battles my horse got wounded and I rolled off it. Mogao drove his horse towards me and the very next second, I was on his horse. He saved my life as well and we became best friends.”

Preparing themselves for the next day, everyone wished each other good night and drifted off to sleep.

Next day the battle ended, with a triumph. Many soldiers had lost their lives, amongst them were Mogao and Grottoes.

Both of them had fought fearlessly and defeated the enemies. When the rest of the troop got to know about their sacrifice, they named the cave where they spent the previous night as ‘Mogao Grottoes’. The ‘Mogao Grottoes’ is still present in silk road Dunhang , China and now is a memorial of two brave warriors who fought selflessly for their kingdom.

The Continue of Mogao Grottoes

Discovery Bay International School, Tasli, Oyku – 10

The secrets of the international scholar caves have Lead people to the treasures and a key to a very special castle. The travellers have heard the news they were on their way to the treasures. But there were only 3 people looking for the treasures so let's see who will get the awesome prize. Once upon a time there were 3 people called Sparkle, Silly and Willy.

They were all 10 years old. One time Willy decided to open the tv to watch cartoon films but when he opened it was news in front of him. Sparkle said close these news it is boring but they heard the treasure thing. They were super excited since their mom was outside and their dad was at work they had an idea!! They packed their stuff and headed to the treasure. But Silly said but we don't have the map. They were so sad . Until they found a book that was sparkling it was something important I think said Sparkle. They opened the book and saw a map. Is there a ghost here that brought us this said Willy. Let's go now!! Said Silly. Ok! Said Sparkle. They headed to the treasure. In the map there were a lot of clues. The first one said find a boat that leads you to the key. What key said Silly. Maybe a key that opens the treasure. Oh maybe there is a sea really close to our house. Maybe it is there, said Sparkle. They headed there and there was a boat !!! They went in and there was a pirate. He said what are you doing here. We are here for the treasure. Omg you are here for the treasure. Yes they all said. Let's go to find the key. The pirate knew where the key was. Ok I will lead you guys there . They were soooooo happy. After They arrived at a forest. Where here said Sparkle let's go. After they said bye to the pirate they headed to the treasure. But there was a mistake when they saw that the treasure was under the ground. Oh no. But there was a clue that said go look at the back of the trees. They looked for hours for the clue they found it. It was a shovel so they could dig. The map said dig next to the tree that says Mogao Grottoes. They looked and looked and looked and they found it. It said to dig underground next to the tree they found a gold treasure. OMG they said at the same time. They opened the treasure without a key. There was a key inside. The map said you found it that leads you to a very special castle. They went home and showed their mom. Their mom was so happy. That was the end of a really great adventure.

Tale Of The Abandoned Caves

Discovery Bay International School, Wong, Liann – 11

This story takes place thousands and thousands of years ago when the goddesses and buddhas still roamed the world—

Beads of sweat were running down from his head, he was tired and so was his dog Lotus. After miles and miles of walking, they finally came across a luscious and stunningly flourish patch of green in the distance... 'Alas' he thought, 'shade, and maybe water'. He found a small shallow river flowing from a pond and immediately drank. Just as he finished drinking, he noticed that there was a little river flowing from where he was drinking. So he decided to explore. "Where are you going?" Moaned the old man, they had already been walking for twenty minutes and the sun was setting upon the mountains of sand. "We have to stop here Lotus, it's getting dark." Declared Lotus' owner. Soon after their slumber, the old man woke up at dusk as the sun awakened behind the dunes of sand. The pair ate some nuts and drank some water and they were off. When they arrived at an end to the river, they looked up and discovered that they had reached an end and were standing in front of a colossal wall of rocks. There was a temple in front of the wall of rocks and was decorated with statues of goddesses and buddhas. As the pair entered, the old man felt a gust of wind swirl around him making him shiver. They came across a room with paintings, pots, gold and jewelry all over the place, dust, words and pictures drawn on the walls and cobwebs covered them. It felt, '*Abandoned*'. The old man stared at all the glory surrounding him, imagining how rich he would become with all these treasures. And so, he moved on down the echoing hall. He reached another spacious room filled with sculptures and pictures of buddhas. Then, he went back to the room with treasures, gold and more. 'Maybe, the gods won't mind if I take a piece of gold or two he thought. And so, his hand and trembling to reach the gold ingots. The gold ingot felt cold as he brushed off the dust and grime of it. Then he realized that there was a marking carved on the front "Let's go now, Lotus." Instsited the man. Just as they headed out the entrance, the old man heard thunder roar behind them...

"Where do you think you're going?" Boomed a voice behind them. The old man turned around shaking. He was standing in front of a statue that he had seen in the treasury room, it somehow came to life and was talking. "What are you doing here?" The statue roared again. The old man was in trouble... "Uh, nothing, definitely not trying to take one of your treasures!" Stammered the man. "Not so fast," Demanded the statue. "You are coming with me." With that, he pulled the man and Lotus into a dungeon. Never to be seen or heard again...

The Secret of the Mogao Grottoes

Discovery Mind Primary School, Davis, Jayden – 9

International archeologists exploring the Mogao grottoes cave found this creepy story. It was found in a small box, guarding the entrance

Once upon a time in a village of the Mogao Grottoes, a few children were playing catch. A girl threw the ball to a boy. But the boy couldn't catch it. The ball rolled into an old cave behind them. The boy ran into the cave to get the ball. As soon as he entered, he heard a scary voice, "Leave this place and never come here again," screeched the voice. The boy was terrified. He quickly grabbed the ball and ran for his life.

The word spread about the spooky voice in the cave and a world-famous explorer named Tad heard it. He decided to investigate the mystery. He traveled all the way from America and spent days looking for the Mogao Grottoes caves. He thought about the mystery of the spooky voice and what it was hiding. He was looking forward to the new discovery and that it would make him world famous in the world.

Tad finally arrived at the cave. He slowly walked inside the dark and gloomy cave. At first, he felt nothing strange. But when he got inside, it was not dark or scary like the rumors said. Instead, as he walk deeper inside, he uncovered a golden, bright, and stunning temple! It was made of gold and had many statues of Buddha and other gods. It was nothing like he had seen before." Why was it here? Who built this? Tad wondered?" Why was this a secret for all these years?

As he walked through the temple, he heard voices. "Leave at once or die!" screeched the voice. As Tad continued walking, he saw a Misty figure appear. He was stunned. The misty figure was all white and had no face. It started chasing Tad. Tad ran and ran but the figure kept chasing him. Thankfully Tad found a corner and he hid there. Inside a glass bowl in the corner, Tad saw something shining. It was a golden ball; it was shining so brightly that it blinded Tad. He took it and put it in his pocket. Tad thought he could figure out what it was when he finally escapes from this cave. He ran as fast as he could to the exit, but the figure stopped him.

The figure locked the exit of the cave with a boulder that only a 500-soldier army could open. Tad was trapped. Tad asked in a shaky voice, "Why are you chasing me and who are you?" The figure said, "I was once a Monk who came to this cave to meditate. While I was here, I found a golden ball. I uncovered the secret of the ball, as I wished for a golden temple in the cave while holding the ball. The ball is a magical wishing ball. I knew it could destroy the world if it got in the wrong hands. So, I wished that I would become a ghost after I die and protect the secret of the Mogao Grottoes and the magic ball."

Tad did not believe the ghost at first, he realized that he had a ball too. He decided to test if the figure was telling the truth. He wished that he would be able to see the people outside this cave in front of him. Then he saw a strange vision of people outside a big cave, he realized they were the people outside. Tad understood that the ball he had was the ghost's ball. He also knew the ball could do harm if it got into the wrong hands. Tad gave the ball to the Ghost and promised that he would keep this spooky and creepy experience a secret. The ghost removed the enormous boulder and let Tad go free.

Tad left this story here for the secret ball of the Mogao grottoes of the Mogao Grottoes. But he knew he had to do the right thing for the ghost. He kept his word to the Ghost and never spoke a word about the secrets just he uncovered. It would remain a secret forever and ever.

The Story of the Cursed Boat

Discovery Mind Primary School, Leung, Jenson – 9

Once upon a time, a witch bought a boat but she put a curse on the boat and sold it to a merchant called Huang. Huang's greatest wish was to be wealthy. Huang went aboard the boat and sailed off to Rome. While sailing to Rome, Huang discovered gold and jewels in the boat's storeroom. He thought he was now abundantly rich and wanted to go back home.

The sailor onboard agreed, but only if Huang gave him a share of the money. Huang agreed to give him only a fifth of the share. The sailor agreed to this. Both men didn't know that the gold in the room was cursed. A leak sprang in the boat and it began to sink. Huang had an idea. He collected some wooden planks and hammered the wooden planks over the leak.

Unfortunately, the wooden planks didn't stop the leak. He decided to collect barrels. He fetched a wooden chest and put all of the gold and diamonds into the wooden chest. He collected more wooden planks. Next, he got 10 fishing rods, some cloth, and a wooden stick. He then attached the rope to the two wooden sticks. He then attached the cloth to the L-shaped sticks. Then he attached it in such a way that it made a raft. Then He gathered all of the food in the kitchen and put it in another wooden chest.

Huang and the crew jumped on the raft. Huang fell into a deep sleep. One day later, the crew woke Huang with a stick and said that all of the gold had the number '4' imprinted onto it!

In ancient China, people believed the number 4 was unlucky because death and four nearly sounded the same. When they reached the harbor, they discovered they were in Iran. Soon the police came and Huang told them to go back to the raft. Two days later they arrived at a village. On the top of the village, there was a farm. Huang told the crew to go to the house on the farm and ask them for food.

They went to the house and knocked on the door, then they waited. After a while, he was surprised to see his friend open the door. He was invited inside where he saw a feast piled on the table and his friends were all there. He explained his journey to his friends, telling them of his misfortune and how he had ended up here.

After they ate lunch, Huang's friend gave Huang a small chest of coins. Huang told them he didn't need the chest of coins and that he needed some food instead. His friends gave him enough food to last for a few days.

Huang made his way down the hill back to the raft. He sailed to an island with a hill on it where Huang asked the crew to dock the raft. He found a cave on the hill. Deep inside the cave, there lived a dragon.

The dragon woke up and Huang ran away. When he ran down the hill to get to the raft, he stumbled over a hard object. He looked closer and saw that it was a diamond! He put the large diamond into his bag. The crew escaped the dragon and sailed off to India. A rich woman met the crew at the harbor in Delhi. She was kind and sheltered them. Two days later, she organized him yurts from Mongolia to bring him back to China.

Three days later when the crew reached Vietnam, they saw rice paddies. After that, they arrived in Beijing. While in Beijing, Huang gave the diamond to a large diamond wholesaler and offered him lots of money and Huang was finally rich!

The Golden Tiger

Discovery Mind Primary School, Lorraine, Apple – 10

Over a millennia ago, before the stars existed, there was once a village near the roaring flames of the sun called Lao-Hu. The reason it was called Lao-Hu was because of a legend surrounding their sacred grounds; the Mogao Caves. It was believed that a tiger would come and heal any villagers that became sick or hurt, but when two sisters were born nobody believed this myth anymore as the sister's mother had died after giving birth. She had not been healed by the tiger. The children were with their grandmother and she named the children Ai Lung and Shi Lung.

One day, their grandmother fell so ill that she could barely eat, talk and walk. The sisters sought help from the village doctor, who gave them many herbs and medicines, but these never helped her get better. They even went to the neighboring village but the medicine from there didn't work. That night, Ai Lung and Shi Lung had stayed next to each other with their grandmother, hoping she would get better. Then a thought came into their heads, they remembered a story their grandmother had once told them.

Their grandmother told them about the golden tiger. She described that the tiger was 6 feet tall and had eyes so bright they were like pure blue crystal. The tiger's skin was glimmering gold, it was so shiny you couldn't even stare at it for long or your eyes would burn. The fangs were sharper than the sharpest thing in the world and were the colour of silver. The tiger's paws were so silent you couldn't even hear him coming.

Ai Lung and Shi Lung began to plan their visit to the Mogao Caves. They packed some mooncakes for a snack and a lantern to guide them. "That's the only thing we're going to pack, because we can't carry too much, can we?" whispered Ai Lung. They crept out of the house and made sure no one was watching them, by being vigilant. The path going there was steep because of rocks protruding out of the broken stone pathway. The further they walked, the smaller the village seemed and the windier it became. Finally, they reached their destination, panting heavily.

The Mogao Caves structure was incredibly beautiful and had amazing architecture. The sisters gaped at the building like hungry crows before something caught their eye. A figure of light was walking through the bushes, every step glowing light as it moved. The sisters both stayed as still as statues as they realized it was the tiger walking through the heavy doors of the cave. Suddenly, the tiger grinned and lightly smirked, "I can see you through the dark, you know?" The tiger then disappeared into the cave.

The sisters followed the tiger into the cave and watched his golden tail lighting the way. The golden tiger didn't see them because he was more focused on the crystalline embroidery guiding his steps. Ai Lung made sure they were as quiet as mice, balancing on their toes. Then, Ai Lung heard a loud crack, she turned around to see her sister stepping on a heavy branch that had fallen and blown into the cave. Ai Lung stared at her sister in shock. Shi Lung was saying something, but the sisters had ducked under a red carpet above the embroidery. The tiger swung around and surveyed the area.

The sisters stayed very silent until the tiger had turned and walked away. They leapt out of hiding and rushed to where the tiger was. To their surprise, he stood still. All of a sudden, a shining, purple light blinded them, causing them to stumble. When they woke up, they saw lots of glowing, colorful bottles; filled with strange liquid substances. They couldn't move, because there was a strange bright orange bubble covering them. Eventually, they saw the tiger standing only on two paws brewing a multicolored liquid.

Both Ai Lung and Shi Lung stared at him in fear. The tiger had long and sharp teeth that looked like they would bite you if you weren't looking. The skin of the tiger was bright gold, it blinded them again and his eyes were glistening like a pale, blue moon. The tiger walked closer and closer, slowly moving to them. The sisters were terrified of the tiger itself. They both closed their eyes, hoping this was a dream and they fell asleep next to grandma. They opened their eyes to find the tiger was looking at them.

"Hello, you two, it's so wonderful to meet you, my name is Ha Lung," quipped the tiger. "Wait...Ha Lung? Isn't that our ancestor's name?" Questioned the sisters in unity. "Yes, it is true, I am your ancestor. I was hoping I could

save your mother, but I wouldn't just walk out and pretend I haven't been there for a thousand years and heal her." murmured the tiger. "This is all I can do to apologize for being late. "He then took out a glowing elixir, giving it to them, "Take this, it will heal all the infections and diseases she has in her body, but hurry, soon she will wake up and die trying to find you," the tiger stated. They ran out of the passageway watching their ancestor looking at them. The cold winds grew harsh and it felt like they were going to freeze. Ai Lung grabbed her sister's hand and quickly ran to their cottage in the village. They had made it in time and quietly sat next to their grandma. Shi Lung poured the potion into their grandmother's mouth, patiently waiting for her to awaken. They heard a silent muffle and turned to see their grandmother, curiously peering at them. "Am I alive?" she asked. Both sisters ran to hug their grandmother. "We met our ancestor" they both cried in unison. "We will be eternally grateful to him."

The Girl from Mogao

Discovery Mind Primary School, Pillay, Manha – 9

A long time ago, there was a girl called Mogava living on a farm in Mogao. She lived with her mean older sister in a hut near a beautiful botanical forest and some large old caves. Her sister was lazy and kept telling Mogava to do all the housework. Mogava's sister would not do anything, she would only lie in bed all day and rest. One day when Mogava went out to fetch a pot of water from the clean lake near the botanical forest in order to make her sister some tea. Suddenly, Mogava tripped on a big sharp rock! The rock rolled onto its side into the grass and pushed against a hidden, olive colored, round button. Mogava was standing near the large caves, but the cave's entrance had never opened, it was as though they were glued shut. But now they were opening to reveal a brown desk and chair. Mogava thought that she would come the following day and have a closer look at the intriguing desk.

The following day, Mogava woke up extra early to go to the caves. There were different things on the table: old books, poems, art and art supplies. Mogava picked up a drawing and scanned it with her eyes. She turned the paper over to see if there was a signature or some more information about the artist. She was surprised to see that there was! 'Zhao MengFu, Eight Horses, 25/6/1368'. Mogava was very curious.

When Mogava arrived home later, her sister was sitting on the couch. Mogava was surprised because the furthest her sister ever walked was from her bed to the kitchen in order to get snacks. The kitchen was right outside her room! She fiercely asked Mogava, "Where were you?"

Mogava calmly replied, "On a morning walk. It's a new habit of mine. Wake up bright and early in the morning, maybe even catch some fresh air, clear my mind and basically enjoy myself." Although in real life Mogava was going to the caves.

"Fine, it must be so lame anyway," said Mogava's sister. The next day, when Mogava visited the caves, she decided to name the caves, The Mogao Grottoes which means, in Mogava's language, 'ancient historical caves'. She took some black paint and a paintbrush and painted the new cave name on the wall. When she got home, she was covered in black paint and that's when Mogava's sister started to become suspicious.

The following day, when Mogava was just about to leave, her sister came running out of her bedroom wearing green. "What are you doing?" asked Mogava.

"Some Yoga," replied her sister. But Mogava's sister was actually following her! When Mogava was approaching the cave, she heard some rustling near the bushes. Mogava thought it was the wind as there was a slight breeze in the air. Mogava became suspicious as her sister would always arrive home after Mogava. Mogava's sister said that she was going for a run, but Mogava didn't believe that. Two weeks after her sister started doing this, Mogava realized what was happening and spotted her sister behind a bush. The following day, Mogava had set a trap at the exact same bush her sister hid at and it worked! Mogava heard a thump. She walked over to the bush and saw her sister caught in the trap. She made her sister admit what she had done. When she told the truth, Mogava helped her get out of the trap and go home. Mogava's sister was so embarrassed and ashamed of what she had done. She had learnt her lesson!

Moral: The moral of the story is what you put out into the world will always come back to you.

The Identity of a King

Discovery Mind Primary School, Shetty, Thea – 10

Hundreds of years ago, there was a nomadic tribe in Mongolia. One day when they were in the Gobi desert, they stopped to rest near a cliff face. The tribal chief looked at the sun and saw that it was about to set. He told the others they could spend the night there. The next morning, the tribe got up early to look for an oasis so they could have some fresh water and food. The chief told a person named Wang to look after the livestock while they were away. Soon the rest of the tribe set off in search of the oasis. A long time passed and there was no sign of the Chief and the rest of the tribesmen. While Wang was taking care of the livestock, a restless young mare started running around. It ran through a gaping hole in the cliff!

Wang secured the rest of the livestock and ran after the young mare. The hole was just the right size for him. Once inside, he found the mare kicking at a painting on the wall with its hooves. Wang decided to have a look around. The cave was filled with beautiful works of art. There were sculptures, paintings and murals of kings, apsaras, Buddha and the Silk Road. Wang was awestruck he had never seen anything like this before! Suddenly the mare ran off again, deeper into the cave and entering a second cave. This time it stopped in front of a painting. Wang ran towards it. He looked at the painting the mare was standing in front of, something was very strange about it. It was a painting of four men who looked like the king's advisors and there was a throne in the middle which was empty! The mare looked excited and jumped into the painting! Wang just stared, he couldn't believe his eyes! Without a second thought, he too jumped into the painting. There he saw the four advisors he had seen before; he was about to ask them if they had seen his mare but then he saw it running towards him. One of the men asked him, "May I know your name?" Wang responded saying "I am Wang".

The advisors told him the following story:

"A long time ago, when the king was young, he was to be married to the most beautiful girl in the kingdom. A day before the wedding, a shaman came knocking on the castle doors. She said it was urgent and she had important news to give to the king and his future was at stake. She was taken to the throne room where the king was in discussion with his advisors. She marched towards the king and stood in front of him with a stern face. The king, though taken by surprise, knew of her strange powers and hence allowed this interruption and asked everyone to leave.

The shaman told the king he should marry her and not the other woman and by doing so he would be the most powerful king. Hours passed and the king still refused to change his mind. The shaman stomped her feet in rage then she took a bottle which contained a yellow gold liquid. She poured the liquid in her hand and splashed droplets all over the king while chanting a spell. The king cried out for help. The advisors and guards came running into the room but it was too late the shaman had disappeared and the king was shaking violently. Suddenly, he was surrounded by a vortex of cherry blossoms and he vanished leaving only petals on the floor which formed the shape of a mare."

Now while the advisors were telling the story the mare was standing near Wang the whole time as if listening. Wang looked at it and asked "is this mare the missing king?" He asked the advisors how to turn the mare back to the king. They gave him a scroll which had a map on it; which would lead them to the potion to break the spell and bring back the king. Wang took some food and water and then set off with the mare.

The mare and Wang were almost at the place where the potion was. They were climbing a steep hill, and on top of the hill was the potion. Finally after a day of climbing they reached the top. There they saw a small cave inside it was the bubbling potion in a huge pot. Wang took a bottle and filled it with the potion. Next he looked for the book of spells which he found hidden under the rocks. They headed back to the castle as the advisors had told him the spell would break only if the mare drank the potion at the place where it turned its form from human to animal.

They arrived at the castle and everyone was eagerly awaiting their return. The advisors took Wang and the mare to the throne room where they opened the book of spells and started reading it while Wang made the mare drink the

potion. Suddenly, the mare was surrounded by a vortex of petals and when it settled, they saw their king smiling back at them. The king and the advisors thanked Wang and bid goodbye after rewarding him with huge bags filled with exotic food.

When Wang returned to the Gobi desert, he saw his tribe waiting for him. They all welcomed him wondering where all the food came from and were eager to know about the mysterious Mogao caves!

Finding the Lost Statue

Discovery Mind Primary School, Strelow, Luiz – 9

A long time ago, a few explorers were walking in the Dunhuang Province in China searching for loot and several other useful items. When they arrived at the Silk Road, there was a very large cave right in front of them. After a few minutes, they stepped foot into the pitch black cave. The explorers lit up their torches and went deeper inside the magical cave.

After walking inside the cave, the explorers saw a locked door. The tallest explorer grabbed his lock picking set and started to unlock the door. The door creaked as it slowly opened and revealed a massive statue of a golden Buddha, it was so shiny that the whole room lit up. They also found gold coins, paintings on the wall and ancient scrolls. They took one scroll and left the cave.

The sun was setting and it was getting dark so the explorers started walking all the way back to their camp. At camp, they discussed the golden statue and wondered why it was made. They thought and thought but they couldn't figure out why. They turned to the scroll and searched for the information. The information said that it was built by people called Monks who built them because they believed in a god called Buddha.

The explorers decided that it was enough information for the day, and went to bed, sleeping silently below the beautiful night sky. In the middle of the night one of the explorers heard a horse riding outside and people talking outside their camp, but it did not worry him. The following morning, the explorers went back to the cave with more information than they had ever known. When they arrived there, something was strange, it felt emptier. When they came across the locked door, the golden statue had disappeared. They were confused, shocked and extremely scared that someone might have taken the statue away. The explorer that heard the horse at night said that maybe the people on the horse took the statue away. After they left the caves, they saw marks of horse footprints, human footprints and a lot of sand. The explorers followed the trails until they reached a village with a lot of people.

The explorers asked the people if they had seen a horse. A few of them had seen the horse. One of the villagers said that they were carrying something golden on the horse. This made the explorers highly suspicious about the horse. Most of the people were awake outside their houses and the explorers were told that one of the villagers saw a horse with the Buddha galloping towards the South-East.

They went back to camp and took their chariot and started driving South-East. The drive took eight hours and forty minutes to get to Chengdu. They continued asking people if they had seen a horse. The explorers saw more pandas than horses in Chengdu. Almost everyone said they did not see a horse, and the campers went to an inn and slept there for two nights.

After they had breakfast, they hit the road again to continue their search. They drove a short distance before reaching Chongqing. They asked more and more people and thankfully most of them had seen a young horse with something golden. They now knew to keep an eye out for a young horse!

After three days in Chongqing, the explorers saw a young horse! They immediately got into their chariot and started driving behind the horse. They drove for twelve hours nonstop on a long road and finally took a break, the place they were in was Dongguan. The town was large and crowded and full of street markets. They waited behind the horse and saw the Buddha, shining as brightly as it had in the caves. The horse started to move towards the exit of Dongguan. It was heading to Hong Kong. The explorers climbed onto their chariot and continued following the horse, they drove for a long time. The explorers were keen to get the Buddha back to Dunhuang. Once they reached Hong Kong, they found themselves in Central. There were many wet markets, farms, trading routes and of course horses.

They traveled for a short while before beginning their search of the Buddha, and where it might be going. One of the explorers looked at the scroll and started searching for information. They found two areas after searching, one of them was the Ten Thousand Buddhas' Monastery situated in Tai Wai and the other one was Ngong Ping on Lantau Island. The explorers saw on the map that the Ten Thousand Buddhas' place was closer to them, and decided to go. At the Ten Thousand Buddhas, they searched for a long time to find the golden Buddha from the Mogao Caves, but they were unlucky because every single Buddha was golden! This confused the explorers and they left for Ngong Ping.

At Ngong Ping they couldn't believe their eyes when they saw the Buddha. They sneakily took the Buddha. They drove all the way back to Dongguan, Chengdu and finally arrived at their camp. The explorers felt proud and excited. After having a small feast in celebration, they headed off to the Mogao Caves. When they arrived there, the explorers parked their chariot and pushed the heavy twenty five kilogram Buddha back into its original spot filled with gold and other valuables. They looked at the golden statue once again before they headed out of the cave.

When they exited the magical caves, they saw a person, not an ordinary person, but a monk! The monk turned around and started cheering and dancing. Soon after, more monks started to cheerfully dance. The explorers were proud of themselves, they had restored the golden Buddha to its rightful place! The beautiful treasures of the cave remained untouched and sacred, waiting for future explorers to discover its secrets in the years to come.

The Golden Apple

Discovery Mind Primary School, Yio, Chen Yi – 9

I have carved on this wall a story about a particular day. There is a secret that lies in this cave and if you find it, it shouldn't be revealed to anyone. It is more precious than all the gold in the world. Now I will tell you the story.

It was a hot summer's day and everyone was breaking their backs on the rice fields. Everyone on the field wanted to earn more silver but I was there because I believed that if you worked hard you could be sent to the gods. After coming home, I was exhausted. On the bright side, I earned two silver and gold ingots.

Suddenly, the king's guards came in and told me that the king had a problem. The king always makes me solve his problems because I'm the most trusted person in this kingdom. The king had strange thoughts and always wanted me to solve the problems he thought about. I expected this to be another bizarre problem but it was much more serious this time. The king had been robbed! I came to discover that the king had indeed been robbed quite a number of times!

I embarked upon a journey to find the thief. I walked for ten hours until I saw the thief. I found him in the forest and he ran away but The Yellow River had flooded, causing the bridge that was meant to bring us across the river to become unusable. The thief became confused and I soon caught him. I saw a gold glint in his bag and removed the glistening object. It was a golden apple that was as bright as the sun.

All of a sudden, the thief disappeared but a Buddha appeared in front of me. The Buddha told me to take a bite of the golden apple. I took a bite and my skin felt like stone and I felt stronger than before. The Buddha told me the apple would make me immortal. I immediately knew the apple could be dangerous so I hid it in the cave I had carved this piece of writing in.

A few days later, I went outside and the village was in chaos. I knew the news of the apple had spread beyond the village. Now the tribesmen were trying to take the golden apple by force. I wanted to protect the apple and when I reached it, I had an idea. I stuffed the apple into my mouth and tried to run out but I was stuck! I couldn't do anything! I seemed to have turned to a stone statue.

It took a while to get used to being a statue but I realised I could move items using my mind. I started to carve pieces of writing all around the cave. I thought my role was very important because I was guarding the golden apple that was in my stomach.

The Mogao Caves

ESF Bradbury School, Chau, Dante— 10

The Mogao caves, also known as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, were built by 366 AD, and then slowly forgotten. In 1990, they were rediscovered by a Chinese monk, Wang Yuanlu. He had a vision of a thousand Buddhas on the cliff face, and thus, that's where it got its name. It was a network of an enormous 500 temples. Moreover, they were really worshipped in the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

The Secrets of the Mogao Caves

From behind the scenes, the Mogao Caves can date back historical events that happened in the far past, as there are thousands of statues and paintings of long past occurrences. One of these paintings is from the late Tang Dynasty, another is in the 9th century, and yet another is about Buddha etc. These paintings and statues are relatively important because they can help archaeologists a lot to investigate the evolution of Buddhist art in a region in China. The highest quality of the paintings and writings dated back to the Tang dynasty.

Recent Discoveries of the Mogao Caves

There are secrets discovered constantly in the Mogao Caves. Carefully tiled, paintings and sculptures lure through this cave. However, recently, scientists discovered that not only paintings and statues dwell, and even faded pieces of writing as well. What I mean by “faded” is that they are not visible to the naked eye, and hence, highly developed technology is necessary. The writing was used in different writing techniques – actually materials. They are used in different pigments, and as inferred, they are made in different times as more ways of writing have developed. The pieces of writing can explain the different ways of astronomy imaging, machine learning procedures etc. From these pieces of writing, we can learn about the previous techniques of processing and machinery.

The Stories of the Mogao Caves

Stories written and drawn in the Mogao caves are just outstandingly brilliant. A variety of people have traveled here to add paintings, sculptures and pieces of writing. There are also stories that are told and written mysteriously on the walls of the caves. But, the written stories' authors remain unknown and anonymous.

Teachings of Mogao Caves

What the Mogao caves can teach us are from pictures, paintings, structures and pieces of writing. From these, we can clarify facts. Most of these revolved around Buddhist art. They also did narrative and Sutra paintings. The paintings explain the ways of life in the current time when the painting(s) and writing were made, such as politics, religion, economics, culture etc. The writing was about narrative legends, Buddha and such. It serves a similar purpose to paintings and pictures. A cluster of statues are scattered within this cave. The statues are replicas of different Buddhist gods and had very specific expressions.

As you can see, the Mogao Cave is an extremely fascinating destination for everybody to admire. It lived for thousands of years and still remains important and inspiring today. Hundreds of scientists and archaeologists travel long distances to just investigate this vast canvas.

The Secret Land in Mogao Grottoes

ESF Bradbury School, Tsang, Emma – 9

The Mogao Grottoes, also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes, is a heritage. One day, a little girl called Emily was visiting Mogao Grottoes with her family, including her fraternal twin sister (Chelsea), their father (Wester), their stepmom (Tina), and Clacity, their elder stepsister. Tina and Clacity hated Emily at the first sight for no reason, they scolded her as if she was a slave and made her do all the chores when their father was away for work. Chelsea dared not to confront with her stepmom and stepsister, but when they were not aware, she would sneakily help Emily out.

When Emily and her family reached Mogao Grottoes, they went in the biggest cave crowded with people. Suddenly, the floor started to shake and rumble, the Buddha woke up from its bed and said loudly with an echo, “Hello people!” A thousand gasps filled the cave. The Buddha continued, “Today I will take three people on an amazing journey to a secret land!” Lots of people raised their hands up high in the sky. Tina and Clacity even wiggled their hands and snapped their thumbs and fingers to grab the Buddha’s attention.

The Buddha first pointed at Chelsea and said “Well, I’m picking you.” Chelsea jumped up high in the sky and shouted “Hooray!” Next the Buddha beckoned Emily and Wester over. Emily looked down at the floor as she walked calmly over to Chelsea, but deep inside her heart, she was leaping so high that she almost touched the sky! Tina scowled at the Buddha “Why would you choose Emily? She’s a brat!” Not a single sound was to be heard, the Buddha said solemnly, “Maybe you are mistaken, madam, I can see that it’s the opposite way around though!” Tina’s face turned as red as a pepper and her eyes almost popped out! Emily walked closer to the Buddha and whispered to the Buddha’s ear. After that, the Buddha said again “I will bring you and that lady beside you, because Emily begged me to bring you two along.” Tina crossed her arms and murmured something into Clacity’s ear, she didn’t even feel thankful for Emily and the Buddha.

Following the Buddha, Emily and her family one by one squeezed through a narrow passage. The Buddha started, “Well, here is a secret passage to the caves underground with more hidden treasures, paintings and lots more!” The click of the Buddha’s fingers opened a secret passage behind one of the sculptures.

Everyone’s (except for the Buddha) heart was pounding with happiness and their soul started dancing as they entered the secret entrance, and Emily tapped her chin and questioned, “So, did the Monks make all these sculptures? What about the paintings and the treasures?” The Buddha praised Emily, “That’s an incredible question! Yes, the Monks made all the sculptures and paintings. The treasures are both from Ancient China and Europe because the Monks used to travel along Silk Road and collected the valuables.”

Tina and Clacity’s eyes went wide open when they saw the shimmering golden jewels and precious gemstones with ruby, emerald and blue diamond. Emily focused on the paintings and sculptures. A sculpture that looked like a snake with four legs and shimmering scales caught her eye and she asked the Buddha, “What is this creature?” The Buddha said, “This is a dragon which symbolizes the emperor and power. Together with the tortoise, phoenix and qilin, they are the four sacred animals of Ancient Chinese tradition.” The Buddha told the animals to introduce themselves and some Ancient Chinese heroes who risked their lives to save China. Emily’s jaw dropped open when she saw the animals came to life and talk. However, Tina and Clacity were not interested at all and just rolled their eyes and kept yawning.

As they moved on, Emily covered her mouth and gasped when she saw the magnificent paintings, so she asked the Buddha what they represented. Suddenly, the Buddha teleported them to the past where the Monks were doing the paintings. The Monks explained to Emily that paintings were mostly about Buddhism and told them the tales of the merchants, the Monks and others who lived in the ancient oasis town of Dunhuang.

Emily spotted some noodles and dumplings on the paintings and asked puzzledly the Monks “Why does these look like spaghetti and ravioli?” The Monks explained because of Silk Road, Westerner and Chinese somehow share their culinary culture and tradition.

Tina stomped her feet and shrieked at Emily as she thought Emily was wasting her time with stupid questions. The Buddha suddenly made Tina temporarily mute and said, “Only if you be nice and respectful, I will give your voice back.”

The Monks took them to another cave with magnificent wall paintings and started telling them a story – A millennium ago, there were 500 bandits doing all sorts of wicked things in a small Ancient India kingdom, so the king sent out a troop to capture them. Then the bandits were sentenced with a brutal punishment, gauging their eyes

out. They were sent out to the wilderness forest and suffering in sore pain. They got down on their knees and begged for help. The Buddha showed up and the 500 bandits admitted what they did wrong and promised to become better people. The Buddha forgave them and gave back their eyes. They followed the Buddha and became the Monks.

After listening to the Monks, Emily and Chelsea knelt with begging hands to beg the Buddha to give their stepmother's voice back. Tina's eyes filled with tears and was mouthing the words, "Sorry, I have been doing wrong, but everyone still cares for me and helps me. Please forgive me. I swear I will never do it again!" The Buddha heard Tina's sincere regret, so the Buddha gave her voice back.

They were teleported back to present. Tina understood how Emily felt when she treated her crudely. And they all lived happily ever after.

The Decline of Evil.

ESF Glenealy School, Aniruddh, Nihara – 9

PROLOGUE

“I’m so close, yet so far. ” Lucy said. Why did it have to be her chosen to brave the dangers of the Mogao Grottoes? Why couldn't it be Jack instead? Jack (Jackie) Montgomery was her worst enemy at school, he was rude , smelly and annoying. “Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!” Lucy suddenly screamed and she was never seen again.

CHAPTER 1: The Beginning

She was running, running as fast as she could just to save herself , she didn’t care where she was going and where she was headed, she just wanted to go. Suddenly, she bumped into a wall and the demon came closer and closer until there was nowhere to run . Out of nowhere, a sudden burst of light appeared and a sword burst down from the sky, smiting the demon's minion and letting Jade run past. Then the sword flew into her hands and latched itself there. “ Why did this sword choose me, I wonder?” she thought.

CHAPTER 2 :The Dragon

She found an egg in a forest which was the colour of a galaxy in the night sky. She built a campfire and put the egg over on a stick to put over the fire. Then she went to find a few more sticks for the fire ,when she heard a sickening crack and a little head popped out. Jade was in awe of the little baby dragon. he was perfect in everyway, when her little horns and the eyes were little slits but not slits of malice, just slits of curiosity , its eyes were the daintiest emerald green, Jade squealed because the dragon was just so cute. She decided to name it Emerald because of its glowing emerald eyes. “I mustn't get sidetracked, I am on a secret mission.” She looked mournfully at Emerald. “I suppose it wouldn’t matter if I took her with me.” So off they went and they walked day and night until they came to a series of caves saying the same thing “ Welcome to the Mogao Grottoes.” “How welcoming this sign is.” She thought. Then she noticed something tiny beneath the words. “ You can come in but you might never come out.” She gasped with horror, she had been expecting the demon in the Mogao Grottoes to be horrid but she never thought he would be this horrendous to kill people. She reassured herself many times to get a grip because everything would be fine, right?

Chapter 3: The Mogao Grottoes

She entered the Grottoes feeling confident of herself, then her hopes sank when caught sight of the demon. It really was horrible, it’s eyes were blood red and it had horrible hairy tusks and disgusting horns covered with blood and moss, and its face was wrinkly and sagged with a horrible expression. She was about to turn tail and flee but the sword pulled her closer, then the sword pierced the demon in his heart and the demon screamed, a scream that echoed around the whole country, maybe even the whole continent.

Chapter 4: Paradise awaits.

A portal appeared at the back of the caves , glowing with periwinkle blue light beckoning for her to go in and the sword kept drawing her closer and closer until she was sucked in.

When Jade came to after being knocked out from the force of the portal, her eyes beheld a great sight. She saw a lush green forest with a street paved with Jade and sapphires as well as signs with blue and green writing on them. One of the signs with green writing on it said “ [To the Jade Emperors Palace](#)” So she set off that way hoping to ask the Jade Emperor for directions to get back to the caves. So she hopped and skipped and la-di-da-ed on the road hoping to find her home.

Chapter 5 : The Jade Emperors Palace

She finally reached the Jade Emperors palace but when she went to the gate there were two big, brawly guards who were really mean to her. Emerald was growing big now so Jade had an idea.

She climbed onto Emerald and they discreetly flied over the castle and she landed in the throne room, luckily the Jade Emperor was having breakfast in the dining room so she hid behind the curtain until he came back. When the Jade Emperor came back, he was in a fairly good mood , so Jade decided to come out then. She went in and broke the news that she needed to go home and the Jade Emperor said yes but Jade only then noticed how alike they looked so she said “ I think you might be my father.”.....

Peter And The Statue

ESF Glenealy School, Armstrong, William – 8

Long long ago there was a boy called peter. He loved to explore caves, especially Mogao caves. He also liked to play games and run. One day he was walking back from school, when he saw a cave that he had never explored before. He thought his mum wouldn't mind if he took a small peak. When he looked around the corner he saw a massive cave, he had to explore this. Without thinking he ran off into the cave. When he did though the entrance came crashing down. With no hope of escaping he continued to travel deeper into the cave. He had been walking for hours And he was starving. He thought to himself "I won't escape, I'll be trapped forever, no one will help me" But he still walked. He finally decided to stop walking but suddenly He saw a gloomy and dark hallway. He decided to walk through it because he thought it was an exit but it wasn't. It was a magical statue. The statue shouted with an angry voice "if you answer my riddle correctly i will let you pass if not you shall be trapped here forever. Peter was not sure about his answer but he decided to answer anyway. He took a deep breath and answered. His answer was wrong! The doors slammed shut and the statue disappeared. He was stuck there for hours wondering if he would get out. He looked around the room to see if there was a hole but he saw nothing. He looked one last time in every corner. He was looking and then he saw the tiniest hole imaginable. he started chipping away at the hole with a rock he found on the floor. After a few minutes it became big enough for him to fit through. He crawled through it and ended up in a forest nearby. He wandered around for a minute then he saw a familiar road. Then he saw his mother, he rushed towards her. Peter learned his lesson and promised he would never wander off again

The Fairy Summer

ESF Glenealy School, Aspert, Matilda – 8

This story took place in a town called Far far away, South west of Italy. There were two

friends called Joss and Skylar, they were both in school at the library. Joss found a

book about a magical fairy cave “ Sky” said Joss “yeah” replied Skylar “I found a

a book that tells a story about a fairy cave is real, “ said Joss “Should we go visit on the summer break.”

Said Skylar “ Ok “replied Joss.”You finished packing” asked Skylar “ Yes” replied Joss. They started walking in the forest Joss said “ I'm so excited “ “The map says that we need to go here “ Said Skylar “ okay” replied Joss. After a few weeks they arrived at the cave” We're here” said Skylar “Yes” exclaimed Joss Two fairies came to pick them up “ hello” said one of the Fairies “You need a go to the Queen fairy” said the other fairy “Ok” Surprisingly said

Joss “come this way “said one of the Fairies “hello” said the Queen fairy ‘How may help you” Said the Queen fairy “Well we just need a place to sleep” said Skylar “ok “ replied the Queen fairy” we will give you a sweet is that okay” said The Queen fairy. once just and Skyler arrived in the room they settled for the summer the Queen the Queen fairy came

twice a day. On e morning they went to breakfast and had a huge surprise that they weren't expecting because it was Joss is birthday they all have cake and a and had a very nice games, Joss love the cake because it was Vanilla cream cake she was very happy .They sang happy birthday to Joss and opened presents, Her favorite present was the travel set.

“Thank you everyone, thank you very much. I really appreciate everything you've done for my birthday” exclaimed Joss “anyways how old are you Joss” asked Skylar “ well I am 17”

replied Joss “Well then happy 17th birthday” said the Queen Fairy “ Why thank you” said

Joss “Next month is my birthday” Said Skylar “really” said the Queen fairy “yes it is’ said Joss .Next month, “I'm so excited tomorrow's my birthday “ exclaimed Skylar. Next morning

with a wonderful smile.

She went downstairs for breakfast and she had a huge cake! , it was her favorite chocolate

icing and cream cheese filling, They all sang happy birthday to Skylar, “ thank you so much everyone, this is a great birthday” “ You're welcome” replied the Queen fairy. How old are you “ well I'm 17 to “ exclaimed skylar.

“ I'm so sad we have to we have to go back too far far away because of the summer holiday is finished” sadly said Joss “well maybe we can go back next year or even for the winter break” Said Skylar “ that would be wonderful” exclaimed the Queen reFairy “ we really can come back” ask Joss “ sure why not “ said the Queen fairy. The fairies builded a magical ride to go too far far away.

The Dragon Adventure

ESF Glenealy School, Chaeng, Jun – 8

Once upon a time, there was a squad of four teenagers who loved to go on adventures to fight dragons. The squad named Apios lived in 2000 BC. At that time, people usually fought dragons. One day, Zach, one of the boys in Apios, went on a journey to find dragons to fight them. His other teammates, Daniel, Ryder, and Jack followed him. While they were walking in the woods, they got lost.

They tried hard to get out of the woods so that they could reach their destination. However, they could not find a way out. Luckily, they packed food and water in their backpacks. Zach even brought a tent! Soon, it was getting dark. Jack and Zach built a campfire while Daniel and Ryder set up the tent.

As it got darker, the squad could hear frightening noises around them. They could hear snakes slithering and wolves howling near them. Immediately, they rushed into the tent and held their weapons in their hands tightly. However, the wolves did not pay attention to the squad and just left them alone. Zach heard his stomach rumble, so he unzipped his backpack and started eating the food that he packed before the squad fell asleep.

The next day, the sun peeked behind the mountains. It was a beautiful morning as the squad could hear larks singing in the clear blue sky. The squad had a mission to complete, so they quickly packed their belongings and set off to a tower where the dragons lived. When they arrived, the dragons looked furious and frightening. The dragons had red and black eyes, a long tail, and green skin. They were almost as big as a house.

At that moment, the teenagers could hear a terrifying sound, one that was between a snarl and a roar. The squad froze in fear, and they were as still as statues. The squad took out their armors and bats. They positioned themselves to be ready to fight their enemies. Suddenly, a monster-like creature swooped down from the sky. It was a bigger version of the dragons. It had two straight horns that thinned down to the sharpness of a needle and a long flickering tongue like a snake in a mouth full of razor-sharp fangs. The creature was flapping its enormous wings that produced strong gusts of wind every time it flapped them. The demon approached the squad as the squad's eyes widened in terror. Every step it made shook the earth. The squad could not help but tremble in fear. Zach wondered, "Who is that?" Daniel whispered, "It's the Demon that created these dragons." Zach gulped and squeezed his eyes shut, hoping the Demon would not end their lives instantly.

Within seconds, the Demon cast a spell. A vast green glow surrounded the dragons and miraculously, they seemed to become bigger and stronger. The Demon laughed and muttered, "We, Demons, will defeat all human beings one day with all our might." At that moment, a large amount of smoke erupted which made everything smoky and foggy for the squad to maneuver. While that was happening, the Demon vanished without a trace. Without notice, the squad heard a loud growl. The squad turned around and saw two other teenagers attacking the dragons. They were also holding bats and shields. One of the dragons used its long whip-like tail and threw the two teenagers up in the air. Luckily, they landed in a bush. All the teenagers continued to fight against their enemies, but the dragons were too strong. They were invincible.

Suddenly, Zach thought of a brilliant plan. He said, "While the dragons are trying to attack us, we can hold up our shields while cuddling up like a ball and protect one another. We can then run as fast as we can to smash all the dragons as a group." The others agreed willingly. The two other teenagers joined the squad. Soon, they all gathered, holding up their shields and bats. They took a deep breath at a synchronized pace, plucked up their courage, and began charging towards the dragons with all their strength. The dragon growled at them. They were not so lucky because the dragons broke their shields and bats so there was not much hope left.

Out of nowhere, a weird-looking eagle flew past them and dropped a wand. Little did they know that the wand was the answer to stopping the dragons from being aggressive. When Zach held up the wand, the dragons froze like statues. The dragons were acting strangely. They were walking around as if nothing had happened. The squad wanted to attack the dragons, but then they thought, "Mmm...I want to harm the dragons, but they are living things like us. We shouldn't harm them". There they said. No, they did not want to harm the dragons, so they took the dragons to the Dragon Cave to rest.

A few hours later, the dragons woke up and began to act aggressively, baring their fangs. Fortunately, Daniel already knew that there could be a possibility of the dragons harming them again, so he created a potion that would calm the dragons and make them friendly. Daniel fed the dragons some of his potions. Everyone wanted to play with the dragons, so they took them out of the cave and flew on the dragons! Weeeeee! Off they went.

Flying on the friendly dragons was the perfect way to end their mission. When it got darker, they

brought the dragons back to their home and chose to keep them as their pets! Everyone learned that they should not harm animals because they are, after all, good living creatures!

The Last Grotto

ESF Glenealy School, Chaki, Adhiraaj – 8

19/11/500

(November 19, 500 BC)

Smack!!!!

A flying newspaper catches Yan Zhang on the head! He sees an article about pilgrims making grottoes and thinks “not too bad – seems like a good way to get rich and famous...let me get in on the action too” and he decides that he is going into the grotto making business.

He sells everything he owns to the grumpy, dusty old man in the village and with that money, he buys himself a horse called Yue. He saddles up and sets out towards the West Silk Road.

Neigh!!!! Yue wonders why the tiny, wrinkled man wants to head to the grottoes. He’s angry at all the galloping he’s having to do so he tosses poor Yan around who gets nauseous and horse-sick. Some free advice at this stage – badly planned and last-minute gallops into nowhere – strongly NOT recommended especially if your horse is wily and naughty like Yue.

After 5 days of riding, a tired Yue and saddle-sore Yan arrive in a city called Jinan near the Yellow River. Yan hated how loud the people were – storming around noisily as if it was mandatory to be so loud. Also disrupting everything and bumping poor tired & sad-eyed Yue every 2 minutes! Sigh....

The plan was to stay there for 10 days but Yan was starting to have second thoughts – the city was just too noisy. “I am not sure if this dig-a-grotto-get-famous plan is any good” he thought miserably. “Neigh” Wined Yue – he was telling Yan that everything was going to be OK and that Yue & Yan were going to be very famous soon. So famous that a young boy would write a story about them one day in the future!

So do you think something changed? Nope – the usual continued until 2 days later Yan was resting when YET ANOTHER flying newspaper caught him on the head. The headline said, “Grottoes are out – no more grottoes!” Yan panics, scampers about packing & loading up his belongings on Yue and charges off towards the grottoes.

Now let me introduce you to another character – a pilgrim called Fai Cai. He is posh for a pilgrim – fancy clothes, shiny jewelry and lots of money. But he is greedy and wants to be famous too and when he reads the headline about the grottoes being out, he decides that he will be the one to build the last grotto and dig for treasure.

Off he goes towards the grottoes and since he was used to travelling on horses, he did not get horse sick or saddle sore.

So let’s check on Yue and Yan. They’ve reached the Gobi Desert but they look confused and unhappy. They are staring at a HUGE, unending wall.” How do we get to the other side” they both think as they sit down in despair. Suddenly Yan sees a small hole – he starts to dig around it. A few hours later the hole is big enough for him to crawl to the other side. AND THEN MAGIC HAPPENS – Yan finds a way to open a secret door and then Yue gets to the other side too. After a quick celebration dance, they decide to take a quick nap only to wake up 2 full days later. Yue gets up with a shriek, saddles up and charges off towards the grottoes.

In the meantime, Fai Cai decides to hitch a ride on a flying balloon. Well, he does save time for sure but now there is problem – how on earth do Fai Cai and his horse get back on earth? When he can think of nothing else, Fai Cai cut the basket off the balloon... CRASH..OUCH – and they are finally on the ground. Fai and his horse had landed right outside the giant wall in the Gobi Desert except that the wall now had big holes in it. If you think it’s from Yan & Yue, then you are correct. Fai & his horse get to the other side of the wall, and they also decide to rest. They too fall asleep for 2 days and wake up and panic – there is no time to waste!

Meanwhile, “Clip clop” Yue galloped at great speed towards the grottoes! He entered from the North side (front) and admired it “It is beautiful” he said, with tears in his eyes. He can’t believe his dream is almost about to come true.

Fai entered the grottoes from the southern or back side. “What’s the big deal? These grottoes could have been better.” he muttered. He went inside and started digging, sniffing, looking for the treasure but sadly, he didn’t find any. This made him furious – his hands started trembling and he started to yell & throw punches around in the air. He sort of goes insane.

“What was that, who’s shouting ?” Yan thought when he heard Fai’s screams. So he went in and investigated “HELLO.. WHO IS IT ... WHERE ARE YOU?” he called out. Then he saw Fai who was drenched in his own blood and behaving like a crazy person. “AH...blood !” Yan said. He whistled and immediately blacked out. Then Clop! Yue appeared on the scene and kicked Fai off into a valley far far below. Seeing this Fai’s horse runs off. Yan now starts to dig and slowly build the last cave. It takes him 2 months to make the last cave. By then, people from the nearby villages start to tell everyone about the last grotto he was building. Soon everyone on the silk route had heard of Yan. Finally, Yan was FAMOUS and a celebrity. When he went back to his village, the villagers proudly lift him on their shoulders. To thank him for making the village so famous, Yan is gifted 1 million gold coins.

Yan & Yue are now retired because they are rich. They spend their time telling everyone of their great adventure in the race to build the last grotto.

THANKS FOR READING !

The Mysterious Cave

ESF Glenealy School, Cheung, Owen – 8

Ring–Ring–Ring! The school bell rang while the kids raced to go home. One of those kids was Ming. Ming was a boy that everyone knew. Ming was in 12th grade, the oldest year group in the school. Ming raced out of the school as quickly as he could. However, Ming wasn't going anywhere near home. He was going to the cave which he found not long ago. However, he has never gone into this cave before. Ming was pretty excited to see what was in the cave.

Ming was jogging until he found the entrance to the cave. "What would be inside it?" "What if there was treasure inside?" Ming's mind was racing.

The moment Ming arrived, his face brightened up. There were numerous magnificent sculptures and beautiful paintings inside the cave. Ming slowly walked towards the art to feel the texture of the art. The area was bumpy and dusty. However, Ming suddenly felt the ground shake. "What was happening?" Ming thought. Suddenly, the ground cracked open! Ming was now falling from the sky! Then, everything went pitch black!

He slowly opened his eyes. However, he realized that he wasn't in the cave anymore. Ming slowly started worrying. "Where am I?" he thought. Suddenly, Ming stood up; and when he looked back, he saw a boy standing still, looking very surprised. The boy was wearing a dark furry jacket and blue jeans. The boy finally spoke. "Who are you? How did you get here?"

Ming replied worriedly. "Where am I?" "You are now trapped in a secret place made by a dark wizard. You are in this place because the dark wizard put magic in the paintings."

"Then, who're you?" asked Ming, still very worried. "My name is Fang, and I mistakenly entered a cave, just like you." "Is there any way to get out of here?" Ming asked. "Yes, but I will need your help," Fang replied. "Okay." Then Fang talked in a mysterious voice. "This place is made by a powerful wizard. He wants to trap many children to assemble an army. There is also a dragon that guards a secret palace. Nobody knows what is inside the secret palace. We need to get through the dragon, sneak inside the palace and find a way to get out of here." When should we start, then?" Ming asked. "Tonight," Fang replied. "Tonight!?" Ming asked, very surprised. "Yes, that is that time when the dragon is sleeping," Fang answered. "Fine," Ming replied.

It was 7:00 in the night. The night was silent with the sea waves softly crashing to shore. Ming and Fang worked together to make a fire to cook food with, with some twigs, leaves and some rocks. Black smoke was coming out of the fire into the dark sky, and the smell of burnt twigs covered the air, bothering Ming. Fang brought Ming some fish and some seaweed. "This was all I could find around the shore," said Fang. Ming stared at the food, looking disgusted. Finally, Ming took a small bite of the fish and seaweed. "Eww!" said Ming, spitting out the fish and seaweed. "Don't complain!" Fang told Ming. "I'd rather eat nothing," replied Ming.

After trying out the fish and seaweed, Ming set off to sleep on some leaves. After a few minutes, Ming drifted off to sleep.

"Wake up!" shouted Fang. Ming slowly opened his eyes. "Wait, what?" Ming said, very puzzled. "It's time to get out of here," answered Fang. "Oh, okay," said Ming.

Ming got out of bed and got out with a start. Then, Fang threw an item of pitch-black clothing into Ming's face. "What was that for?" Ming asked. "We have to wear black clothes to get past the dragon." "Fine," Ming said and quickly put the black clothing on. After Ming put the dark clothes on, Ming and Fang slowly went out to a dark forest.

Swoosh! "What was that?" Ming whispered. "I don't know," Fang replied. Ming and Fang started slowly creeping closer into the forest. Swoosh! "I think there's something near us!" Ming said with his voice rising. "Just keep quiet and stay still," Fang replied. Suddenly, and roaring sound came from behind! ROAR! "Run!" Fang shouted. Ming and Fang were quickly running forward, hoping they would escape. Wooosh! A huge wave of water appeared under Ming and Fang!

Ming looked behind and saw a blue dragon shooting water out from its mouth. The dragon had beautiful scales with a curled moustache. Now, Ming and Fang were swimming on the wave that the dragon had made. However, the

dragon was catching up! Ming and Fang had to think of something to stop the dragon, or the dragon will kill them. Suddenly, the dragon was about a meter behind them! Ming and Fang both ducked and got under the dragon. Ming and Fang both escaped from the dragon! The dragon was going out of control, crashing into a tree. Crash!

After escaping from the dragon, Fang found a temple! "I found the temple!" shouted Fang. The temple was red and green with a door made out of wood. The door had a golden handle, which looked like a ring. "Great!" Ming replied. Ming and Fang slowly crept closer and closer to the door. Then, Fang slowly opened the door. ERRRRR! The door screeched. Suddenly, a wizard with a red coat and a long, black beard appeared on a green chair! "What are you doing here?" a low voice boomed.

Fang and Ming quickly ran as fast as they could! However, they found themselves floating back to the wizard. Suddenly, the wizard cast a spell on Ming and Fang! Ming and Fang were now floating on a purple bubble. Then, Ming thought of an idea! Ming suddenly took a water bottle out of his pocket and poured water on both of the bubbles. Poof! The wizard disappeared!

The Escaper

ESF Glenealy School, Ching, Natalie – 10

Gold was unhappily strolling with his pride over the savanna. Oh, how he wished something exciting would happen during these boring Saturdays. When they finally reached some shade, Gold's slender body slumped onto the rough bark of the tree. The heat licked forcefully at the lions' fur. The pride quickly recovered, and rising to their feet, they trotted on, looking for water.

"Come on!" roared his best friend, Sandy, "Don't you want some water too?"

"No, I'll stay." murmured Gold, wanting more than anything to spend this time somewhere else.

"See you later!" Lemon called back.

He laid down, wanting to sleep. Gold loved sleeping. He was just about to drop off, when a beautiful lioness went past his direction. He sat up straight in awe. Just as he was about to greet her, a humongous elephant galloped toward him. Gold desperately rushed out of the way, but it was no use. The elephant charged Gold towards the giant brick wall. He scurried up the towering wall quickly. Peering down at the elephant that awaited him below, he knew he would be safe. What a narrow escape! He curled up and lay his head down, tired. His eyelids dropped and his eyebrows relaxed. He slept comfortably, unaware of his surroundings.

Bang!

A sudden loud noise awakened Gold from his sleep. Not knowing what was happening, he jumped about frantically, hoping something bad wasn't going to happen. He thought he had experienced enough last night anyway, and didn't want that to happen again.

Bang!

This time, the frightening noise shook the solid walls, crumbling it into scree. Gold felt himself dropping, and telling his mind to concentrate, he flung himself at the top of the crumbling bricks and held on for dear life. His eyes closed in tiredness, and he felt numb all over. He was almost certain that he had died. Even though he tried so hard to feel the floor and open his eyes, no part of his body would move. Very little did he know what had happened to him.

Light seeped through the cracks of the wooden hut that he woke up in, pointing out that he was alive. As soon as his eyelids opened, Gold darted to the bolted door, only to find his paws shackled to the floor. Frustrated, he banged his hands against the floor, hoping to get the metal traps off, but only making his paws throb and bleed. Now he was stuck, and hurt too. He paused for a moment to think, not wanting to damage his body again. Then he remembered the teleporter he had somewhere in his messy mane, and reached up to get it, but as he did, the metal chains tugged down on him, not allowing him to get it. Then he froze. For, outside he could hear footsteps.

Creak!

The door joints rattled open, revealing a tiger. Quickly, Gold placed his hand down, trying not to be suspicious. The tiger, whom had been sent by some evil villain, as far as Gold could tell, smirked at him and said, matter-of-factly:

"It is my very sad duty to report here to take you to the boss. Come here, and I shall take off your shackles"

Gold approached the stranger, allowing the tiger to unlock his shackles. Then, the tiger took Gold by the paw, and dragged him into the Mogao caves.

Gold had a faint memory of falling into this majestic cave, but he couldn't be sure if he had made it up or not. Giant walls decorated with old paintings stared at him from their great height, looking mysterious and cunning. Statues

surrounded him, and a chill slivered along his back. Buddhas stood proudly against the hard stone walls, painted with a variety of colours. The ceiling was tall and the cave was vast, and if he didn't know that something dreadful was going to happen, it could have even been a magical place where he could meet other lions.

Thump!

A dragon landed heavily, shaking the ground. Gold found himself face to face with a ugly, bad-smelling dragon, and almost shrieked in terror. His face was huge, a sick-green kind of color, with shiny scales that danced in the light. His eyes were piercing and sharp, with a glint of mischief in his eyes. His small ears flapped menacingly in the air. He inspected Gold closely, then shouted:

“Guards! Come here and take the lion away!”

A rush of flying lizards lifted Gold into a pitch-black room, slamming the door behind them. Outside, he could hear them talking.

“Where key?”

“What! You no bring key!”

“Boss no give key”

“Ugh”

As the lizards departed, Gold peeked out and crept into the grand speechroom, where the dragon was speaking. He just managed to hear the end before it ended.

“to conclude, I am going to earn thousands of dollars, all for me! ”

As Gold tiptoed out of the auditorium, a large fist grabbed at his fur. He yelped helplessly, not knowing who had caught hold of him. He felt the oily claws flinging him. No, it couldn't be. Heat prickled against his skin, much hotter than the african savanna. Just for that moment, he regretted whining about the african heat. He scrambled and squiggled, to see a large curved object coming toward him. It was coming closer and closer, almost able to touch the tip of his nose, now. Knowing this would be the end of his life, tears trickled down his face like rain pouring onto the earth. A large object closed in on him, blackening out every spot of light. His body was coal, and as lifeless as a rock. Resting his head in his arms, he wished he had known better.

He knew he had made a big mistake, and as much as he wished to undo it, he couldn't.

The moral of this story is to stay with together, because you never know what is around the corner.

The Mogao Caves

ESF Glenealy School, Gilham, Alessandra – 9

PROLOGUE

In another time, many years from now, everyone thought that Siberian tigers were extinct. Our heroes in the story, Safiya, Hallie, Rachel and Lainey decided that they needed more proof. So they went to the Mogao Caves because they were known for giving answers. They set off on their long journey up the tall, jagged mountain. At the top, they set up camp. During the night, Safiya heard horrible growls and whines of terror coming from inside the cave. She lay there in the stuffy tent, petrified until the morning. During breakfast, Safiya slumped down. “I don’t feel very well.” She admitted “Think I should go home.” “I could take you.” Rachel offered. “Well, if you really want to.” Lainey sighed. “Yes please.” Safiya responded. “Ok, you should probably go now then.” Hallie put in, disappointed that Safiya would not be able to venture on with them.

After that, Hallie and Lainey decided to go in when the sun was up. They went up to the entrance and stepped into the dark, gloomy cave.

1

As they walked around the cave, the whispers of *She still lives* and *She is here* floated into their ears. A few minutes after the whispers stopped, they heard a terrible growl coming from the next room. They're hesitant to go in, but in the end they do. There, they saw a majestic Siberian Tiger. She had beautiful gold fur and was standing proudly with her head held high. They realized that they couldn’t take her out or she would be killed to make rugs and coats. Then, they discovered that she was pregnant because she does not move around as much as a normal tiger, so they chose to inquire.

They decided to call her Grace as she was so proud.

Months later, Rachel arrived back just in time to see the cub born. No, not the cub, the twin cubs! She had one male cub and one female cub!

They knew Grace did not trust them, so they built her trust over the next few weeks by moving slower around her until she let them get near her. She then let them lead her to hunt animals outside of the cave for her cubs and herself.

The friends then decided to take Grace and her cubs out of the cave, but they couldn’t. There was a giant boulder. It must have rolled in as there had been a storm while they were in the cave. Safiya came back and tried to get in, but realized that it was on a slope. So, she shouted at the girls inside the cave to push, and the boulder rolled... *down the hill?* So they tumbled down and there, they found the tiger poachers – uh oh – squashed by the boulder!

2

The girls then became tiger breeders and the population of tigers grew slowly but surely as they made sure that there is always one tiger couple to give birth to more tigers. All went well – until word got out about it. Some tiger poachers that had stayed well out of the picture until now come overnight and steal all of the tigers. All except one. The youngest, Yasmin, had hidden as best as she could, and so she was ready to track down her family. So she, Safiya, Rachel, Hallie and Lainey went with Yasmin to find the other tigers.

They searched for ages, but they couldn’t find the tigers. They kept searching for them for weeks, but they heard not a word from any of the villagers and not a growl near their house.

3

They visited the cave again, saying “I hope they are here” and “They must be – where else *would* they be?”

And they were right. The tigers were in the cave. But they hadn't had any proper meals since the tigers were taken away, so they're all extremely skinny, not at all majestic like tigers are meant to be. They were starving to death and in desperate need of water. So the girls soothed them, saying "Don't worry, Grace, we're here to help you." And "Tiger, it's ok." Or "Yasmin helped us track you down – she's so amazing!"

The caves started to whisper to them yet again, saying *They will be here soon*. Grace came to them and growled. She could tell that something bad was going to happen too.

4

The people who stole the tigers suddenly turned up to bring the tigers out to sell them, but when they saw the girls standing there with the tigers, they were horrified. The girls made them tell what they were doing, so they had to explain to them. Later on, they brought them to the King and Queen and explained what they had done, and the King and Queen put a ban on tiger skin rugs or tiger skin anything, and the tigers were free to go back to their ecosystem. The girls then realized that they are the only ones who the caves trusted to talk to and that they are very special. The caves are magical and can give them, and only them, answers.

5

The girls don't know how to thank the caves, so they asked the caves what they wanted. The caves magic whispered that the best thing in the world was them, so they requested that the girls visit the caves every month. The girls agreed, as they loved the caves just as much as the caves loved them, so from that day onward, they visit the caves every month. And during one remarkable visit to the caves, they found a dinosaur, and the whole story started over again.

The Secret Caves

ESF Glenealy School, Hajasi, Kaydon – 8

It was one fine day when... decided to go to china! 'I know a place!' said Jay/

'The mogao caves in china!' said Sam. 'is it far?' said Jay 'oh!' 'we need a detective in case something weird happens!' said Sam. 'good idea!' said Jay. as all of them went to their friendly detectives house on a plane! To China. (that was where the detective lived.) 'It is such a coincidence that the mogao caves are in China, and the detective!' said... when they landed at the shanghai international airport, they had a problem! 'We forgot the sheet of paper that contained the detective's address!' said... then suddenly... 'I FOUND IT!' said Jay very loudly. 'Found what?' said Sam, 'obviously the address!' said Jay duh?! As the 3 of them carefully followed the directions on the A4 sheet of paper, they finally got to the detective's house. When they opened the door, before any of them could say anything, the detective said 'what a surprise my dear friends!' said the detective. 'Now can you please tell me, my dear friends, what are you doing here?' said the detective, confused. 'We wanted to see if you want to come with us to the mogao caves!' said all of them. 'Sure!' said the detective. so all of them walked to the shanghai international airport, got on their private plane and took-off! After exactly 52mins they landed at the Beijing, China international airport! When they got off their own aircraft they headed straight for the taxi! It was a long taxi ride to the mogao caves! When they arrived they made sure they had everything checked! Water bottle, check emergency food, check walkie-talkies, check (for communication) and lastly weapons! You never know fully what is in there... right? After they made sure everything was checked, they tested radio contact. 'Can you all hear me?' said the detective. Yes everyone said! Good let's move on! 'When it gets quite dark ...' 'Turn on your torches' 'Ok?' Said the detective on the walkie-talkie. When it got dark, everyone turned on their torches as the detective said. When they all turned their torches on, they suddenly noticed something out of the dark! There were two tunnels, 'uh witch one?' 'the one on the left!' said... as they went deeper into the tunnel, one of them said 'Uh is it just me i'm seeing CCTV's everywhere (closed circuit television). Everyone immediately paused 'Uh I think you are right!'. Someone said 'Uh we are not the only ones here!' said Sam. 'Should we go back?' said Jay 'No it is too far from where we started' said Sam. 'Besides we have all been walking for roughly 2hrs. 'Ok...' 'but can we at least shoot down these CCTV's?' 'sure!' said Jay as we continued walking in the next 5 mins of walking we shot 30 CCTV's! 'The person who built this sure would have 0% of blind spots because there are so many CCTV's! After the next 20 mins of noisy gunfire we saw 4 machine guns on the floor! We each picked up a machine gun and hid it well in case the person who built this CCTV army sent out any guards or anything else (it would be best to keep the machine guns hidden so if a guard saw us they would think we were not armored) In the next 30 mins of noisy, machine gun fire we saw a 4 astonishing F-22 raptors! 'Great god!' said Jay. we each got in one of them, and when we all got in, lights came out of nowhere, and a giant runway appeared right in front of us all! 'OMG!' said Jay. 'This is great!' said Sam. 'should we take-off?' said Jay. 'sure!' but one thing first!' said Sam. 'what?' said Jay. 'the fuel level!' said Sam. 'oh yeah!' said Jay. Almost forgot! 'Now let's start the take-off!' said Sam. 'apply full throttle!' said Jay. TAKE-OFF! said Sam. To be continued.....

The Quiet Whale

ESF Glenealy School, Hayden, Rory – 8

1

Whale

A long time ago there was a whale who lived in a cave. This cave was next to another cave. Many said this cave next door was the place of death. The cave was as old as time and crumbling down. Now, fish from all over know how deadly it was. It was said if you go in, you will never come out.

Our story starts here!

“What was that?” asked Whale.

“I don't know,” said another voice.

“Oh, sorry, I made that sound,” said a third voice.

The three voices were: Whale, Shark and Orca. They had been friends for as long as anyone could remember.

“It's been five minutes,” complained Shark.

“I'm going home,” said Orca.

“That's only three hundred seconds. Am I right, Orca?” Whale asked.

“Yes!” confirmed Orca.

“ORCA, STOP SHOWING OFF!” said Shark.

“Fine. We'll stay for one more min...,” Shark replied as he was interrupted by Orca mid sentence.

“Sixty seconds! Why did you call us anyway?” said Orca.

“There are nine fish who are saying I am eating other fish again. I've never done that in my life! I only live next door minding my own business,” Whale explained to the other two.

2

Please don't tell me

“Please don't tell me you want us to go down to the sea bed and shout to everyone that Whale is not a big eater,” said Orca.

“How did you know?” said Whale.

“We do it about 250 times per year!” said Shark.

“You need to do it yourself,” said Orca.

“Okay,” said Whale.

“To prove you are innocent, move to a different house,” suggested Orca helpfully.

“You may be right,” Whale said sadly.

“Well, I'm going home,” said Shark.

“Me too,” said Orca.

3

Whale's story

Once Orca and Shark had gone, Whale thought to himself it was so long ago that he was not on the run. Perhaps it had been 9 or 10 years. Whale had no parents; he was an orphan. Shark and Orca weren't orphans and they didn't understand him. In the orphanage, it had been quiet so Whale had learned to be quiet.

Shark was heading home when he saw a shadow behind him.

“Whale?” Shark said, but it didn't look like Whale (or any whale he had ever seen). It was like a ghost. It seemed to be growing. “What is that...?” he muttered, a little frightened. He swam all the way back to Whale's house and there Whale was.

“Shark, what’s up?” said Whale.

“Stop fooling around! I know it was you... That whale I saw was you,” said Shark.

“What are you talking about?” asked Whale.

Just then, Orca came passing by and said “ Shark, I thought you were going home,” Orca continued.

“Well, maybe. If this prankster didn't do what he did,” Shark replied.

“What do you mean, Shark? I have been here with him the whole time,” Orca confirmed.

“Thought you were going home,” said Shark.

“I was but I was so curious about Whale, I decided to stay to listen to his story,” said Orca.

4

Who was that?

“Well, if it wasn’t Whale, who was it?” wondered Shark.

“ME....” came another voice deep from the caves.

“Who is that?” Orca whispered.

“The thing that lives in the cave next door. This is bad,” said Whale.

“What should we do?” said Orca, shivering.

“Try not to be eaten!” said Shark.

Just then a big shadow appeared from the cave.

“Swim for your life!” shouted Shark.

“What is that?” said Orca, now absolutely terrified.

“I am... the monster from the caves. Everyone fears me. I have ended the lives of many,” said the voice.

The voice was small.

“Are you a piranha? And if so, how do you kill all the big fish when you are so small?” Shark, Orca and Whale asked in unison.

“I don’t. They die of heart attack and I just finish them off,” said Piranha.

“How do they all die of heart attack?” asked Whale.

“They are very scared of me,” said Piranha.

“How do you look so big if you are a piranha?” Whale asked.

“I’m not,” said Piranha. “My shadow appears to be big in the light but I’m not big in actual size.”

“Well, you should apologize to Whale. Poor Whale has taken all the blame while you have been feasting on fish the size of a school bus!” said Orca.

“Well, I have never apologized to anyone in the past, and I am not planning to do that anytime soon!” said Piranha.

“We could tell the police on you,” said Orca.

“Who would believe you? Everyone thinks Whale is the culprit!” laughed Piranha.

5

The big eater

Orca swam off to call the police while Whale and Shark talked to Piranha. When Orca came back with the police, he told them all about Piranha. Piranha did not kill the fish but had eaten them after they died.

The police agreed that was not against the law. However, the police also agreed with the trio that there should be a new law that one could not eat others. Piranha was thrown into jail but he had a plan B.

Piranha had some fish treats. Once he got to the sunken prison ship he lured the fish guards out of the ship with his fish treats. He got out through the air vents on the ship thirsty for revenge!

Piranha swam back to Whale’s cave and as soon as he got there, he started to eat through the wall before he finished off all of Whale’s food while Whale was out.

“I cannot wait to see Whale’s face,” Piranha said menacingly as he chuckled.

6

The E.A.F.

As Piranha waited for Whale to come home, he ate more and more of his crumbling house cave until there was nothing left.

But after he had finished eating, he felt sick. Worse still, he was becoming fatter and fatter until he EXPLODED INTO SMITHEREENS!

When Whale got home (or at least where home used to be), he could not believe what he saw and wondered what on earth could have happened.

Dark never Turns to Light

ESF Glenealy School, Jastreboff, Maleha – 10

The ragged edges of my prison, the boulders clapping together, sealing me in my inescapable prison. I watch the spiders as they come closer and closer in my tomb. I slowly venture off to marvel at the old walls and dust creeping up to me. The oxygen level was low. What was I to do?

Hello my name is Chun Ton and this is the tale of the gruelling plot to sabotage me in my very own kingdom. However if things happen outside what will happen inside. In my own words this is the story of how dark never turns into light.

Walking with the guards behind me I gaze into the light exhausted as we finally reach the kingdom, famished from being chased and escaping the snakes. Hastily the guards take the carriage back to the castle. Lying in the comfort of my bed exhausted from what has happened. The war lasted for 5 years and finally we triumphed. But I had not known that coming back to the kingdom would turn out to be a careless idea. Citizens of the village of Mogao always ask me why go to war if we can live here in peace? There is only one answer to that; this is what I was born to do. I pondered questioning my every move but then, It all happened so fast. First I was sitting peacefully in my room then I heard a noise coming from my closet . As I emerged to the closet, opening the doors. My world went blank as if I were in a room with no windows.

My eyes flicker open to look up and see muddy and dusty cave walls. I could hear the boulders slamming together, sealing me inside of What? As the oxygen was slowly becoming lower and lower. I knew I did not have much time. Soon I shall die from thirst but I made the best of it. The only way to survive was to face my fears. Ripping up my clothes to create a layer of protection from the creepy crawlers that live below me. I still have one tool to entertain me. I use my shovel to slowly pick away at the walls creating the sculptures of the future. Using my tears and the rocks I create paint to smear my personality across the walls of my cave. I give my sculptures personality. The caves of the mogao grotto are not so blank any more, they are at least not as blank as my heart. I paint my emotions on these walls bursting them with sadness, betrayal and regret. My feelings are destroyed knowing that the people I trusted the most betrayed me when I have been loyal and compassionate. My heart has a wound that is tearing my soul apart because I was left here to rot.

Slowly my body breaks down. Dehydrated, hungry and in need of energy. I lie there on the cold floors of the grotto. I close my eyes slowly remembering that they will never be opened again. My final words shall be something you should all know. Dark never turns to light.

The Alicorn Who Never Gave Up

ESF Glenealy School, John, Natalie – 8

Once upon a time there was an alicorn named Stella. Stella lived in a cave and enjoyed living in the cave. Stella's colour of her body is purple. Stella had a few friends named Alex, Barbie, Elle and Ana. Alex loved to eat watermelon, Barbie loved to eat cupcakes, Elle loved to roller blade and Ana loved to dance. But Stella missed them so much each day. Every day Stella would meet her friends at the cave and they would play. They would fly in the air, read books, sing and dance. The cave was a very fun place for the alicorns. Their whole life depends on the cave. Stella's friends stayed in other caves in other parts of the town.

The cave was at the top of a mountain, this allowed the alicorns to fly into the sky.

But one day, the earth shook, stones started falling, and Stella was in deep sleep inside the cave. Stella woke up to see that the cave was going to collapse. Stella found some bricks so Stella used them to hold the walls. Stella found some rocks and saw some walls that didn't have any bricks so Stella used them to fill them up. Stella knew that it wouldn't hold but she found some glue to stick it together.

Stella saw it was still collapsing so she used her horn to make it stop collapsing but it needed concentration. Stella took a few minutes to try to fix the collapse. She couldn't do it so the cave collapsed even more. The bricks and rocks were getting closer so Stella tried to stick it again. Stella found some tape. She used it for the walls. The walls closed even more. So Stella used her horn and wings to hold it all together. The earthquake had woken up Alex, Barbie, Elle and Ana and they rushed to help Stella. Together using their wings, glue and hard work they were able to fix the cave. There was only one stone down and Stella picked up that stone and hit the hardest and then it stopped collapsing. The cave was saved after all. All the friends together soon cleaned up the cave and it was more beautiful than before.

Stella and her friends had saved the cave and their gathering place and would spend many Christmases together with their family and friends.

The Magic In Mogao Caves

ESF Glenealy School, Kwan, Yenny – 8

Chapter 1

The Secret

A thousand years ago,in the Mogao Caves,there was a secret.There was that secret is because Buddha wanted the devils to have a lesson.More than a thousand years,the secret was already here and the devils wanted to find out what is the secret and steal it.But every time they sneaked in,the soldiers stop them from getting it.If you want to find the treasure, it's going to have a long adventure in it.

Chapter 2

Devils Stealing

A powerful magic inside the secret room which only Buddha and the soldiers can go in.Every day,the soldiers check and see if the magical powerful magic is there.There was a map for them to follow but no one knows where is the map and how to read it.The map was actually the paintings on the walls which the Monks create it very hard.(The paintings is a map to find the directions to the treasure box.)Another year passed and the devils were coming to try to steal the treasures again!But that's not gonna happen because Buddha knows that they are coming so she had well prepared and Buddha said:this is going to be the most fabulous year ever!At night when everyone's sleeping,the devils were quietly coming in and got in!It was dark and sacred.And then when the devils was slowly walking,trying to find clues.SUDDENLY.....one of the devils step on something and a sound came up!Out it came,QUAKE!It was a rubber duck!Ohhh!It was Buddha!She put the ducky on the floor so when the devils step on it it'll have a quake sound so all the soldiers will come out to catch them!And the soldiers did!All they come to catch them!Later at midnight they were back!This time they were checking the floor and everywhere.The devils want to steal the powerful magic because the powerful magic is the key to open the big treasures boxes.They were trying to find some clues.After one-and a half hour,they finally found out that the paintings are the maps and they followed the paintings to the secret room and stole the key successfully.One of the devils said:Now is the time to follow the instructions and get the big treasures.And then they worked out how to get to the big treasures.They sneaked out the door and thought that they could run away from them!

Chapter 3

Come Back Here

But Buddha was smart!She put an alarm on top of the door and when the alarm rings,that means the devils are getting out to escape or steal things.The alarm rang as loud as it could!Everyone rushed out and attacked the devils.Buddha sent more soldiers to attack them because the devils are too strong to attack!Finally Buddha hit them on the wall to be a painting and they can never come out ever again.I think the devils should be happy because there are many more devils that were hit on the wall and they can be together now!Everyone smiled at Buddha and said:WOW!I am AMAZED!Good Job!Buddha said:Thank you!You guys did well too!Buddha said:I said it will be the best day ever!And so it did!

Dragon Devil

ESF Glenealy School, Lamba, Samaira – 8

One day, in the city of Hong Kong, a unicorn called Crystal was playing with her toys when suddenly..... Spotty, the city's most evil dragon landed outside Crystal's house (which was a cave) and cackled, "ha ha ha ha! I am going to trap you with this boulder and you will never escape in your life!" Yelled Spotty. Then, the evil dragon pushed the boulder into the cave entrance and left. Crystal sat on the floor staring at the boulder in shock. "How am I going to get out?" She wailed. Suddenly, a small voice said, "need some help"? Crystal turned around and saw a small mouse. "Yes please", said Crystal. "But how can you help me if you are so small"? Oh you just wait and see", said the mouse mysteriously as he slipped through a small gap in between the wall and boulder. A few minutes later, he returned with hundreds of mice. Then all the mice leaned against the boulder and began pushing. "Push, push, push and one more push", Crystal yelled. Finally, the mice managed to heave the boulder out. "Hooray", cheered Crystal. "Thanks". Then the mice left. A minute later, she got a message. It turned out that Spotty was so mad he failed, that he began crying with anger. Crystal laughed and she and the mice lived happily ever after.

Reckless

ESF Glenealy School, Lau, Wing Sze – 10

8:00 am

“Kids, wake up!” Haoran & Ying Yue's mother yelled. “Mmmmmmmmmh” was all their mother could hear. Yue was 14 and Hao was 15. “I don’t wanna wake up...” Yue whined. “Well, we have to,” Hao said as he got up from his bed. Hao grabbed his clothes and walked to the bathroom to change his clothes. “Oh well, I better go change.” Yue thought.

The siblings went to the kitchen as their mother was cooking their food. “Brilliant, you’re here!” Their mother applauded. Their mother placed 2 plates of dumplings (5 on each) in front of the 2. “Enjoy~” The dumplings surprisingly tasted so good that they stuffed them all in their mouths at once.

9:00 am

“Hao! Hao!” Yue screamed. “What do you want? I am right next to you.” Hao replied. “I found this place online! It is a M–mo–Mogao Grotto.” Yue said confused. “Mogao Grotto? Psh, that place is ancient. I had an exhibition on that. I– Why are you asking, anyway?” Hao questioned. “Oh, let’s go there! We live close to it!” Yue said excitedly. “Are you crazy?! It is dangerous! It was made in 366AD!!” Hao whisper–yelled. “I don’t care, let’s go! It’s just a 25–minute walk!” Yue said as she dragged her brother out of the house. “Ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous! I will not risk my dear WiFi just for this stupid adventure!” Hao protested & whined.

“Here we are at the Mega Greta!!” Yue said, amazed. “Mogao Grotto–” Hao corrected, “This place is awesome!!” Yue said, stunned. “Eh, not really. Kinda boring to be honest with you.” Hao protested. “Don’t be so boring, Hao! Can’t you appreciate that this place even exists?!” Yue whined. “No, actually not really,” Hao replied. “You–” Yue was about to punch her brother’s face just as he distracted her by saying “Let’s explore the outside of this place!” Hao said excitedly. “Oh! Right, about that!” Yue said as she started to go around the Mogao Grotto. “Tch, ridiculous,” Hao murmured.

“Okay brother, let’s get into it! Lemme just text mom real quick–” “No Yue, we have no WiFi here, it is pointless.” Hao said as he cut Yue off. “O–oh...” Yue said as her head went down. “Tsk, reckless girl” Hao whispered. “Let’s go in anyway!” Yue said. “Fine, but if we get in any mess, I’m telling mom that it was your doing,” Hao said trying to make a deal. “Deal,” Yue replied.

The 2 somehow got in and started exploring. Yue thought the gate was left open for a few, but she realized she was wrong. A loud bang seemed to hit the floor. “H–Hao?!? W–What was that?!” Yue said worriedly. “Oh, the gates went down,” Hao smirked. “Told you it wouldn’t be a good idea.” “This isn’t time for jokes, Hao! We are trapped!” Yue whispered. “Kay, kay, fine,” Hao murmured. “Well...well, what do we have here, hmm?” an echoey voice crept up the 2’s spine.

“Why, hello there.~~” An anonymous voice echoed “Who are you?!” Hao shouted. “Oh, how rude of me,” The anonymous voice chuckled. “I’m a dragon, she is a dragon. We’re here to become your friends!” The 1st dragon echoed. “REALLY?!” Yue exclaimed. “No, of course not. We’re here to attack you.” Those 2 dragons quickly came from a statue to life. The first dragon was a deep blue, the second was a vibrant red.

The first one went for Hao, the second chased Yue around. “HAHAHA, THIS IS GETTING FUN!!” The first dragon said as he punched Hao. The second dragon was elegantly violent and was not to be messed with. “My dear, you are both badly hurt! Hah, we might as well make you die right now!” The second dragon barked. “I’m sorry Hao! I’m so sorry! This is all my fault! If I hadn’t become so reckless, none of this would’ve happened! Because of me, we are now doomed!!” “YEAH, I KNOW THAT! GOOD THAT YOU KNOW.” Hao replied. As the war was going on, Hao & Yue were heavily bruised & hurt. Yue broke her arm, Hao was coughing blood. They were in heavy, heavy pain. They thought they couldn’t fight anymore. So they said their last words. “KIDS! QUICK!

ESCAPE! I'LL HOLD THEM OFF!!!” A statue figure said. They both ran out of the Mogao Grotto and went back home.

“OH, MY WORD! CHILDREN! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!” Hao & Yue’s mom cried. “Sorry mother...I guess I was just too reckless..” Yue exclaimed softly. “Yeah, no joke. If you ever plan to do something stupid like this again, don’t pull me in it. Hao joked. “Sure thing, brother,” Yue said, right before she fell asleep.

Lexy and The Cave Dragon

ESF Glenealy School, Lee, Chae Young – 10

Once, there was a lovely adventurous girl called Lexy. She loves to explore and visit other places she especially likes to explore caves. Summer break was coming soon and she decided to go to a cave called Mogao Grottoes. Lexy learned about that in school and she thought it would be exciting. She dashed to her mother and asked about her idea. “Mother, please can we go to China and go to a place called the Mogao Grottoes?” she asked. Mother thought for a while. “Are you really sure you want to go? I thought we could stay here and have a nice holiday with friends and families.” said Mother. “Yes! I want to go more than anything.” Lexy replied quickly. “Very well we may go,” said Mother.

The next morning Lexy and Mother were off to China. ‘Lexy finally got to go to China!’ Lexy thought happily. In the plane Lexy totally forgot that she was so air sick. She barfed in the toilet three times. When the plane arrived Lexy quickly rushed outside first and got to smell the fresh air in China. Mother found a small Inn where they could stay in. “Are you ready to explore China?” Mother asked. “I am ready to see everything, especially the Mogao Grottoes!” said Lexy confidently.

In the early morning Lexy and Mother went to look at the caves. It was like an old small tall tower cave. “Wow!” cried Lexy. It was so old that paint of grey stripes peeled out in the walls. Mother went inside the caves and Lexy followed her. Just then there was darkness. Lexy wandered everywhere in the caves, then she realized that she was stuck inside the cave. “M—Mother, where are you?” Lexy asked, feeling so scared. There was no sound. Lexy wanted to cry but she tried to be brave. She saw two flint rocks and she made a small fire. Suddenly she saw a very ugly painting. “Ahhh!” Lexy screamed. She tried to be calm again. ‘It’s just a painting, it’s just a painting, it’s just a painting.’ she thought trying to calm herself. She felt much better before she could move on and she heard a noise. Then a figure came out of the shadows and Lexy realized that it was not a person. It had a horn, razor sharp teeth, big wings and a horrible stinky fire breath. “Dragon!!” Lexy screamed. “Calm down, I won’t hurt you,” said the Dragon. Her scales were brown and grey like the caves. “Who are you?” asked Lexy. “My name is Caveslayer. I live in this cave. What is your name?” asked Caveslayer. “M—my name is Lexy,” answered Lexy. It was her first time meeting a dragon in a cave. The Dragon looked kind of upset. “Are you okay?” Lexy asked. “I came from heaven and I am here on earth to protect the caves but I miss my home. I want to go back to heaven.” replied Caveslayer sadly. “Why don’t we get out of here together?” asked Lexy. “Are you sure?” asked Caveslayer. There are many traps in the caves.” said Caveslayer. Soom they both agreed and went on their adventure. They went left, right, straight and back. Finally they found the entrance locked. In front of the caves there were puzzles of maths. ‘Darn, I hate maths. I am so bad at it.’ thought Lexy. There were so many questions in maths. “Are you good at maths?” Lexy asked. “Nope, I have no idea what maths means, well dragons learn gaths. It is similar to those problems but much easier.” replied Caveslayer. The first question was 6×7 . “I will give you a tip, use a stick and do the calculation on the floor. It will be very useful.” said Caveslayer. She calculated and got her answer 43. She carefully put the number into the puzzle. However she was wrong. The cave began to shrink and squeeze together. Lexy and Caveslayer were almost being stuck.

Caveslayer tried to think but she couldn’t find an answer in her head. “Think again,” Caveslayer said. Lexy concentrated then put the number 42. The answer was correct but it was half closed. There was another question. 9×5 . “I know this one!” Cried Lexy. She put the number 45 and the door opened. Lexy rode into Caveslayer’s back and squeezed out of the door. They were free. However Lexy realized that she had to go find her mom. Caveslayer landed on the entrance of the cave. “I will miss you. I hope we can see each other again.” said Lexy. “I will miss you too, I will always remember you.” replied Caveslayer. Then they gave each other the last hug and she flew into the sky and disappeared. Lexy went off to find her mother. She found her mother sitting very tired. ‘She must have looked for me.’ thought Lexy. She ran to her mother and they gave a hug. “Where were you?!” Mother asked. “It’s a secret,” said Lexy. “But I wasn’t far.” Mother sighed in relief. Lexy would never forget the amazing daring adventure she had done with her dragon friend Caveslayer.

The Gem Stone

ESF Glenealy School, Lee, Henie – 8

One day there was a girl called Elizabeth. She LOVED animals especially Non – Real creatures like mythic creatures! Elizabeth always shows everyone kindness and she is always respectful. Her house was on Braemar Hill road with a lot of trees! That's how she now loves nature! One day she wakes up and sees a beautiful bunny in a tree so she takes a picture with her favourite camera! She loved art and her family. She always adventures all around the world with her little sister called Misty! They went out on an adventure to find new things and experiment new things. They saw a lot of pets like: Puppy, Cat which are all different types! But in the meantime her little sister saw a Mogao Grotto! Then Misty said “Elizabeth! Look there is a little thing there, what is that?” Then Elizabeth said “Oh my! Goodness me it is a Mogao Grotto! Let's have an adventure!” Misty asked, “ Do you think it is a great idea?” Elizabeth said “Duh Misty we need to find out new things!” So they went on an adventure. When they went in they said “ WOAHH OMG” .There were traditional Chinese statues and there we're one tunnel to go somewhere else so they went in and walked and there were obstacles. The floor was turning red and turning..... HOT! Misty said “ AHHH” Elizabeth said “ get on the obstacle! It is LAVA!” So they jump and do obstacles and the floor turns normal. Then they entered the room and saw a magical effect and then it damaged Elizabeth's magical necklace! Then they saw glowing bright as a hot morning sun then it was a..... MYTHIC CREATURES!

Then Elizabeth said “ OMG! Hello mythic creatures! My~ name is Elizabeth and this is Misty. What is your name?” Then Kitsune said “Sorry to break your necklace! This is my friend's. My name is Ruby the Kitsune and this is Kiren the Phoenix and Luna the Simurgh, Rose pink the Birthstone, Crystal white the Birthstone, Amethyst purple Birthstone And lastly Lucy the Green Birthstone which is the youngest.” Elizabeth said “ Oh wow what a wonderful name! Do you want to join our group and adventure all around with your power?” Then Everyone said “ YES! Please we will be honoured!” Then they became a wonderful group and always adventures all around the world!

The Heartbreaking Breakup

ESF Glenealy School, Nair, Ira – 9

PROLOGUE

“I love you more” “No, I love you more,” teased a happy couple. But of course, they thought that a middle school couple wouldn't even last till high school, but it did— and they got married! They knew that what they had was special.. “Surprise, I’m pregnant!,” cried the woman. [BABY CRYING] “I’m gonna name her Miley,” said the woman. What they had was special, and they didn’t know it then, but they had a whole adventure waiting for them!

The room was surely filled with tension, for no one noticed young Miley laying her eyes upon the situation. “You are so self centered that you forgot your own daughter's birthday!,” Miley’s mum suddenly rebuked. And with that, off went Miley’s dad— and down came Miley. “What were you fighting about!? Where has dad gone? Did he really forget my birthday!?,`sobbed Miley. “I’m sorry sweetheart, you're dad and I should have told you what was going on earlier,” admitted Miley’s mum “You're dad and I have been fighting for a while now, we just thought it would be safer to not tell you. We decided to have our family adjourned for a while.” The room was silent, as Miley and her mum gazed up at the inky night sky, Miley in tears..

The next morning Miley woke up to find her and her mum sitting at the kitchen table, where they had left off last night.. Suddenly, the door slammed open and Miley’s mum woke up. “Miley, Miley!,” Someone screamed, “I didn’t know your parents were getting divorced, why didn’t you tell me?” Miley was confused “Ralia, is that you? My parents aren’t getting divorced, they’re just having a break,” Miley replied. Ralia, the girl calling Miley, was Miley’s BFFAE. (best friend forever and ever.) “What? But my mum said...,” but Ralia stopped right there, and realized that Miley didn’t know “Know what?,” asked Miley, her mum replied, “Your dad and I are thinking about getting divorced”

“Ralia, I’m sorry but I think you're gonna have to go now because my mum and I have some sharing to do, or more like she has some sharing to do with me. So can you please leave now,” asked Miley. So she went, and Miley opened her mouth, but then again, she chose to shut it... “I know, I know, I’m gonna have to do all the talking and not you. Because I’m the one who kept a secret and I usually do that to you when you're the one keeping the secret. We just thought to keep a secret, for the better of course,” Lulled Miley’s mum. Just then, Miley burst into tears and ran out of the door as fast as she could, hopped on the bike, and cycled away..

Miley’s mum quickly called her husband, or more like her almost ex husband, and told him everything. “I came as fast as I could, let's go look for her.. They too ran out, hopped in the car, and drove in Miley’s direction. Miley, on the other hand, had now reached the one place her dad used to tell her to ‘never enter, or else..’ But she did enter, and little did Miley know that she was reading about this place earlier today: The Mogao Grottoes! She hopped off her bike, and ran in..

When her parents reached that far, her dad was terrified. He knew Miley had always listened to his warning about The Mogao Grottoes, but it seems not today. They called and called until it was night.. But that didn’t stop them! They kept on calling, desperately. “Miley, come out! This place is dangerous. Trust us!” Finally, they heard a reply, “Why should I trust you? You betrayed me!”

“Miley please! We’ve been calling for two hours now, please just come out!” “At least we know she replied, that means she’s safe,” Miley’s mum assured her almost ex husband. But that wasn't it, Miley realized how much her family loved her, breakup or not. She was finally starting to rethink the ‘hideout forever’ thing. But it wasn't just her, her parents, still calling, were also starting to realize how much Miley, and each other meant to them, basically, how much the family meant to them.. “Do you think that us calling for so long is the reason this is taking longer and that we should give her some time and space to figure this out?,” asked Miley’s dad. Miley’s mum replied, “Maybe..” But just as they were leaving, Miley ran out of the cave and gave them a big hug and said “I’m so, so sorry for running away. And dad, I’m so, so sorry for not listening to your warning. But most of all, I’m sorry for not respecting your decision.”

“Oh no Miley, we’re sorry. We should have told you the truth,” replied Miley’s mum. And her dad added “And you shouldn’t be sorry for ‘not respecting our decision’, breakups take time to get over, and we’re still figuring it out ourselves.. That’s why we didn’t tell you. And there is something we would like you to know,” said her dad. Miley of course was curious “What?” Her mum replied this time, “We also, while you were in there ‘realising’, we also realised that our family means everything to us” “so you’re not getting divorced?,” asked Miley. “No,” her mum replied, “No, we’re not!”

Miley sniffled, “I love you guys so much!”

[HUG]

EPILOGUE

Miley happily skipped down the stairs, gently humming a song. Her family was back to normal now! “Hey mum, can me and Ralia have pancakes for breakfast?,” asked Miley. Of course, her mum was weirded out, “What, but Ralia’s not here” “LOOK OUT!,” called someone anonymously. But it was too late, the table had been crashed— by Ralia! “Skates again, Ralia?!,” scolded Miley’s mum. “Sorry,” she replied.. But she wasn’t mad, this had already happened eight times before this one! Okay, maybe better!

The Story of Fairies in a Cave

ESF Glenealy School, Oladokun Piguillem, Sade – 8

Sade was a 10-year-old girl, that was living in a small town in the mountains where the Mogao Caves are, in Gansu Province, China. She was very adventurous and brave.

One rainy day, she wanted to go out. Her parents stopped her from going out because it was very foggy, stormy, very cloudy and you could not see anything outside. So, the whole family went to sleep. When Sade heard the lightning struck, she went out of bed and checked on her parents if they were sleeping or not. Her mom and dad moved a little bit but did not wake up. A second later, her dad saw her peeking at them and thought it was not real and he was dreaming. She rushed back to her room. Her dad went to her room to see if she was there and saw her sleeping. When her parents went back to sleep, she got dressed and went out. But before Sade went out up the hill, she saw a huge blue light. She was so curious about what it was, that she went up that hill. It had so many rocks that she even thought it was called ROCKY Mountain, but it was called FAIRY Mountain.

On Fairy Mountain there were Twelve bits. It took one hour to climb every single bit of Fairy Mountain. There are Twelve bits of Fairy Mountain, and each part takes one hour to get there, so the answer is all together how many hours Sade is going to walk is Twelve hours. Sade never gave up on walking and it was so rainy and cloudy she could barely see a thing, but she still did not give up. Sade did not know that there were Twelve bits of Fairy Mountain. Sade arrived at the first bit of Fairy Mountain. It was a creepy forest that made weird noises. Sade almost got lost in the forest, but she got back on track thanks to a map she had in her backpack. Sade made it to the second bit of Fairy Mountain. There was two Bigfoot in the second bit. It was so cold that Sade got frozen. Luckily for her, the two Bigfoot came to save Sade. Sade was screaming while the Bigfoot were waiting for her to stop screaming until Sade fainted. The Bigfoot could talk, and Sade was freaking out and she almost fainted again. It was so scary because the Bigfoot had cracked the ice and almost cracked Sade. After that, Bigfoot wanted to hug Sade, but Sade woke up and instead of getting a hug, Sade started running while yelling:

“I run for my life!”

Sade was also screaming: “someone, help me!”, “someone help!”, and Bigfoot put their hands down because they were sad that Sade did not hug them and did not show gratitude. The little girl knew that it was not right, not to be thankful, so Sade decided to stop running and wait for them to show them gratitude. They started hugging and then she could not stop because their fur was very soft and fluffy.

Sade was lucky because she has been practicing Bigfoot language, so if Sade ever sees a Bigfoot like now, she can talk to them.

She only needed three minutes to practice Bigfoot language, and when she was done, she told them if they could help her if she ever gets in danger again. They said: “DALA” (which means yes in Bigfoot language). So, they went of to find out what the blue light was and why it was there. The Bigfoot followed Sade to the third bit, and they saw many warning signs saying: “do not continue, go back down or some dangerous things can happen”. They wanted to ignore the signs and continue until the twelve bit, which was the top.

At the end of the third bit, they saw a magical, weird door. The door was blue and cracked. They went through the door and bad things started to happen and they started running: on the forth bit spears were shot at them, on the fifth bit the floor crumbled, on the sixth bit the walls were squeezing in, on the seventh bit there were mini knives falling from the ceiling, on the eight bit huge dogs attacked them, on the ninth bit rocks were falling from the mountain trying to knock them off, on the tenth bit there a huge fire started, on the eleventh an earthquake started until the twelfth bit ... the survived!!

They could see three huge caves.

The cave on the left was dark and cold. A monster was living inside that will eat you if you dare going inside.

The cave on the right, was red, full of lava with bubbles.

The middle cave had a bright light inside and it also led to the blue light and if you went in that cave all around you will turn into rainbows and flowers and things that are so, so joyful. So, after one hour of thinking which cave they should go through, they finally finished thinking they said that they were going through the middle cave and they were so lucky they went through the middle cave because this cave was leading to the top. When they finally got to the top of Fairy Mountain, the twelfth floor, it was incredible!

It was so amazing!! It was full of colourful flowers, magic rainbows, and FAIRIES! It was worth going through so many dangers to be there.

There were thousands of them! They were singing, dancing, playing, laughing, and hugging. In case you don't know, when fairies hug, they make a blue light... the lightnings you see during storms!

So, if on a rainy day you see a blue light or lightning, don't be afraid to go out on an adventure, as you might see fairies hugging. And if you are very lucky, they might hug you!

New Tales From The Mogao Grottoes:

ESF Glenealy School, Pang, Avery – 10

The humans constructed me a few thousand years ago. They formed holes in the mountain and painted over the walls. Over the years, I was decorated with Buddhist Art. But slowly, I was forgotten. People found other routes in the silk road. I was slowly left alone, until all I could hear was the wind rustling in my ears. I fell asleep from boredom. Then, I had a vision...

Darkness loomed over the vast desert, as it covered a soft, dark blanket on the smooth landscape, leaving no trace of light. Altan walked slowly, intimidated by the stunning landscape. The full moon glowed so dim that it was impossible to see without a torch in hand.

A slight movement on the corner of Altan's eye triggered a reaction of fear. Gradually, he turned his head around, trying his best not to stir. Something was moving underneath the sand, lazily towards him. He retraced his steps, alarmed by the sense of unease.

It moved closer. 50 feet, 20 feet, 10 feet. That was when Altan started to run. He didn't dare look back. He navigated around the endless dunes of sand, only to find a jagged hill that was as big as an elephant. Altan climbed up anxiously. When he looked back, he saw a red worm-like creature, five foot long, that was attempting to grab him and feast on him until satisfied.

The grotesque critter had blood red skin which looked like tubes connected with each other by a 100 layers of rusty duct tape. The front of the creature had a mouth like a lamprey's, a conveyor belt of teeth spiralling down into a never ending abyss of darkness. If the rock wasn't there he would be erased from existence. Although Altan's hands and legs were scraped by sharp rocks, he survived.

The sun began to rise as Altan once again was travelling on the barren wasteland of the Gobi Desert, that was when I saw myself. The cave. I was no longer alone, was I?

I woke up in shock, and found Altan in front of him. He was awestruck by the size of me. I stared back at him. For so long, I had never seen someone in such a long time, it was almost impossible to recall when. But now, I appreciated the fact that there was someone.

Some hours later, Altan had left. Once again, I was alone, and fell asleep from boredom. I had a vision again.

A giant, powerful monkey was terrorizing the heavens, throwing fireballs at every single structure he could find. Warriors from the heavens were throwing spears, rocks and fireballs at the monkey, but nothing seemed to work. Below the monkey, there were monkeys and humans, fighting with each other. Bigger monkeys were sailing in boats, firing an arrow that would eventually land precisely on their forehead. Underneath the fighting, someone was plotting revenge.

Not soon later, a few explorers walked towards me, marking the end of my solitary confinement. More and more people came, and finally I was not the cave that was once alone.

The Legend of the Mogao Grottoes

ESF Glenealy School, Sreeram, Avantika – 9

“Ooh so close!” whispered Carlos as he was walking through the forest. Carlos was an 18 year old boy who had an obsession with treasure. He also loved to explore. Not too long ago he found a map that led to the Mogao Grottoes. The Mogao Grottoes was an old cottage owned by a very wealthy family. But for at least a century this family had been missing. Legend says that the treasures the family owned cursed them and that whoever owned or touched the treasure shall turn into a demon. Carlos was in search of that treasure. He didn’t believe or care about what ‘legend’ said. Suddenly something started to glow not too far away from him. He started walking closer and closer to the cottage until he finally reached. At first Carlos thought that he must have been dreaming so he pinched himself. “OW! Definitely not dreaming” cried Carlos, he was absolutely stunned. He couldn’t believe how much treasure was right in front of him to take. He was just about to pop some gold coins in his bag when ZAP, his arms started to feel lighter and turned black, his legs started to fade away and he could fly! To Carlos it felt like a good thing but later he didn’t feel great at all. He took out his mirror and saw his face! The legend was true. He had turned into a demon. He couldn’t say a word! He looked hideous, as if his face had melted and then hardened to stone! He was terrified!

The Legend of the Mogao Grottoes (Avantika Sreeram)

It was a gloomy morning but something felt special about today to Andrea. Andrea is a 9 year old girl who goes to Sycamore Valley Primary School. She is just about the brightest person at school and loves to research and explore. Today was the day her class would start their projects on Mogao Grottoes, in Andrea’s opinion this was the best part of the day! “YAY! It’s time for Mogao Grottoes research,” exclaimed Andrea. So off she went with her friends to research. Later on that day after school, she was dying to ask her parents for something huge. Finally once she got the chance, she ran to ask. “Hi mum, hi dad! You know how we’re researching Mogao Grottoes? Well I thought since you used to be explorers we could go look for the treasure or something. PLEASE!”. Andrea’s parents were bewildered, they hadn’t been exploring since they moved to the city. “Of course not! Don’t you know what legend says? Whoever touches the treasure shall perish or turn into a demon!” cried her parents. Andrea was furious, she couldn’t believe her parents who had been amazing explorers a long time ago were refusing to help out their daughter for a very important school project. She thought this was very unfair and unreasonable but she knew herself she couldn’t let this happen. She had to come up with something to go and explore. Right that minute Andrea got an amazing idea, it was risky but worth it. She had to sneak out tonight and sneak back in 2 days after midnight. Andrea wracked her brain to think of a much easier idea but it whatever it was wouldn’t fulfill her desire. So she had no choice but to start packing for tonight. Later at night when her parents were asleep she slipped out with her bags. First thing in the morning her parents realized what happened but very vaguely. They didn’t understand why Andrea would have run away, but then it struck them, she went to search for the Mogao Grottoes. Exactly at 12:00 that night Andrea was walking through the Sycamore Valley Park. It felt unusually cold and quiet without the lights on. In that split second she suddenly started falling down and down and down. Everything was a blur until she heard a very faint squawk, “Finally! SQUAWK! You have opened your eyes!” Squawked the unusual parrot. “Hi! I’m Leo! Are you a human?” “Yes.” replied Andrea weakly. Leo tried to pick her up with all his might but she was too heavy. Once Andrea felt better she got up. She asked Leo where she was too busy checking some kind of ragged and old map. At last he told her where she was. “We are in China, just a few miles away from the Mogao Grottoes. The Grottoes is a large cave which has a demon lurking in it” said Leo excitedly. “I know what the Mogao Grottoes are, we are researching them in school,” replied Andrea irritably. Suddenly a bush near them started shaking. Andrea went to check it and observed that there were hardly readable words carved into a stone under the bush. Andrea was about to touch the carvings when in that split second she was whizzed into some kind of green portal. “AAAHHH! Help! Somebody HELP!” yelled Leo. Andrea was at last able to calm him down. Andrea was confused and unsure where she was until she saw the glowing treasure. She was almost about to touch the treasure when she heard a soft but slithery voice saying something to her. “Stop. Don’t touch it,” said the mysterious voice. Andrea stopped but was really curious. “Who are you? Why shouldn’t I touch it?” asked Andrea quietly. “Don’t scream or run away if I tell you who I am,” said the voice “I am the demon from the legend. Around 20 years ago I came here to explore like you. I was silly enough to not believe the legend and when I touched the treasure I turned into this hideous creature. By the way I’m Carlos but my demon name is Whistler.” Andrea was astonished that she was right in front of a demon but wasn’t getting attacked. “I have to tell Leo! Leo!” called Andrea, but he wasn’t there. Andrea turned around and Whistler was gone too... TO BE CONTINUED...

Max the Wolf

ESF Glenealy School, Sze, Darren – 10

Crash! A statue has been broken again in the mogao caves. The workers inside the caves can only see a shadow. No one knows who breaks the statues. People say that it was a phantom, some say it was a thief. But no one truly knows who is doing it.

Once, there was a wolf boy called Max, he lived in a forest, and he is a bad wolf, because ever since his parents were lost in a tragic storm, Max has not been taught to be polite and be kind to other people, so every day he just does nothing, and he likes to eat other wolves' food without asking.

One day, Max was taking an afternoon nap, then there was a lot of talking on the other side of the forest which broke the silence. It turns out that there was a new attraction which was discovered in the forest, and it is formed by a complicated underground tunnel system interconnected inside to a lot of caves. Each cave has different buddha statues. Max is now angry that there will be a lot of voices when he is sleeping and resting. He wants to stop it. Max thought of a plan, at night, he will break all the buddha statues in every cave and will do it sneakily and silently.

The night after he planned it, he went to the caves at midnight, all the people who work in the mogao caves as well as visitors have gone back home. When Max stepped in, there was no one. He smashed all the buddhas in the first cave, second and the third. Then he went back to the forest to sleep.

The next day, he woke up to the voices of the people, but this time, the news crew was there. They were reporting that there was a break in into the mongao caves, and all the statues in caves one to three have been broken. The police are trying to find who broke the statues, and they are going to every house in the town. Max knew that he did something wrong, but he did not admit it.

One night, as he was destroying the statues, Max suddenly heard a loud alarm that blared all over the caves, and security guards came rushing into where he was. But Max dodged left and right, and he ran as fast as lightning back to the forest.

The next morning, Max woke up to the news crew's voices again. They announced that the caves have made a foolproof security plan, and it includes a trap, where at night, if anyone trespasses the caves and doing suspicious activity, they will be caught and brought to the local police station. Max heard the announcement, but he just ignored it. In the night, he crept into the caves, but when he stepped in, he saw that he accidentally crossed a laser sensor, there was a noisy alarm. In 2 seconds, Max found himself inside a cage attached to the ceiling, then he felt that he was being lowered, when he finally got out, he was happy that he could escape. When he reached the exit, he was stopped by the guards. They took Max to the police station. Max was so nervous, and he passed out.

When Max woke up, there was no one in the room except him. When he tried to open the door and sneak out, the door was locked. As there were no guards outside, he tried to kick the door lock but after he did that, the lock started to flash red, and Max knew that it wasn't a good sign. So, he just gave up and sat tight.

Suddenly, a monk opened the door. He is bold, kind with a facial appearance like a buddha and he told Max to sit down with a nice and soft tone. He gave Max two magic beans, and said a magic word, after that, all Max could see was colorful smoke.

When the smoke disappeared, Max discovered that he was inside a cave with a few buddha statues alive and looking at him kindly. They suddenly spoke, and said "Max, you are a bad wolf, but there is good inside of you, we can help you to achieve that goodness. Our names are Wisdom, Kindness, Generosity, Patience and Compassion." Max is very surprised at first, but finally came to his senses. He is very happy that someone can help him to become good again. At first, when the buddhas were talking to him, he was daydreaming for the first few days, but after a week, he finally listened to the buddhas, and he learned something. After a month, he got a test from the Buddhas about being good. When he finished the test, he hoped that he would get a full score, and he did! He is very happy, but he needed to stay there for two years to learn how to become a good person.

The two years have finally passed, Max is now a very good boy, the buddhas used magic to return him back to the mongao caves. After he arrived there, he left the caves and went back to his home in the forest. He was very tired after two long years, and he slept for a long time. After he woke up, he went to the mongao caves' recruitment center as he wanted to get a job to renovate the mongao caves. With his good and sincere attitude, he got a job as a cleaner. Since then, he goes there everyday to help clean and dust the statues. When tourists come to the caves, they heard the story about how Max turned from a bad wolf to a good one. This wonderful story has been propagated to other villages and people enjoy listening to it all the time.

The Descendants of the Grotto Guardian

ESF Glenealy School, Szeto, Abby – 9

XiuYing jumped. Enough to skip over the lava in the stone hole in the ground. “It is not that far!” She yelled out to her friends, Daniel and Stacey looked underneath their feet. “It’s literally ONE METER long!” Stacey yelled across the lava. It leached up, heat steaming from the stone above. “Fine, if so, use this.” XiuYing focused on the pulse underground. There was something that reached for the surface, that wanted to touch the sky. And so it did. XiuYing imagined pushing it upwards, towards the surface with her mind. “WOAH!” Stacey cried. “What is that thing!?” a block of bridge was pushing upwards. “RUN OVER BEFORE IT BLOCKS OUR PATH!” XiuYing cried to them. “Won’t it block our temporary EXIT as well?” Daniel asked, worried. “JUST GET OVER. NOW!” XiuYing bellowed. Stacey and Daniel hurried over the slabs. Suddenly the rising speeds up. The stone flushed up, flying through the skylight. “Oh.” Daniel gasped, awestruck. “How in the world of flying pudding did you do that?” Stacey asked, as she gaped at the sky. “I do not know. Unless I have some amazing—giblety things, what do you call them? Ah, yes. SUPERPOWERS.” XiuYing retailed. “It is unlikely I have SUPERPOWERS.” ”Um— YES YOU DO!? THAT WAS HISTORY’S MOST BRIEF MOMENT IN THE FABRIC OF TIME, BREAKING ALL THE LAWS OF GRAVITY BY LITERALLY WEDGING A BRIDGE!” Stacey hollered, looking like a chicken who was trying to fly. “Guys, can we get going?” Daniel asked. “Yes.” XiuYing pushed ahead. “Aggggggggh!” “XiuYing!” Daniel and Stacey cried in horror. They couldn’t see anything. It was too dark. Who knows what had happened. “Well, there’s only one option. We go forward.”

Chapter two

“MORE LAVA!?” Stacey looked SO ANNOYED. “How did you get over it again?” Stacey asked. She stared out over a pit of lava, surrounding a giant stone pavilion. “Hmm, maybe we can do something ourselves this time.” Daniel unzipped his backpack and pulled out a big waterproof sac that said ‘1MM WATER, LAVA EXTINGUISHER’ “okay, that should do it.” Daniel carefully let the water out of the sac making his way through, to the pavilion. “Woah!” Stacey cried. “Yes, I know very well stored treasure, even throughout the years.” XiuYing said, as she placed her palm in the centre of a golden lectern, surrounded by diamonds that leached out like wind-tipped spears. Her palm fit, like it was made for it. “*What is this sorcery?*” XiuYing whispered to herself. Suddenly, an immense glowing started. “WHAT???” Stacey yelled. “AHGGGG!” Daniel suddenly cried. A big hole opened beneath their feet. One by one, the stone pillars of the pavilion fell, forcing XiuYing to run, and leap from the platform that the pavilion was on. “NOOO!” Stacey cried, her voice slowly fading. What had happened? XiuYing ignored the tears and carried on focusing. Waitamminute. Wasn’t she falling a few seconds ago? She looked to her feet to realise she was on a small stone platform. “What?” she said, suspicious. Was there someone watching her? She looked at the lava that surrounded her and noticed something shiny near her. Maybe it was some treasure, or something that had fallen off the pavilion with her, but no. It was a golden plaque with words engraved on it. 為了拯救你的朋友，你必須通過測試 it read. It was in Chinese! *Chinese*. She KNEW this language, more than anything else. “Hmm... in order to save your friends, you must pass the test...” XiuYing gasped. How did whoever or *whatever* was in the pavilion know about her friends, or herself? She paid it no attention, and walked off into the next room. She rolled her eyes. The next room was a pool of water, with a long distance, much too far to swim. So she conjured the stone bridge, and immediately ran over. And just like that, she had passed the test! Her friends emerged from under a stone slab. “You saved us!” Stacey yelled happily. They ran to the next room. It was filled with paintings and decorations. Stacey and Daniel gasped. And XiuYing suddenly said, “we must be on guard. This place is full of—” click! Daniel stepped on a pressure plate. XiuYing, the brave girl who dared to go into danger. XiuYing, the girl who wasn’t afraid. Now, she couldn’t imagine that she was falling into a void.

To be continued...

The Secret Box

ESF Glenealy School, Tsui, Jeremy – 8

Once upon a time, there were two investigators who needed to go to a cave in China because it was creepy, dark, and scary, and people who went there all disappeared after they go into that large cave. The investigator was Nate, and his assistant was Chloe. Lots of investigators went there but they were disappeared in the cave.

They were going there to find out what was in the creepy large dark cave. When they arrived there, they saw a big creepy treasure box. The cave was dusty too with a foul smell. It was disgusting. They wanted to open the large box. After a while, they opened the scary treasure box. Suddenly they fell asleep. When they woke up, they saw an old filthy note and it said: Dear friend you are captured by the monsters. You must fight every single creepy monster! Caution there are lots of people who died here or didn't want to fight. There are three monsters who are good at fighting. There was a shiny key on the sticky floor. Next to the note, there was a super dusty key hole. Do you know what was inside, they were soon going to find out what was inside. When they turned the lock with the key, the door opened itself and it was like a ghost opening an old door with its hands. When they went inside, they were in a park and it was nighttime. They saw a man and they became friends. His name was Ice Man and they went to the creepy, dark stadium where they fought the filthy giant. The first giant was called Dragon Man. He had muscles that were as big as a giant van. The Dragon tried to smack Nate but Dragon missed it.

Then Ice Man shouted "freeze power" and shot a lot of snow. Then the dragon blew fire and it made the ice become water. Then he shot the dragon again and this time the dragon was slow and it made the dragon freezed. Then they went to the next match and it was against Bomb Man. Bomb Man kept shooting bombs at them. They all dodged at the bombs and Nate kicked Bomb Man but he was not afraid of that but got less power. Then he kicked him a few times and he was dizzy then they pushed Bomb Man. Then they went to the next level where they met Balloon Man. It was the last level. He was very fat but could float. He was popping the balloon. It was noisy so they all covered their ears. But then Chloe was angry because Balloon Man was hurting her friend's ears. She jumped on Balloon Man and she somehow made him fall down so they got out of that treasure box. They told everyone about what happened inside the treasure box. They became a team that fights bad guys.

Living The Dream

ESF Glenealy School, Wang, Henry – 15

I'm just an ordinary twelve year old kid. I live in an ordinary street, in an ordinary town, in an ordinary city, called London, everything about me is normal, well, except that I am living an absolute DREAM

It all started the year before last year, when I was adopted to this unordinary family, a snooky rich one, at first I was so absolutely relieved to be part of a family, hoping that they would love and take care of me, but no, it happened to be the exact opposite, did they love me? NO. Did they take care of me? NO. Did they spend time with me? NO! So what happened exactly?...

Roughly one year after settling in with the rotten family, the parents went out for yet another fancy dinner, leaving me in for a whole dumb afternoon. And at the very same moment I heard the main door slam, I thought of something not like anything I've thought of before, so my mum and dad always forbade me to go to their luxurious bedroom, so whilst they were gone, I thought, why don't I sneak in?

And that's the moment, where my very own eyes met the most shocking but at the same time most amazing thing I had and will ever see. A portal. No I'm not playing around with you, I saw a portal, but what was inside was even better, inside such a portal stood none other but the worldwide famous Mogao Grottoes !

Obviously, I stepped inside, I checked out many of the caves, they all looked so cool and ancient , until I began thinking about my family, of how mad my mum and dad will be, how they'll hate me so much more, how they'll bully my non stop for sure, and man let me tell you, I began to get angry, I mean WHY? WHY are they so mean to me? WHY? JUST WHY? But the anger only got better of me, each time I thought about them my fists will clench up tightly, my face would go up in anger, and my eyes would stare out madly, and finally I knew enough was enough, why couldn't I go to a family that wants me, huh why? And then something happened , something happened, a thundering voice came out of the sky “ If you manage to defeat the last witch in the fantasy area then you shall be rewarded with what you wish, love” the voice boomed.

So there I was, in fantasy area fighting the last witch, both summoning our own dragon that is good/bad ready for battle, then casting spells on each other, dodging lasers. The witch was good, but I was faster, stronger, fiercer, togher... you get the Idea, but the witch managed to keep on track, until I thought of something, light, LIGHT! That's it, witches hate light! I shouted the correct spell and did it! I was so happy I began dancing and I nearly fell off the dragon! Then I was back in the mogao grottoes, and a cool heart layed in my hand, and sighed a relief not knowing what to do next, FOR THE PORTAL WAS GONE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Then I woke up, I was lying in my bed breathing fast and heavily, and finally came to my senses, “I did it for nothing!” I cried, I buried my hands in my face sobbing, but then lots of unusual things happened. My brother asked if I'm okay, my mum put her hand over my back, and my dad said what's wrong? Am I crazy I thought, or if the dream came true!

So everything became the exact opposite. Did they love me? YES! Did they take care of me? YES! Did they spend time with me? YES...

So here I am, I'm just an ordinary twelve year old boy, I live in an ordinary house, in an ordinary street, in an ordinary town, in an ordinary city, called London. Everything about me is normal, well, except that I am living an absolute DREAM!

The Mystery Cave

ESF Glenealy School, Wat, Jamie – 9

(You'll never guess what happened to me!)

One sunny morning, Angus, Benjamin, and I met up to walk down the woods together to have a nice picnic. So on Sunday morning, we gathered our hiking equipment and a picnic box. It had two juicy submarine sandwiches, two cans of lemonade, and a healthy salad. We chatted together what we were going to do in the woods.

"We should explore a cave!" I said. "Or we could go back home and grab camping equipment to go camping!"

Angus exclaimed.

Suddenly, we reached a left and right hand fork. One said: "Campsite" and another said: "The scary woods." After few seconds of thinking, we decided that we going to the woods. We encountered few thorny bushes, some thorn scratches and a furious hive of bees. We made good progress through the woods, but couldn't find a single place to eat. So we made a makeshift table with rocks and wood.

When we were eating our delicious submarine sandwiches, we saw a monkey. We thought it was cute, but it suddenly lunged for Benjamin. "HEY!!!" Benjamin shouted. The naughty little monkey thief had snatched the tasty sandwich out of his hands! We quickly packed everything into our picnic box to avoid the monkeys from taking our food. Just before we thought it couldn't get worse, the monkey called his whole pack to join in the thievery of our food. They took the entire basket with them and ran away. "Never come back!!!!" I shrieked.

We tried to trudge our way back home, but we soon got lost. We looped around the whole forest and couldn't find our way out! Dawn was soon falling. The pink sky was the only source of light that we had. My heart jittered nervously while we tried to find our way out. Suddenly, a gust of wind held us back. "AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH!!!!!" screamed Angus. "Incoming hurricane!!!!" He exclaimed. We ran and ran trying to find a shelter to stay for the night. Just then, we spotted a cave. We dived inside, for that was the only shelter that we had found. We wandered inside, going into the deep, dark, murky depths of the mysterious cave...

Grabbing a stick on the ground, I used my survival skills to make a torch. A soft glow full of sparking yellow embers filled the cave. The cave seemed very quiet and gloomy to us. Angus thought this was a bad idea, but he bravely followed me. Suddenly, out of nowhere, there was a antique panting on the cave wall! Who had came here before us?

We were getting scared, and we used a stick and got ready to fight whatever that would come in our way. Then we found a dark, dusty and gloomy room. Brushing away century old cobwebs, we stepped inside...

We saw a soft glowing candle on a coffin that said: "Li Tai Zhen ". Our curiosity got the best of us, so we used a shovel to creak the coffin open, and saw a chinese vampire with blood stained fangs. "AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH!!!!!" We screamed. We were so horrified by this monstrous creature we dropped the lid and ran away. Which was the biggest, fattest mistake that we had ever made in our entire lives.

The vampire had followed our footsteps and tracked us down. So we ran and ran to the nearest prison to try and evade capture. The prison was called Gold Warrior Fort and stayed there, thinking that we could evade capture. We were right! But only for a while...

Once the vampire arrived the castle, we figured out something spectacular. The fort had made a magical force field that magic COULD NOT WORK ON, just in case any magical beings were daring enough to escape the deadliest castle on Earth. "YEAH!!!!!" we cheered, thinking that the chinese vampire would get outwitted. But when we realized that the vampire summoned all of the magical and deadly creatures to fight the great Gold Warrior Fort, we were out of luck.

The deadly army of vampires smashed the fort's force field until great big cracks appeared. Then the leader used all his rage, curses and magic to smash the shield into great big pieces. His vampire armada of deadly killers swarmed inside. The Gold Warrior Fort soldiers fought to their deaths using all their power, strength, weapons and skill, but still got wiped out by a punch to the chest, an acid breath to the lungs and a slash to the skin. While all this chaos was happening, we ran and ran to the forest, and built a hut around us, camouflaged by leaves and twigs.

Unfortunately, the remaining vampires had followed us in our tracks, and was now starting to swipe and scratch at us. It wounded Benjamin, and he tripped over a tree root. We saw him getting swarmed by the vampires; it was a horrible sight. We had no choice but to leave him to his untimely death. We hated it, but we had to leave our trusty and kind friend. Reluctantly running away, we spotted a abandoned mine, and ran down. While we ran and ran to evade the coming vampires, we found a fork! So we led them down the mine, and cunningly took the fork that led back us back up. The we blocked up the fork with old mine carts and tools left by the workers. Angus found a dynamite and took it in his hands, thinking it would be useful. When the vampires busted through the mine carts, pickaxes and blockages, we threw the sparking dynamite down, down, down to the mine, hearing the great satisfactory BBBBAAAANNNNNGGGG! The death of the vampire was relieving, seeming that we didn't have to continue fighting the seeming immortal vampire.

We went home, never looking back. This is the worst day of my life! I wish that we will never ever encounter a situation like this **EVER AGAIN!!!!!!!!!!**

The Mysterious Thief of Houston House

ESF Glenealy School, Wat, Janice – 9

On a bright sunny day, I strolled through the thick bright green grass as I went for a morning walk. The sun was rising from the mountains slowly, and the sky started to become brighter. The birds that were perched on the great oak tree were singing a joyful melody. It was such a lovely day!

As soon as I arrived back at my house, I ran up the rickety steps and opened the door to my room to find a big mess. “AHHH!” I screamed. An intruder had been in my room! My Aunt Vernisa rushed to my room in a hurry, “What happened, dear?”. I said, “An intruder had been in my room”. “Oh dear” said Aunt Vernisa. She quickly rushed through the room looking for clues. Then she saw that the jewelry was missing from the bookshelf. Then told me “We’ll wait and see if there are any intruders trying to sneak into your room again and steal our precious family heirlooms.” Then she ushered me out of the room without a word. So, I decided to go to the garden to calm down. But, when I went down to the flower beds I saw a huge mess of mud. I showed Aunt Vernisa the huge mess in the flowerbed and looked everywhere. Suddenly I found a strange spade left there and it appeared to be our farmers. And they have stolen our precious family heirlooms!

After the delightful dinner, I went back to my bed thinking how to trap the farmer that stole the family heirlooms. But soon, I felt sleepy and my eyes drooped, and I fell asleep thinking about a strategy to trap the farmer. At midnight, when the clock struck twelve. I heard some hushed distant talking: “Here boss, here is the precious family heirloom that you wanted!”. It sounded like the voices from the garden. Slowly I rose out of my bed to open the window. A huge rush of cold air came through the open window. I tried to see who was talking, but I couldn’t see anyone in the dark night sky.

The next morning, when I went down to the garden, I saw two large footprints imprinted on the garden bed. I ran excitedly up the rickety stairs and to my Aunts room. I opened the door slowly to tell Aunt Vernisa, but when I opened the door I saw Aunt Vernisa sobbing inside the room. “Aunt Vernisa?” I asked carefully, not wanting to hurt her feelings anymore. She slowly turned around, revealing her puffy face and red eyes. “What is it, my darling?” She asked sadly. So I explained to her. “I found some clues that will lead us to the person!”. Aunt Vernisa brightened up and said: “Can you show me the clue?” We rapidly ran down the rickety steps and to the flower beds to show her the footprint. Aunt Vernisa stood there studying the footprint: “Hmm, it looks like farmer Bert’s or Liam’s footprint. We should measure their feet!”

When it was lunchtime, I asked Aunt Vernisa: “Any luck?” Then she briskly replied: “No luck because they wouldn’t let me measure their feet. Disappointed, I walked back onto the garden to cheer myself up. After playing for a while it seemed clear that the person would never be seen. But, suddenly I heard nearby voices coming from under the garden. Confused, I kept on searching. Soon, I followed the trail of sound into the well! Eager to find out more, I decided to climb inside the dry and narrow well.

The well came down into a deep dark cave. Fascinated, I went back up the well to collect a flashlight from my bedroom so that I could. After getting the flashlight, I lowered myself down the narrow well and into the darkness. When I clicked on my flashlight I saw spades, our lost family heirloom and boots. I sneaked around the cave and I heard footsteps coming toward me. I rushed up the narrow opening and went up the ladder, back to my garden. To be sure that they didn’t follow me I ran back to my own room, locked the door and closed the curtains. I was so thrilled now I could work out how to catch the thief and send them to the police! So secretly, I decided that I would go down to the well in the morning.

The next morning I hurried down the rickety stairs to the garden and climbed into a narrow well. There I found the lost family heirlooms, happily I reached forwards to get it but suddenly, two men leaped in front of me, it was Liam and Bert! Angrily I asked them, “Why did you take our precious family heirloom?” They replied, : “None of your business you rude girl!”. Since they wouldn’t tell me I took my phone out of my pocket, and called the police so that they could catch them. Panicked, they chased me to the corner of the cave and tied me to the wall and demanded for my phone. But soon, time was running out for them. I heard the police siren and immediately knew that they had no chance of running away again. With a sigh of relief, I waited for the police to arrive.

But when I saw the police, I was devastated. The police weren't police officers, it was Bert's and Liam's gang of thieves ! They came and gagged me so I couldn't yell for help, helplessly I stared down at my feet ashamed , what should I do?

T. B. C. (to be continued)

Will she succeed in trapping the thief's or will she fail?

The Cursed Caves

ESF Glenealy School, Yang, Justin – 10

“One time only” Sam shouted at Sally when she wanted him to cover her when she went to John's Party but Sam couldn't because their mum and dad wanted them to fetch some fish from Finn's, The Fish Store. They walked swiftly to Finn's. At Finn's, Patrick the shop owner welcomed them to his shop. For a while Sam and Sally wandered around the shop looking for the perfect fish. Then All of a sudden, Patrick suggested they go to the back of the store. At the back of the store Patrick asked them “What do you know about the Chinese Caves?” Sam responded with “I know a little bit about it from history class. Sally on the other hand doesn't know anything. Patrick let them go back out to buy some fish. On the way home Sally and Sam chatted about how weird it was. When they arrived home no one was home then Sam Remembered how he saw no people except the squirrel on the tree. Sally Screamed “MUM DAD WHERE ARE YOU???” Sam was worried too but then suddenly Sam and Sally teleported into a random chinese looking temple then a hologram appeared saying “Whoever enters this temple is now responsible for that mess over there.” Suddenly Sam and Sally blacked out waking up back in their house with everything normal. Sam and Sally were talking about how was it possible that they shared the same dream. Their mum started calling them to come downstairs to eat dinner so they quickly ran down the steps to the kitchen. They quickly swallowed down their eggs and bacon and quickly ran outside to go to Finn's. When They arrived the shop just wasn't there it was another store called Juno's when Sally and Sam opened the door to Juno's, Daniella the manager greeted them to her shop. Quickly after that a girl named Karen pushed hardly on the door and shouted “let me speak to your manager immediately” Daniella replied “I am the manager what can I assist you?” Whoosh, Sam and Sally Teleported Back To the Chinese caves but this time A young man appeared with a panda and said “Hello I am alex how may I help you I am here to serve and protect you from the evil me and my panda, Himsu” “Wait what evil Sally” asked The Kanrit evil of course don't your parents tell you?” “No?” Sam Replied “Well Drink this potion” said Alex Suddenly Everything turned normal forever and forever.

Mogao Caves

ESF Kennedy School, Ang, Sya – 9

“Attention passengers, we are coming in for a landing, please make sure your seatbelt is on.” a voice groaned.

“Oh my gosh! It's been so long, Hung!” Langxiao screamed in a person's face.

“Langxiaoooooooo!” A voice answered.

“Is this the cave?” questioned Kayla.

“Yup, it is,” replied Hung

“Ow!” Rasped LangXiao.

“Look, a sheet of music!” Beamed Zilla.

“Weird, why would there be a sheet of notes in 277 the Mogao caves that your grandfather found, Hung?” Langxiao asked curiously.

“I dunno, Something probably happened in the past and yeah, they left the tune there.” predicted Hung.

“Wait... Look closely, Kayla. Can you help me with this?” Inquired Zilla.

“Looks like an old mechanic puzzle, pretty sure it still works. I can handle it.” claimed Kayla.

On the wall Hung was reading “如果你進入，你們中的一個人必須有魔法血，否則這可能會失敗。播放一首古老的曲調，在你面前的樂器。這樣，你可能會進入一個過去的世界，一個古老的世界。擁有神奇血統的10個家族分別是冰家庭、水家庭、火家庭、森林家庭、空氣家庭、皇家庭、星家庭、龍族家、時間家庭。這一切你很快就會發現。”

“What does it say?” blurted Kayla.

“It says If you enter, one of you must have magic blood and play an ancient tune using the instruments in front of you. In this way, you may enter a past world, an ancient world. The 10 families with magical bloodlines are Ice, Aquatic, Fire, Forest, Air, Royal, Star, Dragon, and the Time families. You will discover all this soon.

“Complicated, but puzzling. This is not needed. We don't even have any magic blood in us. But let's try it anyway,” Hung told the group.

“Look! A Yangqin! A jiahu bone flute! Erhu! A Chinese drum!” Pointed Zilla.

“I guess this is what we have to play with.” chimed in Hung.

“Okay, then. Pick your instruments, people,” Heaved LangXiao.

“What! Where are we?” asked Kayla.

“Looks like one of us does have magic blood.” exclaimed Hung.

“Oh, look who we have here?” Humans from the Earth! Let's take them.” acknowledged a light voice. They turned around to see a block of floating ice cube. As if this was set up, they followed the floating ice cube .

“Who dares to enter?” asked an unrecognizable voice.

“Jianghang, my queen. Jianhang.” the levitating ice cube replied.

“Come in, dear. I'm just writing a letter.” The sound declared.

Zilla looked around. Behind the lady was a vault. Zilla thought: Probably a puzzle for gold or something. They entered, not expecting to see a human with black hair, mythical snake eyes, and a dark blue dress. She could have looked like an Enchanted elf, only not for the raging expression on her face.

“RUUUUN!” Shouted Langxiao fearfully.

“Wait... I NEED TO GO BACK! Kayla, come with me. Trust me!” Screamed Zilla.

“Okay! I'm coming!” Shrieked Kayla.

“Let’s see... Kayla, can you solve this?” pointed Zilla. Kayla looked at the puzzle. It looked like a mechanical puzzle, just like the one in the Mogao caves that was carved earlier, except that instead there were strange characters in the boxes.

“Hmmm, I think I can.” answered Kayla.

Kayla stared at the mechanic puzzle. It looked like a Chinese story she had heard when she was younger.

“Long long ago, Houyi shot down 9 suns. The queen of the west gave him an elixir of life, but it can only be used for 1 person. His wife, Chang E, kept it safe. The man became more and more famous, and he taught youngsters his archery skills. One of Houyi’s apprentices went to Chang E’s home and said “Give me the elixir or die!” So Chang E drank the elixir and flew away to the moon.

With that, the safe cracked open and a giant bird flew out and chased them.

“We’re doomed, aren’t we?” asked Hung, panting.

“I guess we are. I can’t believe that bird ate half of my right leg” replied Langxiao.

“Look, humans. I am not allowed to kill you, but I have something else in mind instead. I will make you immortal, with one condition.” The bird clarified for them.

“Where are the girls?” thought Hung.

“Stop, Chang E!” Kayla panted.

“They made it!” cried Langxiao.

“Did you just call me... ChangE? Asked the bird. I guess I’ll tell the story, then. The elixir sends me to the Mogao caves, not the moon. The elixir made me a new magic blooded family. The Phoenix family. I became the ruler of the Mogao caves, but I was never found. The other families comforted me, but it was not enough. Langxiao is part of the Star race. Goodbye!”

With that, the kids found out that the Mogao caves were magical, and left.

“Uhh...” Trembled Langxiao

“Y—yes?” Stammered Kayla

“My leg is still halved. Can we find a water source? I’m kind of thirsty. Also, it might help my injury,” Pleaded Langxiao.

“Look!A waterfall! And it’s right below us!” Yelled Zilla.

“The myth Longmen...is here to...” Muttered Hung under his breath.

“Let’s go and patch up LangXiao,” Quipped Kayla.

“A little more...on the left.Yeah, a bit more... perfect!” Articulated Langxiao.

Kayla stared at the leg, mouth open. It was healed! Kayla whispered something in Zilla’s ear and started to stare too, in shock.

“Hung? You said this may be Longmen... I think you’re right. The waterfall, ChangE. I think I know. Langxiao, look at your leg,” Murmured Kayla.

Langxiao gasped in surprise. “I knew it!” Langxiao boomed.

“ChangE probably fell in the waterfall, but she can stand on water because of the pill for the elixir So she slides down to the Mogao Grottoes, when she didn’t know she was supposed to be in the Longmen Grottoes, where immortals with the elixir or the west queen can get to!” Figured Zilla.

“Makes sense,” reported Hung.

“Wait, the waterfall! We can use the waterfall!At least I can. I can use it to check on ChangE!” Elaborated Langxiao.

“I guess that will be our plan for life until the next generation,” Smiled Zilla.

Everyone took their things and left, remembering the Mogao Grottoes and Longmen Grottoes forever.

The Hidden Treasure

ESF Kennedy School, Bondada, Arianah – 9

In 2004 a young monk was sleeping peacefully in an old temple dreaming of finding an old but beautiful treasure. Aki was a young monk who was very diligent, he wore a dark red robe and brown sandals.

The next morning when Aki woke up, he was a little shaken up from his dream. However, he thought that the dream could be real. After all, he thought, wasn't anything possible? He put on a delicate robe and went to sit with the other monks. Aki almost always enjoyed breakfast with the other monks because they would always chat about their remarkable adventures and just how much fun they were.

During breakfast Aki mentioned his dream to the others but they just laughed and said, "Such things could never happen Aki." After breakfast, he went to his room in the old temple and thought to himself – are the other monks right? However since Aki was such a brave and optimistic spirit he decided to see if his dream could be true.

So Aki packed his bags and left. He wanted to find this amazing treasure to prove to the other monks that anything could happen. In just a couple hours, of travelling, Aki was already regretting leaving the temple because it was scorching hot. He knew if he turned back now then everyone would think of him a coward. Besides, if he turned back he would only reach the temple by nightfall.

So Aki continued his journey to the hidden treasure. He reached a sandy, dry and hot place. It was a desert with lots of thorny lizards and deathstalker scorpions. Even though Aki hadn't been in the desert for even 30 minutes he was as sweaty as a pig. Aki tried to find shade so he could cool down but there were barely any trees. Aki sat down on the hot sand and took out a huge bottle of water. He drank gallons of water but nothing stopped him from sweating. Days flew by but Aki had still not left the desert. Everyday Aki was boiling. It was like he was standing on a frying pan being sizzled to death.

One day, Aki was looking at his map and it struck him that if he left the desert it would lead to the China and Hong Kong border. Aki felt certain the treasure would not be there so it had to be in the desert.

Aki unloaded all his tools and opened his tent. At 7 o' clock Aki decided to have some food, but there were no trees so there was no fresh fruit! Aki decided that he would have some of his emergency crackers. He ripped open the packet and he ate them joyfully.

Aki decided he would call it a night so that he could have more energy for tomorrow. There was no point looking for the treasure when it was pitch black. Early in the morning, even before the sun was up Aki heard a high-pitched bleat. He wondered what could be making that strange and unfamiliar noise. Cautiously, Aki stepped out of his tent. He saw a large camel bleating on top of its lungs. Aki was excited to be face to face with a strange looking creature for the first time.

It had been 8 hours and Aki still hadn't found the treasure! He was frustrated and downhearted. As he was going to his tent to retire, Aki saw a dim light. Aki was very confused because no humans were in the desert. Could this really be true? Aki thought his mind was playing tricks on him. With the smallest glimmer of hope he decided to follow the light. As he got closer what seemed like a small dim light became a beaming light that shined bright like the sun. It was coming from inside a cave.

Aki decided to have a look and walked into the cave. As he approached he just knew – It was the well-known ancient Mogao caves! Aki went inside and it was beautiful – there were lovely paintings all over the walls that told ancient stories. There were even some magnificent statues of Buddha.

Aki looked at the masterpiece in admiration; it looked like it must have taken years. Aki saw a painting of two angels flying along a small meadow while holding hands. He wondered what it was like to have a true friend, someone who was always by his side. When Aki walked into the next room there was the treasure, it shined gold like the sun and it

made Aki's eyes hurt. When he finally got a glimpse of it, it was an old and delicate gold robe. He didn't take the treasure because he realised that all he really wanted was a true friend.

Aki decided that there was no use in taking the treasure because he didn't need it, what he needed was a true friend. When Aki arrived at the temple it was already breakfast. He felt apprehensive as he went in as he thought everyone would laugh at him for not bringing the treasure.

When he arrived at breakfast all the monks had a new mindset. They congratulated Aki on having such an amazing journey and they all told him about why they changed. They said "Aki we weren't good friends and even though we weren't encouraging you, you did not listen to us and let your heart be your guide." Aki was spellbound that they had changed because of him! Aki decided to accept that he was an inspirational leader and if he ever led the monks he promised to god that he would always let his heart be his guide.

The Dragon Stone

ESF Kennedy School, Carmona Cringean, Juan Francisco – 9

Once upon a time, dragons lived free in China, roaming the land causing terror and havoc. One day a group of monks got together and trapped the dragons into a single stone and they hid it in the Mogao Grottoes near the Silk Road, a route used to trade spices from Europe to China. However, now the stone seemed to be breaking and shadows of dragons swept the land causing minor havoc. If the dragon stone breaks, how will it be sealed again?

Dusk, a brave, tall 14 year old boy woke up in shock from his disturbing dream. Was it true that there had been dragons? No, surely not! He decided if he had sense he would not believe in dreams. So he got ready for another day of helping at the temples. “Wait up guys!” he yelled, “I’m coming!”

His friend Frank shouted “Seriously Dusk, that's the third day in a row that you have got up too late. Wake up earlier!” They walked up the steep marble road to the ornate temple where they worked but instead of seeing their peaceful temple, they came upon a terrifying scene. They found a dragon with a look that was menacing and frightening. As soon as they saw it they ran for their lives wondering how the dragon got there. The group ran down the mountain to the mainland where they found hundreds more ferocious dragons and thousands of houses and shops were floating above a wild pool of energy, a strange force having uprooted them from their usual tranquil streets and avenues. Luckily Dusk and his friends found a cave with other people inside and dived inside then rolled a boulder into the door preventing dragons from eating them.

“What on earth was that!”, they said with exasperated and frightened looks. They didn't know what had happened. How did all this happen in one night? One of them even fainted with fear at what he had just encountered. The group were so used to the quiet life that they usually enjoyed in the mountains where they lived safely and without such terror.

Suddenly Dusk remembered his dream. He thought he might know what to do to stop the terrible dragons but he was not sure he would be clever or strong enough to seal them away. However he was courageous and he told his friends the dream and while he was talking he noticed some minecarts in the deep dark cave and on top of a wall there was a sign saying Mogao Grottoes. “This is where they sealed the dragons in my dream”, he told his friends. “Hop in!” he said to his friends. The ride was so fast that it was hard to enjoy, especially when he did not know how to seal the dragons away in their stone or dimension. How was he supposed to know how to banish them? Suddenly the ride ended and a sign said to take the golden staff and banish the dragons. Dusk was about to reach out and touch it but suddenly an arrow flew by his head almost killing him. Quickly, he grabbed the ornate staff with an aura of power and ducked. Suddenly a barrage of arrows flew out. Frank quickly pulled the lever and they went back to the cave in the speedy minecart.

When they got back to the cave the ground shook. Was it an earthquake? No, it was the dragons battering the cave. Everyone got some stones and sticks off the ground to attack the dragons. Suddenly a dragon came in but froze in the vicinity of the staff and then the dragon became a blue sphere fizzing with energy and then the sphere went into one of the stones that became the new dragon stone where the dragon was sealed for all eternity. Then Dusk and Frank and all the others began using all their weight to push the heavy, round stone blocking the exit away and ran out.

“Guys!” said Dusk “Lure the dragons to me, the staff will stop them from harming you.” That was how they spent the rest of the day getting the dragons into the magic stone. It was easy work with the magic staff. When they got back to the cave there was a pedestal where the dragon stone was. Dusk placed the staff on the pedestal and then there was an almighty BANG and then there was no more dragon stone or staff and the floating houses and shops turned the right way round and went back to where they belonged. Everything was right again. The villagers could continue their peaceful life.

When they got to the temple, Dusk and the other workers found something strange. The temple had a red energy above it. Dusk and Frank investigated the source and found another dragon, but they didn’t have the powerful staff to protect them! They were so scared when the dragon stared at them. Luckily the dragon was friendly and greeted

them and then the dragon flew into the red energy and disappeared. Finally there were no more dragons. The adventure was over and Dusk and Frank could now continue to tend the temple quietly all the time knowing they had saved China from a dreadful fate.

Mogao Grottoes

ESF Kennedy School, Chau, Sheung Sophie – 9

莫高窟的故事 оповідання Гроти Могао

One ordinary day, Emma was so bored that she decided to play with her little brother Liam. Liam is seven years old and he is in primary school grade 3. He is in 3W, Ms Worringham's class. He's annoying most of the time, but he's very perspicacious.

Emma entered his bedroom door and bolted inside. He was studying a book by his study desk and he was very focused. Emma steadily wandered to his desk. Liam spotted Emma in the corner and welcomed her.

"Emma! Hi, I'm reading about Mogao Grottoes. It's awesome entertainment!" he declared. "Only to you, I don't understand why you like these things... but although they **do** seem a bit interesting" pronounced Emma. Liam cackled "But you don't know that Mogao Grottoes is in China and it's awesome" commented Liam "you want to go there with me?". She knew that mogao grottoes is in China, so it wasn't possible to go there today since they were not old enough to go to the airport themselves. But, she was interested. "Okay, How" said Emma trying not to sound believed. Liam chuckled, he tugged Emma into the storage room which was inside Liam's room. The room had a sign which was taped on top of the door that said "NO ENTERING" with a little tiny skull drawing on it.

Anyway, no one had been in that room after Liam had owned it, not even Mum or dad. Liam gripped Emma harder and harder on the ankle with his sweaty hands, Emma waved off his hand as if they were playing yoyo. "OW!" shrieked Emma "WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU!". "Oh, sorry" hummed Liam, his cheeks were red in embarrassment. Emma's cheeks were also red and sorry, but she never showed Liam her feelings very much. Liam took a deep breath and locked his eyes shut. Once more, Liam hooked Emma's ankle softly, But this time, Emma paid no attention to his sweaty and stinky hands. But it didn't last long either, once Liam entered the room, he dragged Emma with him and that was the first time Emma had entered the gloomy, misty room.

They strolled into the room until they reached a lengthy, narrow pathway with barely any light. Liam paused and searched the grimy wall, soon, he paused and found the miniature flashlight hanging on the wall. He unfastened the mini lock on the flashlight, and it opened with a 'CLICK'.

Suddenly, in a blink of an eye, a spot of light appeared on the shown spot. Liam kept marching deeply into the thin and narrow corridor expecting Emma to follow him. But as he continued, Emma gulped and slowly came to a pause. Liam was demented and turned around in confusion. "I don't think I want to continue" Emma uttered as she scratched her head. "And why would you think that?" questioned Liam as he started to start an evil smile.

Liam quickly dragged her along the narrow path. They came to the end where there was a weird looking floating bubble in the ceiling. Emma shivered, Liam briskly threw Emma off the sling shot into the bubble. Liam followed her and soon, they both landed dreadfully on their backs. The floor was rough and full of pebbles and stones, Emma stood up to see her surroundings, It was extremely cloudless, and the bright morning sun woke everybody with a huge bucket of light.

Soon, Liam sat up as he stared at Emma with his 'can I sleep one more minute before I go to school' eyes. Emma rolled her eyes, Liam hopped up and scanned the lovely view. "It's Incredible!" yelled Liam, "It worked! My teleport machine worked! Yippy yip yip!". Liam hopped around in excitement, But as he turned around, A huge shadow covered the wonderfully lit sun. A huge building stood in the center of the shadow. It was the Mogao Grottoes! "Exactly where I wanted to go! YEEEEEE!".

Suddenly, a police officer stomped towards the kids. "你能不能不要喊年轻人" Shouted the officer. Liam stared at the officer in the eyes in confusion, he tilted his head so the officer could tell he was not from China. "I take Chinese lessons" declared Emma "The officer just said: *can you not shout, young man?*" "Oh, I bet he's gonna catch us to his office" called out Liam as he sounded not surprised. But Emma, on the other hand, panicked in absolute fear. She bounced around and sprinted away from the officer. But she did not go far either, she was just whizzing in circles around the platform. Liam and the officer rolled their eyes in annoyance as their heads spun round and round following Emma.

The officer decided he was not gonna wait, he grabbed Emma by the shirt collar and reached to grab Liam. Liam sprinted away and dashed behind a sculpture called the nilima sheik. The officer handed Emma to his partner and raced in to find Liam.

Suddenly, a loud speaker on the ceiling turned on and there was a very important message. A man, about 34 years old, put his mouth to the speaker. He said : *fellow customers, it is almost closing hours, please leave as quickly as possible.*

Liam wanted to scuttle away, travel back home and roll in his warm blanket, but he couldn't leave if the police were still searching for him. But he then overheard the police argue with the museum manager, the manager shoved the police out of the gate with a 'PLOP'. Desperate to leave, Liam hurried away from the museum which was now dark and gloomy in closing hours, he sprinted but he was too late, the gate locked, and Liam fell on the floor with a 'CRASH'.

Liam stood up and was sure of his surroundings, the place was dark and gloomy, like a haunted house. Suddenly, a large shadow of a humongous creature stood behind him...

Mysha and the Cave Monster

ESF Kennedy School, Doni, Mysha – 10

A girl named Mysha and her older Brother named Xavier, are young partners solving unexplainable mysteries around the world. Mysha is 10 years old. She has long straight black hair, and black and turquoise glasses. Her eyes are as black as her shadow, her smile shines bright as the sun. Xavier is 17 years old. He has short black hair, and big, black glasses. His eyes are as black as coal. Mysha was watching the news to find more interesting mysteries to solve, while Xavier was playing games on his phone.” Mysha did you find any mysteries yet?” asked Xavier.”No, but I found that a baby panda from China is missing, maybe we can solve that later.” impatiently shouted Mysha. Suddenly Mysha’s phone was ringing, Mysha picked it and asked.”Hi this is Mysha what can I help you with?” Asked Mysha.” I have a mystery for you, someone saw a monstrous shadow in our cave in China.” worriedly whispered the man.” We will be there by tomorrow morning” excitedly shouted Mysha.

While Mysha ended the call she felt a few taps on her head she knew who was doing it, when she turned around she saw Xavier smiling while play with his phone.” Xavier stop tapping me on the head you monkey!” shouted Mysha.” What did I do?” lied Xavier. “Xavier, please stop doing that or I will slap you on the head instead of tapping!” warned Mysha.” Ok.” sighed Xavier,”So where are we going?” Asked Xavier.”We are going to China!” shouted Mysha. and solve what is in China’s cave that is scarring the people!” Mysha shouted. When it was the next day they packed what they needed and took a taxi to get to the airport for their long flight to China.

While they were in the plane, Mysha was on her Ipad to search for more information about China's cave and search for more images of the monster, But she just saw shadows of the monster. All of the shadows Mysha saw on her Ipad were small, Mysha wondered what it could be. When they arrived a Man stood in front of them “Hello, thank you for coming to help us, my name is Tom.” Tom happily replied.” Do we know you?” asked Xavier. “ I am the person that I called on the phone to Mysha.” whispered Tom.” Oh, yeah remember you on the Phone.” Mysha whispered. “ Follow Me please.” Tom shouted. They arrived at a small house, Tom opened the door and he gave each of us a torch light. Then we followed Tom to China's cave. The cave was big, dark, wet, and cold. “ Be careful ok, and be quiet so we won’t scare the monster.” whispered Tom.

They were walking slowly though the cave until there was a crack then they saw the cave monster shadow. When we looked behind the rock, it was not a monster, it was a baby panda!” So cute!“ Mysha whispered. “ That is the panda that has been missing in China, Mysha can you carry it while we get out of the cave !” Xavier whispered. Mysha slowly walked to the small baby panda and carefully picked the baby panda. After Mysha got the baby panda, Tom joyfully whispered” let's get out of here and bring back the baby panda.” When they were out of the cave Tom announced that the Mysteries of the cave monster was solved and their missing baby panda was found.” And we will have a party tonight for Mysha and Xavier victory!” Tom happily shouted.

At the party there was food and decorations everywhere. After everyone was eating, Tom announced that Mysha and Xavier are going to put the baby panda. Everyone gathered the baby panda was placed on a golden and red big soft pillow, then Msha and Xavier step forward Mysha and Xavier gently and carefully carried the small fluffy baby panda to it’s cage. The cage had soft light brown colour and thick green baboos. There were small panda toys on the sand. Mysha and Xavier kindly put down the baby panda everyone started to clap for Myha and Xavier. A few seconds later there were big, bright, colourful and beautiful fireworks exploding in the dark night sky above them. Everyone was distracted by the bright fireworks.” Wow, pretty” Mysha calmly commented. The fireworks brightened the big, grey clouds up in the sky.

Then a few seconds later suddenly the fireworks slowly faded away in the dark sky. Then a man suddenly shouted after the fireworks faded away in the dark sky.” Hey, everybody let's have a dance party!” Then everyone started to go on the dance floor, one by one, before anyone was on the dance floor one of Tom’s friends started to turn on the

music. Then everyone started to dance, some wiggled, jumped, and skipped around. Mysha started doing a little dance, while Xavier was moving a bit while playing on his phone.

Then a Man with a white chef's hat and white shirt with long, blue jeans, with brown buttons, and a short, thin moustache. Carried a large, yummy, chocolate cake for the party then the man slowly put the large cake in a big space to put the large cake. Everyone was surprised by the large cake behind them. After the dance everyone started to get a piece of cake. After a few minutes the party ended.

Mysha and Xavier went to the hotel to their room. When it was morning, Mysha and Xavier got up and had breakfast then they packed and went downstairs to say goodbye. When they were down stairs they said goodbye and hugged each other. Tom walked them to the airport. Before they went off the plane Mysha and Xavier hugged Tom goodbye. Then Mysha and Xavier went on the plane to Hong Kong and flew back to their home. Mysha and Xavier missed their new friends but it was ok for them.

The Legend of Mogao

ESF Kennedy School, Hannan, Natasha – 9

Chapter 1: The cruelties of the Red Dragon

Two thousand years ago in Gansu a ferocious red dragon arrived from the North and occupied the Mogao Grottoes. People called him Hong Long because he had red eyes and skin, shot fire bolts and had razor sharp claws and teeth. All the Buddhist art that was hidden in the depths of the cave was now in the dragon's territory. Since then nobody ever spoke about it again, but everybody knew one day he would rise.

Chapter 2: The beginning of the journey

In a village called Xi'an along the route of the Silk Road, lived two twins called Sun and Sand. Their stepmother hated them and one night she took them far away and left them in front of the Mogao caves, hoping the dragon would eat them. When they woke up, they were in a strange place. "Where are we?", asked Sun. "I don't know," replied Sand, "Why are we here? Where is our house?" "We should start walking or otherwise we will never make it back home", replied Sun. As the daylight was fading, and they couldn't find their way home, they decided to take shelter for the night inside the caves.

Chapter 3: Exploring the caves

They were extremely tired, but after some rest they discovered something new. "What is this on the walls, and what are these statues doing here?" asked Sand. "Let's have a closer look," suggested Sun. "They look like they're very old, maybe even ancient!" exclaimed Sand. The drawings on the walls showed some ancient kings and queens, small villages and a fire shooting dragon. Many of the paintings were covered in spider webs, "Agh so many spider webs, ugh!", said Sand in disgust. Suddenly the wall started to rumble.

Chapter 4: The Battle begins

There was a growling sound coming from the other side of the wall. It got louder and louder every second, there was no time to spare! The ceiling started to crumble and the structure started to wobble. A fire bolt shot through the wall, Sun and Sand grabbed some gold armour and a shield from the armour stand and got ready to fight. The dragon exploded from the flames roaring as loud as he could. "Help! What is that monster?" screamed Sand. Sun grabbed a sword from a chest and began to strike the dragon. Luckily, Sun had a shield or otherwise he would have been a mountain of ash!

Chapter 5: The army of phoenixes

Hong Long stopped for a moment and made a high pitched screeching sound and sent an army of angry phoenixes towards them! "Ouch!" cried Sand, as one of the phoenixes clawed his leg. Sun ran as fast as he could and helped Sand up. "We need to get out of here now, before we get killed". The phoenixes were chasing them out of the grottoes, but because the sand was so thick, it slowed them down. The phoenixes were catching up!

Chapter 6: The golden coffin

Far in the distance they saw flames erupting from the grottoes, while the phoenixes were still chasing them. Sun started throwing sand in the phoenixes eyes and Sand tactically took them down with the sword. As soon as the phoenixes were all dead, they sprinted back as fast as they could, towards the fire. The Mogao Grottoes were nearly destroyed. Sun and Sand ran straight up to the second floor and saw a shimmering gold coffin. "What is that?" Sand asked suspiciously. "It looks like a coffin", replied Sun. "In the grottoes? Are you sure?", asked Sand.

Chapter 7: The heart of the Hong Long

"What do you think is inside?" asked Sand curiously. "Let's find out!" exclaimed Sun. When they opened it, an explosion of light was shining in their eyes. "What is this?", screamed Sun. "It looks like a heart!", exclaimed Sand. "It must be the dragon's heart!", whispered Sun. It looked wrinkly, with a red-orange colour, and flames coming out of it. They looked around the room and saw many ancient scripts written on the walls. One of them showed that the dragon could be killed by destroying the heart with a special sword, the Sword of Spirit!

Chapter 8: Searching for the Sword

They needed to find the sword quickly. The script indicated the place where the sword could be found. “ This way” Sand commanded . They needed to go to the next level, but the only way there was to climb a steep wall. They found long bamboo sticks lying on the floor nearby and they used them to pole-vault up to the next level. Immediately in front of them was a giant labyrinth of passageways.

Chapter 9: The Sword of Spirit

They ran into the giant maze and had to weave their way through thin alleyways. They turned right, but it was a dead end, so they turned left, then right, then forward and finally arrived at the chamber where the sword was kept. It had taken them a few hours to get to the end, but finally they had managed to succeed. “There on the platform stood the Sword of Spirit. It had a netherite handle, that was glowing in the darkness, and a sharp blade. Now as the sword was in their hands, they needed to return to the cave with the golden coffin and destroy Hong Long’s heart.

Chapter 10: Victory

They raced back to the lower level and ran to the cave with the dragon’s heart. The dragon was there to protect it. Sun got in some good hits on the dragon, while Sand tried to get closer to the coffin. The dragon was furious. Sand dodged all the fire bolts, slid underneath the dragon, ran to the heart and stabbed it! Hong Long made a thunderous sound, slowly collapsed on the sand and disintegrated. Sun and Sand sighed with great relief. They saved the Mogao Grottoes from the ferocious dragon.

The Adventures of the Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, Holden, Hugo – 10

Xia Zhong and his friend Coco Larson, were wandering in the Chinese desert, far from their homeland of America. Xia was born in China but moved to America at a young age where he met Coco. The two had quickly become best friends. Xia and Coco had been wandering in the desert for a few hours when they realised their water bottles were empty.

When Xia was a child his grandmother had told him stories of hidden treasure in the desert, but he had never believed her. What changed his mind was when his grandmother died. Her last words were “go to Gansu Province and find the cave, inside you will find something your ancestors left behind for you.”

Back in the Gansu desert, Xia and Coco were becoming desperate and would do pretty much anything to get water. Far in the distance they saw something that looked like a cave. Not knowing whether it was a mirage, they sprinted towards the cave. As they got closer, the cave became clearer. Appearing out of the sandy haze, it started to take the shape of a temple. It had thousands of buddhas and looked like an abandoned place of worship. It was in fact a ruin of a temple from a forgotten time. The temple looked like it would collapse at any second, but that did not stop them from going inside. It was their only hope of finding water and shelter and maybe the treasure that Xia’s grandmother had told him about.

As they arrived at the cave Coco stuttered “should we go in? We don’t even know what is in there”. “We may as well try,” Xia said optimistically. Coco nodded slightly. They entered the cave slowly, peeking around every corner. The cave was bare. Just as they were losing hope, they saw something amazing. It was a small puddle of water and in it was what looked like a book. They scooped up the water, drinking some and saving the rest for later. The water was so sweet, it tasted like nectar.

After they had drunk and stored the remaining water in their water bottles they looked at the book that was soaked in water. Its cover read “The Treasure of the Silk Road”. Xia slapped himself in the face to make sure it was not a dream, then Coco reminded him that it could be dangerous. Xia ignored her. Excited, he opened the book imagining his grandmother’s mouth open in awe. The first page read “*If you follow the Silk Road you will find the treasure you seek, if you survive – Lucas Zhong*”.

Xia could not believe it. It sounded just like the stories his grandmother told him. Coco was not willing to take the risk but Xia was. Xia raced out of the cave. Coco walked behind, not as excited as Xia. “Let’s follow the map,” Xia exclaimed. “Ok” Coco stuttered.

They started walking away from the ruins. They walked until the ruins faded into the desert haze behind them, after what seemed like an extraordinarily long walk they arrived at what they thought was the Silk Road. Coco was shivering with fear while Xia was jumping with excitement. Excited, Xia looked at the book, the words on the book faded and now it read *the journey has begun, once you see it you must show no fear*. “What was it supposed to be?” shivered Coco. “*I don’t know, but what we do know is to not be scared*”, Xia said as though he was reassuring her.

Off they went on a journey with which Xia was tingling with anticipation and Coco feared they might not return. The Silk Road looked deserted because there was no sign of life. They kept walking. Then Coco whispered “*let’s find a place to stay and we can eat our food then sleep*”

By now it was already 9pm and it was slowly getting dark. They found a place to sleep near the Silk Road. They ate their food which tasted off then they went to sleep, they had no sleeping bags because this was supposed to be just a day trip. Eventually they fell asleep. When they woke they were ready to continue their journey. They got back to

the Silk Road then they kept walking until they saw something amazing. It was an oasis, it had water and what could possibly be food, it even looked like people lived there. Xia and Coco ran to get there, once they got there they drank some of their water and wandered around until a figure emerged behind them. He was a big tall man who was offering them food. The food was roasted fish. Xia and Coco picked up their fish and said thanks to the man, “*better get moving*” Xia said politely.

Then they ran back to the Silk Road. As they walked it got darker and darker until all they could see was their hands. It was a cold night. They heard a distant noise and instantly showed no fear as a giant spider came closer; they both assumed the spider was what the book meant by it. They were both trying to hold in their fear, then they thought they should start walking and maybe the spider would leave them alone, they started walking but as they got closer to the spider it was harder to hold in the fear. Coco let out a scream and the spider sprinted towards them. They thought they were dead until Xia grabbed Coco’s hand and started to run. Suddenly they were outrunning the spider and as they went along the Silk Road the spider disappeared and they could see a treasure box through the sand haze they sprinted towards it and inside it was Ruby’s, Gold, Diamonds, and many more expensive ancient crystals. Xia had done it, he had achieved his grandmother's dream.

The Myth Of The Mogao Grottoes

ESF Kennedy School, Kavanagh, Addie – 10

“...but when the boy stepped on the ground, it turned to lava and he started melting until he was no more than a puddle of coal. After him, no one else wanted to go, so the gold stayed where it was, the evil witch protecting it.” Mum finished.

She got up and asked them,

“Who gets the couch tonight?”

“Me!” Both kids said together.

“Liam, you get it tonight. Marie, you can get it tomorrow.” Mum told them wearily. The family was too poor to have actual beds in the house, so mum slept in the living room, while the kids (Liam and Marie), took turns sleeping on the couch.

“Goodnight mum!” Liam yelled as mum closed the door.

“Goodnight mum.”

“Tomorrow is Thursday, right?” Marie asked Liam.

“Yeah, why?” Liam answered.

“Mum’s going to be at work.....” She trailed off.

“Marie, what are you thinking? Get to the point.” Liam told her, getting annoyed.

“In the morning after breakfast, I am going to go get the gold mum was talking about.” Marie replied, sounding more confident than she actually was.

“Yeah right. It’s not like *you’re* going to get some gold from the witch. Besides, it will probably be a crazy strong guy that has lots of weapons.” Liam tried to crush her confidence. Marie knew what would convince him. She turned away and smiled.

“I bet I will get it first.” The words barely escaped her mouth when Liam shot out,

“What time do we leave tomorrow? Where is the gold? Do you have anyone helping you? We need to plan quickly.”

“Ok, it’s 11:21. Mum is asleep. We need to plan for tomorrow,” Marie was sitting down on the rusting floor, a piece of paper and a stubby pencil in her hand.

“The gold is in the Mogao Grottoes. We need to travel on the silk road to get there. It’s going to be hot, but we will be prepared.”

“What is the silk road?” Liam interrupted.

“The silk road is a road that villagers used to carry goods from one place to another to trade and get money.” Marie explained.

“*Used to?*” Liam looked confused.

“Yes. Used to. Until the witch came. No one knows her name. She heard there was gold in the caves and she stopped other villagers from getting it by setting booby traps around the caves.” After a long time, they finally had a plan. They lay down to sleep and closed their eyes.

The next morning, Marie was busily packing everything they needed in a big bag and triple checking they had everything. After a tiny piece of toast, the hopeful kids set off. It was 1 hour until Liam drank a whole bottle of water and asked for more. Marie was too tired to argue. They dragged their sore feet across the smooth sand and eventually came to the end. Even though they were exhausted, Liam still ran forward and leaped across the big crack from the silk road to the Mogao Grottoes. He made it across easily and looked back at Marie.

“Come on!” Liam yelled across the gap. Marie charged forward and jumped like a rocket across the gap.....and landed smoothly.

They crept across the cave silently, their eyes peeled for any sign of movement. Liam squealed as a shadow moved across the cave, but it was only a rat. Soon they came across a bridge of glass. This was their first booby trap.

"It looks like we have to walk across." Marie gulped. She did not think it would be that simple. Liam cautiously put his toe on one piece of glass and drew it back as it shattered and fell into the lava below.

"We have to run together." Marie told Liam. "You go in front of me and I will go behind you. Hurry, we have to get there before nightfall." Liam started sweating. His heart beat faster as he cautiously took a deep breath..... and started running.

Marie did not miss a beat. She bolted after him, careful not to slip into the lava. The two gave a final leap and landed safely on the other side.

"Quickly, we have to find the gold. It's almost night." Marie whispered.

As they walked on, it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Suddenly, Marie saw a glint of gold in the corner of her eye and then pointed it out. They crept towards the gold and saw the witch! She was hideous. She was all crinkly and grey. The witch looked at the children and started running towards them. Liam shot right and the witch followed him.

"Marie! Get the gold! Quickly!" Liam yelled behind his shoulder. Marie bolted to the gold and grabbed a chunk of it.

"Come back you little brats!" The witch shouted brandishing her stick at them threateningly. Marie grabbed Liam's clammy hand and they ran together out of the cave. The witch was close behind. She was just about to throttle them when she evaporated into smoke.

The sun was shining on them. After they regained their breath, they set off again for their house. It was 11 hours after they caught sight of their village. They returned home later with massive bags under their eyes. It was dinner time, two days after they left.

"KIDS!" Their mum almost killed them with the massive hug that she gave them. "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN!?"

"Mum? You know the gold that you told us about three nights ago?" Liam's quiet voice came from his mouth.

"Yes Liam." Mum replied.

"We got it."

"I don't believe you. Tell me where have you *actually* been Liam." Mum scolded. No one answered. Marie cheekily slid the chunk of gold onto the wooden table and looked at her mum. Mum did not think twice. She swept her two kids into a big hug and was silent.

The Myth of the Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, Kavanagh, Bella – 10

Once upon a time, in the small town of Rosewood, Lucy and her American Fuzzy— Lop Bunny Cinnamon were packing their bags for a more special trip than their usual ones. “Okay Cinnamon,” said Lucy, “I’ve got the peanut butter cookies and the chocolate milk ready!” She went through the schedule one more time to Cinnamon, who was sniffing hungrily towards the cookies. “We will head up North east, turn right, turn left, then continue down the Silk Road for another hour.

She beamed at Cinnamon, who unfortunately wasn't paying attention due to the tempting peanut butter smell wafting from the bag. Lucy sighed. “Come on then!” She said, and they set off.

Without warning, and after about 5 seconds of walking, Cinnamon grunted and started to waddle back to the house. Lucy groaned as she picked up the overweight bunny, sagging slightly with its weight.

They came to the fork at about dawn, when the sky was still rich with colours. “Right,” said Lucy, “ We go right.” She glanced down at the now snoring fuzzball in her arms. She bent down to kiss Cinnamon lightly on the head. They then continued walking.

They met a psychic in a caravan on the way to the second fork. “Hello dear,” she said, “I sense something good in your future, only 50 pence for a session!” Lucy declined politely. “Though I must ask if you know anything about the Silk Road?” The physics face clouded over. “ Well, yes I guess I could spill something,” she winked with a sugary attempt at a smile. Lucy stood back. “It is rumoured that there are a number of species guarding the treasure in the cave the silk road leads to,” she said. “Pixies, Merpeople, Ghouls, Sphinx, and Griffins.” Lucy swallowed. “Okay,” she said, “Thank you. Well be off now.”

They turned left on the fork and walked down the smooth path of the Silk Road. After nearly half an hour they then stopped for a break and sipped on their chocolate milk. They walked on for another half hour until Lucy suddenly safety rolled to the nearest cover, a stone pillar, and held Cinnamon to her chest. A Pixie with a trident was guarding the entrance of a large cave. “The treasure is in that cave,” Lucy whispered to Cinnamon, “Don’t worry, I’ll get you in safely, then you know what to do. The bunny sniffed in approval.

Lucy rolled to another pillar, counting the pixies steps when it went right and left. She takes 10 steps each way, giving you approximately 12.6 seconds to crawl past her. “Go, go, go! She yelled. The bunny galloped at a hundred miles per hour, whizzing past the unsuspecting pixie. The pixie, Lalia, heard paws hitting the ground behind her. She gave an exclamation, raised her trident, and gilded towards Cinnamon. The bunny signaled Lucy, who fished out an empty carton of chocolate milk from her bag, and hit the pixie over the head. Lalia got knocked back, and when she looked around Cinnamon was gone.

Lucy jumped in a bush as another pixie approached the door. Lalia yelled in the fairy language. “*Acone rela! Acone rela! Ei bunv wajusasha golsilve!* Translation: Code red! Code red! A bunny has approached the treasure! Lalia’s friend exclaimed and shot off towards the cave. Lucy held her breath.

Meanwhile, Cinnamon was levitating rubies, gems, and gold with his mind. He was then on the run from a very angry ghou, kicking the dust back into his face. He came speeding out of the cave and knocked and approaching

Griffin, who was there for more backup. Cinnamon ran to Lucy, who picked him up and ran. They ran and ran, and did not stop until they came back to Rosewood.

The Maze Cavern

ESF Kennedy School, Ko, Alden – 10

“Chaka—chaka—chaka—chaka toot—toot....” The train slowed down as the brakes sparked and the whistle blew. The train came to a halt as I stepped out of the train. When I left the station, I went to look for the ancient Mogao Caves to finish my investigation. After many hours of travel, I arrived at my destination. My jaw dropped. The cave was ten times bigger than I ever imagined.

I walked into the caves, amazed by all the beautiful artwork of the meeting between Manjusri and Vimalakirti. The curiosity was coursing through my veins as I ventured deeper into the caves. A well—preserved hallway was eventually bestowed upon me. Blue and gold tiles were finely placed around the walls and crimson planks enriched the floor as I wandered through it. When the pathway finally led to a room I was left in awe, the room that was upon me was Cave 1. Marvellous tiles engraved with paintings flourished the walls, six beautiful altars were carved into the walls and three majestic Buddha statues were placed on the main praying site. Sure, it was quite damaged, but I could still see the beauty that it once was. As time flew by, I realized it was time to leave. But then suddenly, I tripped on a loose tile and fell into the underground cave below.

I woke up in pure agony, blisters on my arms, legs bruised and scapes everywhere, but I mustered up the strength to get up but was limping on one leg. I tried to call for help, but I was in vain. Nobody heard me. Eventually, I gave up, but something caught my attention, a deep and suspicious hallway. I took out my lighter, looked up and saw 10 Chinese characters reading, “Welcome To The Chinese History Maze.” My face turned stone cold as my mind was trying to process everything that had happened. My only thoughts were to get out of this maze and everything would be okay.

At first, I tried to get out, but I realized I had already gone too far in. I was dead—lost. The place had three paths, each lit up by near burnt torches. I shouted into each one of them, hoping to see which one had an echo. I did that after about ten tries, and it led me to a dead end. Just when I was about to give up, a vortex from the wall sucked me in.

When I finally stopped being pulled by the vortex, I saw a Buddhist monk in bright orange robes, wrapped around him. He was standing, stroking his beard, smiling and admiring what seemed to be a pre—built cave 1. “Where am I?” I asked.

“You are in what I call the Mogao cave. It’s my latest discovery, though, do I know you?” He replied.

Didn’t someone already make the Caves? They already made thousands, in fact? So why would he say that? “What year am I in?” I asked.

“You are in the Jin Dynasty.” He replied. “My name is Lè Zūn. What’s yours?” He inquired.

“Oh my god, it’s you! Lè Zūn, the creator of this cave! Wait, then why haven’t you built this cave?” I yelled.

“I only just found it? But I have plans for rebuilding this cave, now that you mention it. I saw a thousand Buddhas bathed in golden light in this cave, hence inspiring me to try and build a temple here.” He said.

“Oh, no! I’m on the wrong timeline!” I gasped under my breath.

“So, what is your name?” He asked,

“John, John Sebel.” I replied, trying not to act like I was in the wrong timeline.

“Well John, would you like to take a walk with me?” He asked.

“Um, okay?” I replied. He led the way as I followed. We walked around for a bit until we finally came to a stop as we approached the near-back wall of the cave. “I plan to create marvellous tiles engraved with paintings on the walls. Carve six beautiful altars into the walls and make three majestic Buddha statues to help encourage Buddhism.” He explained.

“What’s that?” I asked, wondering what those half built Buddha statues were. We then walked closer to it, and he explained.

“Well, that is the concept of Buddhism, it states that people are reborn after dying. Most individuals go through many cycles of birth, living, death and rebirth.” He explained, “you should always have a kind and virtuous heart. You should also have good behaviour to others and yourself because good behaviour in each life is the way to help achieve Nirvana to keep the process of rebirth going.” He said.

I thought about what he said for a while and realized that, though I may have not fully understood it; I agreed that what he said was rightful and everyone should have a good heart. We continued to walk around the place, asking each other things and talking about Buddhism. Suddenly, I felt extremely dizzy and collapsed on the floor. “Beep beep, beep, beep beep...” was what I heard as I regained consciousness, “Inject the ketam— Oh, you’re awake, Mr. Sebel.” A doctor replied.

“What happened?” I asked in pure confusion.

“Well, a local explorer found you under severe cardiac arrest outside cave 16. If it were not for his CPR skills, you would’ve been a goner. He then rushed to the nearest hospital, and here we are now.” The doctor replied, “now we won’t put any anaesthesia, but you better take some rest, okay?”

A Few Weeks Later...

When I finally got discharged from the hospital, I immediately went to find the cave that I fell into. I searched for days until I finally gave up. Perhaps that temple was cave 1, and was my time with Lè Zūn a mere mirage, or was that reality...

A Trip to the Past

ESF Kennedy School, Lee, Julianne – 10

‘Yess! We’re *finally* here!’ Huang jumped out of her seat as her brother rubbed his eyes; he had been sleeping.

‘Let’s go!’ Huang dragged her brother out of his seat and off the bus.

‘Hello, Mogao Grottoes!’ Huang declared, spinning around on the spot.

Zhi looked around to find his camera, and noticed their class leaving. ‘Huang! We gotta go!’

Huang stopped, a bit dizzy, and hurried to join them. Zhi blinked for a moment and then ran to catch up.

‘Welcome to the Mogao Grottoes’ the tour guide said, in a calm, clear voice.

‘WOOOOOOW!’ Huang exclaimed, completely ruining the quiet vibe.

All the parents turned towards her and glared. ‘SHHHHH!’

But she was right. The Mogao Grottoes were beautiful; there were amazing mosaics of people and animals covering all the walls, and statues of Buddhas everywhere. It was obviously an old place, but still beautiful. It did deserve a ‘wow’. The tour guide stepped forward. ‘As you can see, there are murals and paintings on the ceiling and walls. Some show Chinese myths or legends, and some show important figures, like emperors or noblemen.’

Huang yawned ‘Ugh, this is so BORING! Zhi, come on! Let’s explore!’

Zhi looked at their teacher worriedly ‘Are you sure? Ms. Chan said—’

‘Who cares about what Ms. Chan says? Let’s go!’

Zhi took one last look at their class, then gave in. ‘Fine, but let’s not go *too* far.’

The siblings wandered through a maze of caves and tunnels, full of statues and murals. Zhi was getting more bored by the minute when Huang saw a flash of movement in one of the smaller caves. ‘Zhi. Did you see that? There’s something moving in that cave. We have to go look!’

‘You can go, but I’m not.’ Zhi sat down, tired of walking through the endless tunnels.

He noticed his sister leaving, sighed, and reluctantly followed her. They crept through the doorway into the room. It was...empty. ‘Seriously Huang? There’s *nothing* in here—’

Huang ran over to a dusty box lying in the corner. ‘Look! A *treasure* box! And there’s a *watch* inside!! It has our *grandpa’s* name on it!! Right here, see?’

Zhi went to look at the watch his sister was holding, and found that she was right! It said, in big letters at the back “Jing Wei” ‘We should keep it... Here, put it on!’ Huang said, as she strapped it onto his wrist.

‘This watch is really out of date. We should wind it forwards to our time.’

Huang reached out to turn the dial, but as she did, a cloud of dust surrounded them. When the air finally cleared, they were both lying on the ground in a cave full of gold and shining gems. ‘Zhi’ Huang said, turning to look at him ‘Where are we? And where’s the watch?’

Zhi peered around. It looked like the dusty old cave they had found the watch in, except for one thing: There were gold sculptures and shining jewellery lying everywhere, almost covering the entire floor! As he examined a sculpture, Huang called ‘Zhi! I found the watch! And there’s a note too! Come look!’

If you have this note, you must be my grandchildren, Huang and Zhi! I made this watch to take you back to the past. You see, I made a sculpture with a precious rock and hid it from the greedy emperor. But he found out, and your grandmother and I are going to be executed! Please save us, not for me, but for you; If we die, you two will not exist! And the watch only works for 2 days. Good luck.

Your grandpa,

Jing Wei 静伟

Zhi turned to Huang. ‘Now what?’

‘Now, we do what he told us to. We go save our grandpa.’

‘Come on, Zhi. Let’s just sleep for now. Tomorrow we can figure out how to save grandpa and grandma.’

All night they tossed and turned on the rocky cave floor. The next morning, they woke up to footsteps outside the cave entrance. Someone outside the cave entrance spoke. ‘Can you believe that the head architect and his wife are going to be executed?’

‘...Yah, I *can* believe it, we’re going to bring him to the execution right now. Remember?’

As the footsteps faded, Huang turned to Zhi. ‘They’re going to the jail cell! We can probably convince them to free grandpa! C’mon, let’s go!’

Huang ran off the same way the guards had gone. Zhi had no choice but to follow her.

Huang peered around the corner and, seeing the guards, stepped out of the shadows and sauntered over to them.

‘Who are you, and what are you doing here!’ A guard pointed his sword at Huang.

‘I am from the future. You must set these prisoners free.’

‘But they disobeyed the emperor!’

‘If you let him execute these innocent people, you’ll be next.’ Huang threatened.

‘I don’t want to die!’ The guards exchanged alarmed glances and ran away, dropping the keys as they went.

‘Grandma! Grandpa! We’re here to set you free!’ Huang said, her eyes welling with tears.

Her hands shaking, she unlocked the door, and two figures stepped out. Grandpa slowly walked towards them, his arms outstretched. ‘My wonderful grandchildren! You saved us! But you must turn the dial back and leave now. We can escape the palace on our own. Goodbye! I will always remember you!’

He hugged them. Huang twisted the dial, and once again, a swirl of dust surrounded them.

They landed in a heap in the same dusty cave. But this time, their class was there! They were all sitting down, eating cookies. 'We decided to take a break,' Ms. Chan said, smiling at them. 'Where have you been?'

'Well we—' Zhi began

Huang interrupted him, 'We just went exploring. The sculptures we saw really brought us back in time.' She exchanged a grin with Zhi 'And... Can I have a cookie?'

The Decendancy

ESF Kennedy School, Lee, Summer – 10

Cecily was very excited for her next school trip. They would be going to the Mogao Grottoes! Cecily packed up all the things she'd need. Her water bottle, lunchbox, sketchbook and a pack of colored pencils to draw any important details.

That night, Cecily could hardly sleep. She was so excited! When the day came, she double-checked everything was packed and went to the bus station. They went directly to the Mogao Grottoes from the station. They were told that the actual caves were crumbling.

The temple was very big! Cecily sketched the temple as they took a short break. Then they entered the caves. 'Wow!' Cecily thought. 'There was me thinking the temple outside was big!' The temple was titanic, and it wasn't crumbling as much as they were told. There were many beautiful statues of Buddah and all sorts of artwork and poetry. Blue and white tiles covered the floor and banners covered the walls. It had a big domed roof that was also covered with tiles. It seemed to be sort of falling, but it was still amazing. Cecily immediately went to examine the artwork first. Her best friend, Christina took a look at the poetry.

Cecily was tracing a painting of Buddah with one finger when she heard a shriek. She whipped around to face Christina being grabbed by a statue of a demon. But that wasn't possible was it? 'I must have fallen asleep,' Cecily thought subconsciously. She slapped herself only to find out that she was not dreaming!

"Tina!" Cecily screamed, reaching out to her friend.

"Help! HEEELP!! WHAT IS THIS THING?! STATUES CAN'T MOVE! Someone help me!" Christina panicked. "Em! Via! Tia! Help me help her!" Cecily called to her friends. Emma, Olivia and Tiana came rushing over and tried to help, but the demon grabbed all of them with its many arms. It sucked them to another dimension.

All five girls were still screaming when they landed in a sunny meadow which made Cecily feel pretty stupid. Then the demon abruptly appeared next to them and the screaming got louder. The demon inched towards them. "Cecilia... Cecilia wang..." The demon moaned. Cecily screamed as it got closer. It reached out and grabbed her. Her eyes closed tightly with fear. The world churned around her as she felt her friends being grabbed as well. She was suddenly jerked up into the sky and the world spun around her twenty timeless, the spinning sensation continued for what seemed like ages. Before she knew it, she was transported along with her friends back to the Mogao caves.

"Are you alright girls?!" Cecily's teacher, Ms. Jones demanded.

"Yes ma'am," Emma told her.

"We're OK," Olivia murmured.

"Perfectly fine and unhurt. Well, physically," Tiana added. Cecily remained silent. "Are you alright, Cecilia dear?" Ms. Jones asked.

"I'm alright," Cecily lied. Why had the demon howled her name but not her friends'? Why hers?

The demon appeared shortly after, grabbing only Cecilia and taking her into a portal. "Why are you taking me here?!" Cecily demanded. The demon pointed at a scene among the swirl. Cecily squinted at it.

A woman that resembled Cecily but older stood in the middle of a road, looking up at the sky. A car zoomed right at her. The woman took no notice. The vehicle hit her. Cecily screamed, terrified. Then it struck her. "That's my mother, isn't it? Father told me she died in a traffic accident." The demon nodded.

"Can't you talk?" Cecily asked impatiently.

"I can, but I prefer not to," the demon replied quietly.

"Alright. Is this why you took me here?" Cecily asked.

"To show you your family that you barely knew," The demon said.

Cecily frowned. Her mother died three months after she was born and her father died five years after that. She had never been close to her father. He was mostly working in his office and often left her with a babysitter.

The demon dragged her through the swirl. There was a little boy sitting in the grass that had Cecily's sharp electric blue eyes. He was wearing very odd clothes. "Is that my father?" Cecily inquired. The demon shook his head quietly. "A shame he died, though," it said "He was one of the only decent ones of his kind."

"Don't you have a name?" Cecily asked.

"I go by the name of Oni Rick but you may call me Rick," The demon replied.

"Well Rick, how old is this boy in this image?"

"Twelve. He is Wang Yuan Ku, the one that discovered the Mogao Grottoes. He breathed life into me. Told me to seek his descendant. That is you. You must stay in the Mogao Grottoes"

"WHAAAAAAAAAAT?!?" Cecily hollered.

"Yes," Rick replied calmly.

"So I need to stay there. But why?"

"Your fate is tied to the temple, it's crumbling, it requires your presence in order to survive."

Both were silent for a moment. "You choose, Wang.," the demon told Cecily, "I will stay, I'll protect the temples, besides, who else could do it?" Cecily decided after a long moment of silence. "Good choice," Rick said, smiling since the first time Cecily had ever seen him.

Soon enough, Cecily was transported back and did a lot of explaining. How the demon had explained to her about her descendancy. Rick chimed in a few times to give more precise information. The teachers understood, but a bully, Brooke, seemed jealous. She shoved Cecily from behind, "Come on punk, you're just a little runt, this place will just be worse with you." "Get out Brooke," Cecily told her. Amazingly, the statues dragged Brooke out. From then, Cecily lived in the Mogao Grottoes with the guidance and protection of all the living statues, and every time a school came over for a field trip, she helped the teachers. She grew up and became a guard of the Grottoes, which she was meant to be.

The Hidden World

ESF Kennedy School, Liang, Noah – 10

One day, four teenagers set out on a summer road trip around China. There was John, the leader and Max, his younger brother. There was also talkative Lucy and Celina, the quiet one.

“Let’s take a break from school and have a relaxing time before school opens again,” said John. “I’ve heard about these amazing caves called the Mogao Grottoes in Gansu Province in West Central China.”

“Gansu? It’s a long way from Hong Kong,” said Lucy.

“We should meet the challenge then.” Max smiled.

They took the train for 36 hours over two days and arrived at a beautiful oasis in the desert.

“Are we dreaming?” asked Max as they saw a peaceful lake shaded by palm trees in the middle of the bare desert.

Just on the other side of the oasis, they saw a gigantic cave. Inside, they found a stairway going down into the darkness. They took out their flashlights and went down the steps together. At the bottom was a heavy door. Max pushed it open.

They entered another world. Definitely not modern China but somewhere with busy people in ancient Chinese clothes working everywhere.

“This looks just like pictures I’ve seen in textbooks describing life in the Song Dynasty,” shouted Celina in amazement.

Their sudden appearance caught the attention of cave workers who were building this new cave community to be free from invaders and outside wars. This is the hope of all workers who want a peaceful life away from the world. The workers led them to the site’s manager who questioned them.

“We saw a cave and it led us here,” said John.

“Huh?” said the leader in confusion.

It had been a long day, so a worker just invited them to stay with him.

The next morning, there was a sudden rumor of hidden treasures nearby. The curious youth asked about this. The manager immediately said they must go find it, providing them with four fine horses. They set off to find the treasure with a Buddhist monk as their guide.

The monk went because he wanted the treasure for himself. The hidden treasure was a book containing powerful spells along with a magical spear-like sword and protective armor. Whoever owned this sword and armor would be invincible, indestructible! The monk wanted the book, weapon, and armor so he could rule the entire world.

Now, an ancient myth foretold that only the kind and pure hearted four friends could carry the treasure without harm. Anyone who took the treasure with evil intentions would turn to stone for eternity. Seeing the four youths, the monk understands what that means.

So, the youth traveled and arrived at another cave as the treasure map pointed out. Celina stepped in the cave first and they found yet another endless steps of staircases. They walked down the stairs until they were too tired to move. When they reached the end, they saw a gigantic moving Qilin.

“We are here for the treasure,” said John.

“I have sworn to protect the treasure with my life, and no one can get the treasure from me,” howled the Qilin.

“Please, we can only return using the treasure that no one can find,” said Max.

“Can you help us?” said Lucy kindly.

“Get lost and get out of here!” growled the Qilin with rage now. “You will destroy this world’s peace with the treasure if it falls into the wrong hands.”

Sensing the evil monk nearby, the Qilin froze the time so the monk stopped and could not hear. Only Qilin and the four teenagers are moving. Qilin relaxed and spoke in a kind voice towards the teenagers.

“Did you know that this evil monk was with you the entire time you entered this world?”

The teenagers saw the monk hidden now.

“Oh, we didn’t know he was following us,” said Max.

“I have sensed a great force of evilness and this monk has been contacting the War god,” said Qilin.

“They’ve been wanting to get their hands on this treasure to destroy our Song dynasty to become the highest master of the land controlling all its people as he pleases.”

The teenagers now understood.

“What can we do to stop him from this evil plan?”

“Now, before I unfreeze the time, I will make an invisible wall so the monk cannot see you while you get the treasure. Return quickly and I will let you pass. In future, be careful and make the right choices,” said Qilin.

With this, he unfroze the time. The monk who cannot see the teenagers now returns to the cave entrance to meet with the War god saying he has lost the four teenagers.

The War god shouted furiously at the monk. “You dumb—dumb! I trusted you and you lost them.”

“It wasn’t my fault,” said the monk, “I felt some invisible wall that I cannot pass. And I believe that was done by the guardian Qilin.”

The four teenagers found the treasure and returned quickly to the worker’s cave as Qilin advised. They told the workers to form an army to defeat the evil monk and his followers.

They used the power of the magic treasure to create swords for everyone. The workers and four youths fought against the evil monk and his followers. After a short battle of swords and lightning, the monks were forced into a cave corner and turned into big stones to remind people to not be so greedy for power.

The youth returned the treasure back to Qilin.

It saw their kind hearts and said, “The door is opened for you. Thank you and go!”

The four teenagers thanked Qilin for his wisdom, went through the door and back to the side of the road. Everything was still the same as if only a few seconds had passed. The teenagers went back home thinking about this timeless summer adventure.

Treasure of the Caves

ESF Kennedy School, Oh, Tay – 10

In the early 1900s, there was a British family trying to find treasure in a cave that was forgotten in time, around the sandy slopes of The Silk Road. There was the father, a cartographer, twins that were in charge of the horse and lastly there was the daughter of the cartographer. She had glinting, cerulean eyes and had blond glossy hair that hung gently across her waist, she was the cook.

After months of travelling in the extreme heat, they found a small opening on the side of a rocky wall.

The older twin exclaimed “Could this be the cave we’re looking for, father?”

“It could be!” The cartographer replied.

“Then what are we waiting for, start digging everyone!” Excitedly, the younger twin shouted.

When the sun was at the highest point in the sky, they had removed most of the rock that surrounded the opening.

“Alexandra, you can sit down there and play, we’ll take it from here.” said the cartographer.

This irritated Alexandra, she was thirteen and she was *still* being treated as a child. This gave her the urge to push past and yank out the rock that was stabilising the opening. The wall shook and rumbled as if an earthquake was about to happen, the rocks started to tumble down the wall. Panicking, she ducked down and managed to roll to the opposite direction of where her father was. Out of nowhere, a boy slipped into the opening. The opening had closed.

Alexandra couldn’t help but fall into tears, she thought she would never see her father again. To break the snotty weeping of Alexandra, the boy screamed “Stop being a baby and help me get out of here.”

He pulled out a torch and lit it using a flint, the flames danced in front of Alexandra’s face.

She was standing on a broad hallway, entirely made from rock. The roof of the cave was smooth and almost shiny. The cave looked like it stretched for miles. She then took a closer look at the bandit, he looked like someone her age and a foreigner. He had tanned skin, round black eyes and a scar that stretched across his cheek.

Her eyes swollen red, she sobbed “Who do you even think you are?”

“I am a bandit that has come for treasure in these caves, and if you don’t help me out you will regret it.” the bandit threatened.

She slowly nodded her head.

They wandered around for hours, then she started to notice some markings, “What does this mean?” She asked curiously.

Shocked, the boy said “It’s *Chinese*, it’s a *language*. It *means* ‘you are nearing where treasure lies. Beware there’s traps.’, wimpy girl”

Offended, Alexandra pouted “Will you not call me wimpy girl, my name’s Alexandra, wimpy boy?”

“Don’t you call me wimpy!” The bandit tried to push her, but instantly she dodged to the side. The bandit fell down on his bottom, she laughed hysterically “Oh sorry, did you just happen to fall?”

When he got up, pouting his lips, the jagged tile that the bandit was standing on, lowered. Alexandra could hear a rumbling, tumbling, low sound. A towering boulder came into sight, it rolled down destroying the walls, it was chasing them.

The bandit grabbed Alexandra and ran as fast as he could, facing the way they had come. He remembered that there was a sharp turn in the tunnel, and he knew that the boulder couldn’t turn in that momentum. The boulder was right

behind them. When they had reached the turn, they drifted to the left, and rolled onto the floor. The boulder crashed into the wall. Breathing heavily, Alexandra could only make out two words 'Thank' and 'you'.

They had rested for hours, every single bone of their body ached. Then the bandit just noticed an opening the boulder had made, there was a light that shone brightly there, almost as if it were the treasure. Barely, he got up and limped towards the opening, Alexandra followed him. As they approached, the floor became more and more even, almost as if it was a pathway. Finally, they reached a room filled with scrolls, breathtaking paintings, gorgeous vases, humongous sculptures and tall temples made from wood. They looked older than a millenia. It was fascinating, the room was so gigantic and exquisite, it looked as if a giant had built it. Looking closer at the relics, nearly all of them had a person crossed-legged in robes. The temple structure had at least four temples, each temple stacked on one another. At the edges of the room, there were dozens of hallways, perhaps leading to even more rooms. The bandit and Alexandra were speechless.

Whilst they were awestruck, a familiar voice cried out "Alexandra!", it was her father! The boulder had smashed through the walls and created an exit. Alexandra ran and threw herself into her father's arms.

"Where have you been, young lady!" Her father questioned, happily.

"Father, I've missed you so much! And that's the treasure room!"

"Let's start packing!" Her father exclaimed joyfully.

"Wait." It was the bandit's voice "Stop what you're doing. This is our culture, you can't just steal it."

"Pardon me! Who are you? " His hands balled up into fists.

"I'm an adventurer, sir. And this treasure is my people's culture, so please leave." he said calmly, as he blocked her father's path.

"Don't fight! He's right, father. It may be priceless but it's not ours. We can't just steal." She yelled, eyes glistening.

"But then we would've come here for nothing."

"We can work hard, and earn money, not steal it."

"All right." Her father sighed.

"Thanks Alexandra," The little adventurer said "and sorry for pretending to be a bandit. I just wanted to save our culture."

"It's fine, goodbye adventurer" Alexandra beamed.

The family trotted off to the distance as the sun set. As for the adventurer, he had discovered the Mogao Caves.

The Mogao Grottoes

ESF Kennedy School, Wright, Jake – 10

It was 11am on a Wednesday morning in Gansu, 1907 and the heat of the sun was scorching hot. He was already sweating profusely. He couldn't take the heat. Every 20 minutes he would have to have a drink of water from his flask. To make sure he didn't run out he had 7 x 1 litre bottles. China's harsh desert weather was surely a lot different from England's wet and dreary forecast.

Peter wanted to get to the Mogao Grottoes. There he would study the artifacts and documents. Hopefully he would take some home to add to his magnificent collection which consisted of Ancient Aztec, Incan, Egyptian and more. After 30 more minutes of driving he was there and it was beautiful. There was a huge, majestic temple carved into the dusty yellow walls of an old cliff. The materials used to make it were a red colour that had faded slowly away over the thousands of years it had been there. He couldn't wait to explore.

He got out of his seat wearing his gigantic rucksack full of water, a torch with spare batteries, a camera, and a shovel just in case. The ground was full of heaps of sand and it was going into his shoe, but it was the desert, what did he expect?

When he got to the entrance it felt as if he was as small as a mouse compared to the temple. He walked in and turned on the torch, he was stunned. There were dozens of beautiful sculptures everywhere. Some with colour while others had faded away partially or completely. Before coming to China he had read about the caves and found out that this was built by Buddhist monks and used as a library to house old scrolls. Another thing that fascinated him was the hundreds of wall paintings. There were a variety of exquisite colours and there were so many details in the drawings. They were everywhere and even on the ceiling! There were lots of elaborate patterns with swirls, pictures of Buddhist monks and Buddah himself. Peter walked on through the gloomy tunnel, lit up by the dim light of the torch. As he did he got more and more amazed by everything inside it, this had to be the most interesting place he had ever visited by far.

After walking steadily onward for 30 minutes he came to a room and inside it were hundreds of old scrolls and documents. "They must be thousands of years old," he said to himself, he was in awe at the masses of scrolls. No one else was in the room so he grabbed a scroll and started reading it. It was in a language he didn't know but there were lots of colourful drawings of Buddah. It had been preserved so well that the colour had hardly faded. Peter carefully opened his rucksack and slipped the scroll inside. "This will make a wonderful addition to my collection," he whispered to himself. He grabbed more and observed everything, the colours, the ink and the paper to estimate when the scrolls were made. He roughly guessed around 1500 years ago. He was so absorbed in his work that he didn't notice he had been there for 3 hours!

He finally noticed after finishing examining his tenth scroll. His legs had a cramp and he found it difficult to stand up. When he did he nearly fell over but had to hold onto an unlit lamp to ensure he didn't. Suddenly the lamp tilted down and one side of the wall slid to the left and a hidden corridor appeared! Peter was astonished, what could this lead to? He rushed towards the entrance and ran forward looking for something big. The corridor was long and he had been running for 15 minutes. He was still doing so but then he suddenly stopped. He was completely mesmerised. In front of him was a gigantic, golden Buddha 40 meters high and behind it was a shelf as high as the Buddah with scrolls and documents in all of them. It was a massive library! He inspected the enormous Buddah and found out that the sculpture was real gold! This was an archaeological breakthrough. He grabbed his camera from his bag and took photos of everything. He needed to leave and share this discovery with the world.

He ran out of the corridor as fast as he could and got to the room where he had found the secret entrance and ran to the entrance of the cave. On the way he thought about what would happen when everyone found out about his discovery, would he get rich and famous? Would he go down in history books? Then a thought sprang up into his mind, what would happen to the structure and the documents when it was discovered? Humans had been known to destroy monuments like this, he couldn't risk it. If he did then it might be demolished and the beautiful sculpture destroyed with all of the work around it. He just couldn't show it to the world even if he did get rich in doing so. This part of the cave must be kept secret for as long as possible. So with that thought in mind he ran out into the open world.

He instantly stepped back, the sun shone brightly into his eyes, too bright. It took a while for his eyes to adjust but when he did he hopped into his truck and drove off into the desert. "I hope I find more stunning things like that," he said to himself, "I have lots of time to, I'm still only 24."

The Tale of a Buddha Statue

ESF Kennedy School, Wu, Jayden – 10

Ting! Ting! Ting! When I opened my eyes, I saw a thin, bald man with a yellow robe chiselling my toe! I didn't know what was happening until he told me later.

My name is Sakyamuni. I am 16 meters tall and lying on my right side. My head rests on my right hand, my left hand rests gently on my body, and my feet stack up with the upper surface of my feet facing outward.

My hair has snail-like curls with a high bun, my colour is greyish white. My ears seem to touch my shoulder. I have long eye lines, but small pupils and my eyes are barely open. I have a subtle smile. I also have a bindi—The dot between the eyebrows represents the third eye to feel the world. I can fly so I don't have to walk.

I was created by a monk named Yuezun in a place called the Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang. "I have a vision of a thousand Buddhas, and that inspired me to build caves here as I was passing this region." He told me while he was chiselling my future relatives. Once he created a brother and a sister for me, he went to dig a cave around us. I live in cave 158. It was 366 AD.

After his death, other monks followed in his footsteps and created more than two thousand siblings for me! The whole site is like a magnificent mansion with many rooms housing different buddhas. Some rooms have windows where sunlight beams into rooms. Corridors and stairs are connecting different spaces.

Day after day, birds are chirping. Long lines of traders riding on camels zig-zagging the desert. Monks and visitors enter my room to worship me.

After sunset, my siblings and I read precious handwritten scrolls in the library cave and doodle on the walls and ceilings. My favourite drawings are those where people are flying in the sky and fables about Buddha's teaching. When it's late, we party and play hide-and-seek.

But in the Yuan dynasty, nobody came at all. I asked a shepherd what had happened. He said there used to be a major trading hub nearby but trading via sea-routes began to dominate.

A monk told me in the Ming dynasty "The silk road was officially abandoned." My life has become tranquil. After a few decades, I found it as dull as dishwater. Every day I just read and draw. My siblings and I felt like being quarantined in a pandemic.

One starry night, while I was drawing myths of buddhas on the wall, I heard a sound. "Whoosh!" I went out to investigate. I saw an egg-like object flying in the air, flying lower and lower every second.

Out stepped a skinny person with green skin and a pair of big, black eyes. He said "Hello, earthling, I am Charles from Mars. I left Mars with my family and friends because of the large dust devil or you can say, the large spinning devil." "Can I come into your room?"

I replied "Ok."

He came in and commented, "Not a bad place you have here!"

"You can stay until the dust devil stops if you want." I told him.

"Great, thank you!" he replied.

During his stay, I taught him how to make small stone statues and he taught me how to fly the egg-like flying object—they call it a spaceship.

Two months later, the dust devil stopped and Charles left. He said while he was boarding his spaceship. "I had a good time here. Can I return in the future?"

"Of course, come whenever you want!" I replied. Seconds later, he was gone.

Things changed again in 1900 when our library cave was “discovered” — though we have never lost it! Suddenly, numerous foreigners flocked in and took away our favourite books, my siblings, and wall paintings! They are now scattered in museums and collectors’ homes around the world.

In 1961, I heard that the government had declared this place a specially protected historical monument and would restore it to its glory. More than two decades have passed since then, this place has become a UNESCO world heritage site.

In 2013, the government proposed a grand vision called Belt and Road Initiative (OBOR) which links China with European countries through high-speed rails. Six years later, the railway was completed with a stop in a nearby town. My cave was flooded by tourists again. Children were yelling, pushing and running around. Adults were talking on their phones, snapping pictures and sharing on social media. This is a big contrast to tranquillity for the past 500 years. But soon I got used to it.

This is the year 2180. The earth is a fireball with no water in sight. Humans used up all the fossil fuels. All trees and plants died out. Rubbish piled up everywhere. The planet is no longer habitable. Only aliens have set up a trading post near my home, or the “space silk road” as I call it. Visitors now come from all around our galaxy. Every day I see strange, funny, scary and unusual-looking visitors.

I get woken up by a sand storm and the sound of a spaceship landing. Someone suddenly comes to my cave. It’s Charles! We chatted for a while and I told him how the earth has changed since his last visit. He invited me to move to Mars. I don’t want to leave my birthplace but the earth is so different that I cannot recognise it anymore.

In the spaceship, I look back on the cave one last time and the few thousand years flashbaked in my mind. Tears flow through my eyes.

The Day the Monk Became Rich

ESF Quarry Bay School, Gao, Annabel – 8

More than one million centuries ago, there was a young and kind hearted Monk.
He helped everyone in need that he saw with a kind heart everyone loved him.
BUT one day when he was crossing the dessert near the famous and lovely silk road of China.
Something caught his eye, then he felt a spark in the deepest side of his kind heart.
First, he wanted to see what was inside that deep dark cave, but suddenly horror over took the excitement
After long hours of standing, he gave himself a super hard punch and knew it was time to go inside he bravely walked
inside the huge cave and surprisingly saw that the cave was magical.
There were lights on the top of the cave and made him feel safe.
Then beautiful young girls came and brought him to a genie the Monk felt safer and in front the genie said "Can I
help or do something for you".
The genie then slowly said "you can take over the gold because of your kind heart".
The genie granted five of the kind monk's wishes.
From that day on people went to that cave looking for fortune.

The Dragon in the Bowl

ESF Quarry Bay School, Zhang, Emily – 11

A long, long time ago, in Xian Yang, Wuhuo, a general, went on a hunting trip. He traveled for three days and nights, frequently stopping to hunt. When he reached Yulin, he stopped again to hunt. Suddenly, he caught a glimpse of something shiny under the ground. *It might be something precious!* he thought. So he began to dig; after a few minutes, he saw what it was — a crystal bowl! On it were engravings so delicate it was almost life-like. One showed a picture of a dragon burning down a tower, another showed it getting sucked into something round.

Wuhuo picked it up: inside was a strange substance — it was neither gas, liquid nor solid. Curious, he touched it. The substance cracked. The bowl started to tremble. There was a burst of light, and when Wuhuo opened his eyes, he beheld a horrific scene — a snow-white dragon stood in front of him. It did a somersault in the air and flexed its dagger-sharp claws. Its scales were like pearls shining in the golden sunlight as it gazed down at Wuhuo with its amber eyes. It had two heads, each with a mouth and fangs as sharp as needles.

“Wh—who are you? Where did you come from?” stammered Wuhuo. “S—stay away from me!”

The dragon grinned: “Why, I believe you have just freed me.”

“From what?” asked Wuhuo.

“The bowl, of course,” said the dragon. “That Arhat trapped me in there. Is it still the Shang dynasty?”

“No,” said Wuhuo: “it’s the warring states period now.”

“Oh well, but since you have freed me, you may have whatever you want. What do you want more than anything?” asked the dragon.

I have always wanted a horse... thought Wuhuo. “I wish for a beautiful horse as fast as the wind, a horse who will never be tired. I want a horse who is able to fly.” he said.

As soon as he said these words, a mare appeared before him. It was beautiful and chestnut-colored, with two white hooves. Overjoyed, Wuhuo lept onto the horse and tugged the reigns. She immediately set off, quick as lightning, then rose into the air. The dragon smiled and vanished in a puff of smoke.

That night, Wuhuo had a strange dream. He was walking in a village. Smoke was rising from a tower. *Fire!* he thought. He ran to the site but was stopped by a falling piece of wood. Wuhuo recognized the carvings on it, but he couldn’t grasp where. Suddenly, he spotted something in the sky. It was a two headed dragon, exactly like the one who he had freed that day.

“*This is why the dragon was imprisoned in that bowl.*” said a voice from behind. Wuhuo spun around — it was the great Arhat himself. “*You have probably heard the story of how I caught a dragon.*” he said: “*That was the one. I have come to warn you of great misfortune. You must finish what you started. The dragon sleeps in the old cave. Bring him to me.*” Then, everything began to blur as Wuhuo woke up.

The next morning, Wuhuo woke up early and prepared his things. He mounted his horse: “Go quickly and quietly,” he told her: “be prepared to run.” He set off at the break of dawn. An hour later, he arrived at the old cave — sure enough, the two headed dragon slept soundly inside. *I’ve got to the cave,* thought Wuhuo: *what do I do now?* Then, as if answering his question, the voice of Arhat rang in his ears: “*Take his magical marble and wake him up.*” He took a step forward — in the lap of the dragon was a shiny marble.

As Wuhuo picked it up, a strange sensation took over — he felt safe and protected, like nothing could ever harm him. He looked down at the marble: images flashed inside — pictures of him in a palace of gold, pictures of people bowing down... then suddenly, a flash of bright orange took its place, and a sharp pang of pain ran through his body. Wuhuo yelped, then realized it wasn’t real. He let out a sigh of relief and put the marble in his pocket. He was just thinking about how to wake the dragon when a snarl sounded behind him — the dragon was already awake.

“How dare you steal my marble!” it roared, pouncing on Wuhuo. He swerved to the right and hopped onto his horse. Wuhuo grabbed an arrow and shot at the dragon. Both heads dodged, and it hit the spot between them. The dragon roared in pain. Wuhuo turned around to see that he was flying in the air. The dragon was gaining on them. Suddenly, Wuhuo remembered Arhat’s words: “*Bring him to me.*” He turned and headed towards Yulin. So, the dragon chased him all the way there.

Arhat stood on a smooth rock: “So, we meet again.”

The dragon fixed his gaze on him: “You can’t capture me this time.” he snarled.

“Oh really?” asked Arhat. He leaped up onto a cloud and soared towards it. The dragon snapped at Arhat. They battled for a while, until suddenly, the dragon dived at him and whipped him with its tail. Arhat fell off balance and was immediately pinned to the ground. “I’ve got you now,” said the dragon: “this time, I’m going to end you for good.” It leaned back, preparing to strike. Then, in a split second, Wuhuo spotted the crystal bowl lying on the ground. He picked it up and threw it at the dragon.

The dragon began to shrink. “NOOOOOOOO!!!” the dragon was being sucked in! Finally, there was a burst of light, and the dragon was gone. Wuhuo dug a hole and put the bowl inside. As he covered it, he sighed — finally, it was over. Wuhuo turned around to apologize to Arhat, but he had disappeared. And so, he went home.

The Mogao Caves

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Kwan, Aden – 9

After several thousand years when the Mogao Caves were forgotten, a scholar explorer named Bing, decided to find the ancient cave of Mogao. Bing lives in Dunhuang of the Gansu province in China, where the Mogao Caves was located. He and his scholar friends have been searching the caves for a month-long, one day, one of his friends named Kun-Cha discovered an ancient painting inside an enormous cave.

‘Look! There is a painting here!’ yelled by Kun-Cha holding a lamp, others rushing to see what is it. Everyone was amazed at the huge paintings on the wall. The paintings were drawn by some lines mapping the direction of the cave. It showed there were many chambers inside the cave-like a maze. ‘Hey what’s this Blue dot in the middle?’ puzzled Bing, he wondered it might imply something important hidden behind a wall.

‘Let us use our bombs and cannons to knock down the wall’, suggested Kun-Cha. BOOM! The wall crumbled to pieces. As Bing and Kun-Cha move out of the smoke, there was a blue glowing light...It was a diamond! ‘What’s the diamond for?’ asked Bing. A scholar, Dun-Ming, found there’s a dusty book and read it. He said ‘This diamond is to safeguard all the ancient sacred art and literature inside a chamber.’ Then Bing went closely near the diamond and touched it. Suddenly, ZAP!!!! Little did they know they should not touch it, as it released a dangerous dragon into the sky while a chamber was wide opened!

It released an evil Ancient Dragon and reviewed all of the ancient arts, literature and some weapons as well. The scholars did not know how to fight, luckily there was a Chinese scroll to teach them how to use the ancient weapons. They got all the swords, bows and armour ready and tried to fight with the dragon. The other scholars named Pola and Debi were terrified and ran out of the cave and warned the whole town that there is an Ancient Dragon on its way. But it’s too late, ROAR!! The dragon could fly and it was so furious and started breathing fire to everywhere. The dragon even had special power like laser-eyes that could destroy big rocks and buildings, wherever it went all tumbled.

Bing, Kun-Cha and the dragon were fighting across a snowy mountain using overpowered swords to defeat the dragon. The King of the Dynasty heard the call for help from Pola and Debi, he then ordered his soldiers to get all-mighty spears, blades, swords and armour to fight with the dragon. At last, they defeated the dragon finally. As a reward for killing it, the King awarded them all the ancient sacred art and literature that they have entitled to. The scholars were thrilled.

Soon after, all scholars came together to help the King to rebuild the city, Dun-Ming the famous builder, followed some blue-print paintings that he found in the Mogao cave by using all the broken stones and big rocks that the dragon devastated, then they started to build many long and huge walls along the stretching mountains, they named it ‘The Great Wall Of China’.

In a wish to protect the Dynasty not to be ruined by another evil dragon that may come out again, they build as many walls as possible across different provinces of China. The shape of it resembles a dragon lying across the high mountains. The scholars wish: Be a good dragon to protect our Dynasty! Here comes today, the Great Wall of China. Thanks to the scholar’s bravery and their teamwork, and the tale of Mogao Caves.

The Secret of Mogao Grottoes

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Lee, Dominic – 8

Mogao Grottoes

On a mountain, on a cliff, in a cave, there was a temple, called Mogao. One day, four explorers from different cities, two from Hong Kong and two from Shanghai, came to have an adventure. They were named Frank, William, Merry and Minnie. When they went inside the cave, they saw lots of ancient paintings on the walls, ceiling and floor, as well as many different sizes of sculptures. Minnie said they were made thousands of years ago.

The Secret Library

Four explorers were so amazed that they all of a sudden found a secret place. When they entered a room of the cave, Frank accidentally closed the door by mistake, they found there was another door behind it! When they opened that door, they saw piles and piles of books in front of them. They had discovered a secret library! So they settled down and read the books together for many days and nights. Two weeks later, they still haven't finished reading all the books in the library. But there was a problem, they didn't have enough food left, so, they read as fast as they could.

Treasure Room

Finally, they have finished all the books. They put the books neatly like nothing ever happened, but when they put them back onto the shelf, an image appeared on the books' side. That image was a bunch of words, it looked like a code that told something very important. Then, they followed the instructions to a trapdoor that looked like a book.

When they went into the trapdoor, they found themselves in a treasure room! They saw a lot of diamonds, gold, gemstones and other jewellery as well. William referred to one of the books he read in the secret library, and said, all this jewellery belonged to the ancient royals of different countries hundred years ago. When the countries were having wars with each other, people took all their valuable belongings and hid them in this secret place.

The secret Message

The explorers took photos and immediately sent an email to The Director of the National Museum of China to study, as well as the journalists about their findings. When the explorers came home, everyone welcomed them back with pride and a smile, many media interviewed them and asked lots of questions about their Mogao Grottes adventure.

One of the questions was, have you taken anything from this valuable place? Merry replied to the media with a smile, we have gained lots of fun and experiences from this adventure. Frank grinned, he stole the limelight and said, we have learnt don't put all eggs in one basket! Everyone laughed.

Thereafter, they became very very famous all over the world and became an adventurous team of four.

A Journey with the Nine-Coloured Deer

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Shi, Iris Sun – 9

The deer was gone. We searched everywhere but failed to see the merest shadow of it. My younger brother Martin was heartbroken, while I eventually spotted a piece of bark with a sentence.

“If you miss me, stand under that oak.” Martin read aloud. “Let’s go, now!”

Within 10 seconds, Martin and I were under the oak. Something white flew out of the sky.

“Hello, friends,” the deer said affectionately, “Climb onto me.” It lowered the front half of its body.

“Are you the legendary nine-coloured deer?” I asked in disbelief.

“Yes, I am the deer of nine colours. 2800 years ago, I promenaded on the bank of the Ganges. 1700 years ago, a painter brought me to my new home in the grottoes.” it muttered.

It flew like an angel, but with no wings. We felt puffs of air rising and falling. I gripped Martin’s waist tightly. Those incredible past few days flashed back into my head...

The Forest

Martin and I played in Midnight Forest until the sun was only a hazy orb going down. Suddenly, a small, saddening, desperate whimper echoed through the forest. It sounded like an animal weeping.

Before I processed the noise, Martin was already dashing into the forest like a crazed lightning bolt. When I ran deep into the wildness of the forest, Martin was crouching down, patting a deer and trying to feed it with a sandwich.

Martin made a hush sign, pointing at the deer’s right leg. It was bent at a strange angle, with a few drops of blood on the ground. Its eyes were wide with fear as it shuffled away. It was a unique deer with bright red, chrome yellow, lemon yellow, mint green, sap green, turquoise, sky blue, ultramarine, and violet spots on it.

“It is okay, little deer! We will help save you.” Martin raised his sweet baby voice. The deer did not appear to trust him. I stroked its back gently, and I was shocked by this deer’s soft, fuzzy, and silky coat.

In the following days, we were keen to go to the forest. Martin usually fed the deer with wild berries. I chatted with the deer to comfort it. It seemed to get more relaxed. On the fourth day, unexpectedly, it spoke.

“I’m sorry if I didn’t trust you at the beginning.” It said gently to not startle us.

“It can t-t-talk!” Martin shouted. I hushed him, taking notes. I used to bring a notebook everywhere with me.

“I once saved a drowning man. He swore to hide my whereabouts, but he broke his promise. His king chased me desperately, but I conjured my powers to wield off the sharp arrows. This encounter made me suspicious about humans.”

Then it whispered: “Thank you for taking loving care of me. I’ll show you the wonders of my caves.”

The Caves

After what seemed like a long ride on the deer’s back, we eventually arrived at the deer’s home. There were thousands of half-hidden caves on the cliff. They reminded me of termite holes, so cramped together. The place must have been Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang.

“Here it is. 60 years ago, my cave was named No. 257.” It declared. “Let’s go to Cave 428, home of my 240-year-younger self. People called me Prince Mahasattva at that time.”

Cave 428 was a marvellous place, with a meticulous, super-detailed roof, complete with flying apsaras. Inside of it, I saw tigers licking a pile of bones.

“Were Prince Mahasattva eaten by that starving tigress?” I asked.

“Well, the story was a twisted one. I went hunting with my brothers one day. We saw starving a tigress who was about to eat her own cubs. I offered myself in exchange. However, good intentions alone would not save a life. The tigress refused to eat me alive, so I sacrificed myself. The tigress, in tears, ingested my body.” the deer uttered.

“Wow!” cried Martin, staring at the deer for a trace of Prince Mahasattva, as I scrawled down notes on my notebook furiously.

A second later, we landed on Cave 285. It was as marvellous, with its intricate painting of gods and flying fairies. There was also a coffin-shaped ceiling.

“What happened?” Martin asked curiously.

“500 bandits who committed horrible crimes were captured by the King. They were sent on trial and were given the cruel punishment of having their eyes gouged out. They met me. Well, another 240 years after being Prince Mahasattva, I was incarnated again and this time named Siddhattha Gotama. My disciples called me buddha. I brushed the air, and the bandits had their new eyes back and received enlightenment.”

The deer clapped his hooves, and people and animals started to emerge from the walls. Martin and I stared at them with our mouths open! Apsaras flew and played sweet, joyful music, scattered colourful flowers. Some fluttered rainbow wings and swung on clouds, and some had chicken legs and cloud tails. They were so lively! Prince Mahasattva strode in a single, intact piece, and buddha opened his eyes and slowly sat up. The 500 bandits were chatting, with goblets of wine in their hands.

We joined the party. I danced in the air, as light as a feather. I played the Chinese lute gracefully, and Martin blew a panpipe, bringing jolly laughter. I heard hooves sound and saw Tang Sanzang riding a grey horse.

“Where’s the Monkey King?” Martin could hardly hide his excitement.

My watch abruptly beeped. Oh, it was already ten! Mom would be so worried about us! The deer understood and nodded. We rode on its back home. The deer glowed in the moonless night sky like a crystal radiating nine colours.

It was time to wave goodbye to the deer.

“Where have you been---?” cried Mom’s voice from behind.

The deer disappeared, leaving three small fragments of a lotus petal drifting in the air. Martin and I turned around and winked at each other.

A Brief History of the So–Called Monkey King & More...

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Wong, Joey – 10

If you live in China, you would have heard of the Monkey King. Now, there's something behind this story that not many people know about, giving me the obligation to inform you about it. There's another story. Buried deep within the barriers of Mount Huaguo. Although it sounds like a pleasant place to stay in, I think you need to know that this mountain is anything but that.

The Demonic Paradise. That's the alternative name. After hearing that, doesn't a wintry wave of shock wash over you? What's going on in your head? What can you picture? Over the gruesome screams of monkeys, I can hear the unobtrusive sound of creaking wood. Discernable slashes of knives. It was a grisly sight. However, this trepidation was the consequence of something unthinkable. To start off, let me introduce you to the main character here, Sung Wu Kung.

Let's rewind to thousands of years ago. On the top of a fruit mountain, Huaguo Mountain rested a magical rock. Since it was created, the rock had collected the magic of Heaven, Earth, and stars. As years passed by, this miraculous rock gradually grew into a stone egg that bore a devilish spirit.

Suddenly, the rock burst open, giving birth to a monkey. But little did the residents of Huaguo Mountain know, this monkey was anything but ordinary. At first, the monkey plays among the regular apes on Huaguo Mountain until one day, he puts his courage on display by jumping through a waterfall and accidentally discovering behind it, a special cave, not like any other. The apes followed him into the cave and decided to live there, crowning him as their "Monkey King."

Long story short, he found a master.

The monkey quickly becomes the master's favorite disciple. In no time, he learns magical powers like the 72 transformations which allowed him to become anything he wants and the ability to fly 96560.64 kilometers in a single somersault! The Taoist names the monkey "Sun WuKong," meaning awakened to emptiness.

At that time, his name was on the Hook of Death, and he went down to the underworld in an attempt to remove it. Remember when I said that he left Huaguo Mountain to seek immortality? When his name was taken off the Hook, he would have exactly that.

After getting tortured by him, the gods flew up to Heaven in order to register a formal complaint with the Great Jade Emperor. Hoping to keep him from causing any more mayhem, the Jade Emperor bestows upon the monkey the title of Protector of the Horses in the imperial stables. He was satisfied with that position, but when he found out that when he's nothing more than a stable boy, he returns home and calls himself the Great Sage Equal to Heaven.

Unable to stomach this, the Jade Emperor sent countless heavenly warriors to capture Sun Wukong. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, they were no match for his abilities. Realizing that he could never defeat Sun Wukong by violence, he decides to play nice and give him a new celestial post, "Guardian of the Immortal Peach Orchard." After receiving that information, Sun Wukong is as arrogant as ever.

After he wreaked havoc for some reason, the Jade Emperor sends 100,000 heavenly warriors to arrest Sun Wukong but nobody is successful. Only the combined powers of the three Great Deities and the Great Taoist Lord is enough to capture him at last.

Finally, after all the gods' powers had been used, the Buddha challenges someone called to a dare. Wukong has to get on the Buddha's hand and jump out of it. After so many years, Sun Wukong has finally met his match. When he flew to what he thought was the end of the universe, he found 5 pillars. To prove that he was there, Sun Wukong wrote on the pillar: "Sun Wukong was here." He then peed on one of the pillars and was preparing to fly back, ready to boast, when the Buddha showed some contact.

Turns out, the pillars were actually his fingers, and it's common sense that you're not allowed to pee on the Buddha's hand. He then turned his hand over, trapping Sun Wukong under a mountain called 5 Finger Mountain where he remained captive for 500 years.

The time came for a Buddhist monk to go on a dangerous journey in search of sacred scriptures. He would need protection as he travels from the ancient town to what is now known as India. The Buddha arranged for the Tang monk to free Sun Wukong.

Sun Wukong was willing to obey and remain faithful to his new master monk for his mission but his personality had not changed. The Buddha gives the monk a magical golden headband to place around the monkey's head so that when Sun Wukong needs to be controlled, the headband would squeeze until his head was about to explode.

Sun Wukong went on his journey, protecting his master on his journey. But this group would face 81 trials on their way to find the scriptures as well as cultivate themselves.

After completing their mission, Sun Wukong returned to Huaguo Mountain. He was filled with anger. He wanted to wreak havoc. He wanted revenge.

Throughout sleepless nights, he racked his brain until he thought of an idea. He dug out all of the weapons he used to signal to the demons that he was in Huaguo Mountain! He placed these objects in the most exposed locations of the magical mountains. His plan worked and the demons were attracted to Huaguo Mountain.

But by the time the demonic creatures had arrived, Sun Wukong had already fled the mountain and had flown up to the Heavens. What happened next cannot be described, you had to be there in person. Legend has it that all the villagers of Huaguo Mountain were taken to 5 Finger Mountain and trapped under there...

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Choi, Cheuk Chi – 10

In the early days of 1864, there was a monk called Shenzu. Shenzu was a monk who loved to study Buddhism every second in his life! One day, Shenzu finished reading all the books about Buddhism, but he wanted to know more. 'It's not enough, I am so interested, I'd never get bored about it. But a lot of people don't believe in Buddhism.....I know! I shall travel to sky Temple to study more Buddhism while I spread the message of Buddhism! I'm so smart! Ha! Ha! Ha!' Shenzu laughed. 'I can't wait! After this trip, I will be the smartest person! How did I not think of going to Sky Temple in the past? I will not leave that temple until I learn every last bit of Buddhism there.' An older monk overheard what Shenzu said. He quickly told Shenzu, 'Shenzu, I heard and it is not easy to go there. You must take enough safety equipment to go there! Or else you might get hurt.' Shenzu said, 'Yeah, I can protect myself. I do not need any safety equipment to protect me.' The old man replied, 'I'm doing this for your safety, Shenzu. I don't want you to.....' 'I'll be fine, trust me.' Shenzu didn't wait for him to end his sentence. 'As long as I have my water and food, I will return safely.' So then, Shenzu packed his things and started his journey.

When Shenzu left the Buddhist temple, he took out his map. 'According to this map, I will have to pass the Raging Storms, The Melting Volcano and Fogs Of Mists. It doesn't sound easy at all, so I must have enough energy to pass every stage. I will just find some caves to rest in.' he said to himself. He walked and walked and walked! Shenzu finally encountered the first stage. 'Woah! The lightning almost struck me! And the weather is so cold.....I'm scared!' Shenzu looked everywhere, then he saw a cave. He quickly ran into it. 'Huff.....I need something to cover my head to protect me from the storm. I should've listened to the old monk. I should've brought safety equipment! But first, I must calm down or I can't think.' Shenzu explored the big cave and found a half broken umbrella. 'What? Why is there a half broken umbrella here? But it might help me.' Shenzu rested for a bit then went out of the cave. He ran and ran, he finally reached the end of stage one. 'Oh my! My clothes are wet! It's so uncomfortable.....But I must continue. Stage two must be harder than stage one, I must prepare myself. There's no turning back now.' He murmured. As he walked to stage two, the weather was getting hotter and hotter. Just then, Shenzu saw something pointy from a distance. 'It's getting as hot as ever! It's like as hot as.....a volcano! Wait.....could that pointy thing be a volcano?!' Shenzu took a deep breath then said, 'It's fine, I can do it.'

Shenzu stopped walking when he stepped in the start of stage 2. 'I feel like my whole entire body will melt. It's so hot! But stage 2 must be more difficult. The volcano is going to do more than making the weather hot.' Shenzu thought. He looked through his backpack, 'A small fan and a little water. I'll manage.' When Shenzu ran and tried to reach the end of stage 2, something was shot out of the volcano. 'Lava! I mustn't touch it, or I will burn into ashes! I have to get out quickly!' Shenzu looked in the direction the lava was falling to, but he was so focused that he tripped on a small rock! The lava fell next to Shenzu, and when it splatted, tiny bits of lava fell onto Shenzu's leg. 'Ouch! It burns like crazy! It hurts!' But Shenzu stood up slowly. 'I'll do something with my leg later. But this place is too dangerous. I must get out.' Every step Shenzu took hurt so much, but he finally made it. He sat down and used a leaf to bandage his leg. He ate some food after. 'I can't feel my leg yet. And the weather is still hot until I get to stage 3. Well, the longer I stay, the longer time it will take to get to Sky Temple.' Shenzu continued his journey. He walked to stage 3 with one leg. It hurt so much he wanted to scream, but he didn't. Not long after, fog started to cover his way. He knew he need a lantern or something bright to help him light up the way. But the more he walked, the more lost he became.

Soon, he was afraid. He was terrified he would end up in the fogs his whole life. But then, a mysterious light had appeared in front of Shenzu. Shenzu followed the light carefully, he didn't want to get lost again. Soon, the fogs were starting to disappear, that would mean he finally reached the end. 'Ho! Ho! Ho! You've made it.' A mysterious voice murmured. 'Who are you?' asked Shenzu. 'I am the temple master. I guarded this place for my whole life now.' It said. 'Those stages that you've passed were to test you.' He laughed. Shenzu was confused, 'to test what?' The mysterious voice replied, 'Your determination. At first, you wouldn't have passed, but through this journey, I noticed you changed.' 'You may enter or leave anytime.' Shenzu thanked the temple master then went in the temple.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Chu, Hiu Yan – 10

Once upon a time, there were two brothers, Tom and Jack. They lived in a poor village in China.

One day, Tom and Jack were playing football on the top of a hill. Suddenly, they were attracted by a flash of light under the tree. They ran over there and found that the light was emitted from the soil. So they poked the soil until they saw a wooden box. In curiosity, Tom opened the box. There was a piece of paper inside, it said, 'Go to the 712th cave of Mogao Grottoes. There are 100 gold bars!'

Jack said, 'I think it must be a prank!' Tom replied, 'I don't think so. Maybe it is true. I want to prove it.' Jack shook his head and said, 'How can we prove it? We don't have any money to go there. And also, the Mogao Grottoes is very far away.'

At that moment, a pile of smoke spouted out from the box. Tom dropped it on the ground hastily. There was a little Buddha that appeared behind. The whole body of this little Buddha was golden yellow and he was wearing a red robe. Tom and Jack shouted together, 'Oh! I've never seen something like this.' The little Buddha said, 'Don't be afraid! I come from Mogao Grottoes. Do you want to go over there? I can help!' Tom answered at once, 'Of course! We want to go. Please!' Then, the little Buddha said, 'Okay. Let's close your eyes! M-O-G-A-O!'

'We have arrived, you can open your eyes now,' the little Buddha said. Then, Tom and Jack found that they were inside a cave. It was full of murals. They were bright and colorful. Most of the murals were mainly of women in beautiful dresses. And some of the women who were flying seemed as fairies in the sky. Tom said, 'Fantastic!' Jack agreed with a nod. The little Buddha said, 'Shh! Don't speak so loudly! Otherwise, you may wake up the Nine Color Deer.' He kept saying, 'It is responsible for guarding this place. And also, it especially hates people who want to take away the treasure from here.' Jack felt very scared and said, 'Oh. No!' But Tom said excitedly, 'It is really dangerous. But since we are here now, we must continue. Please help us again.' The little Buddha smiled and answered, 'I regret that I can't go with you. Because I have only two hours to become a real boy every day. I will soon turn back into a statue.' Jack said, 'Huh..... My God!'

The little Buddha pointed to one of the corners and said, 'Go through this secret passage and you can arrive at the 712th cave. But you must remember to keep quiet. Oh! Time is up. See you tomorrow!' The little Buddha didn't move anymore after finishing the last word. Jack asked, 'What shall we do now?' Tom replied confidently, 'We go now.'

Tom and Jack walked into the secret passage and found there was a light coming from the end, making the whole passage very bright. Tom led the way, Jack had to follow him.

After walking for a long time, they finally found a cave. Tom said, 'This should be the 712th cave. Let's go in!' After walking in, they found that the cave was very large. But there was only one huge Buddha statue inside. That statue was estimated to be fifteen meters tall, and it was wearing a red robe. The most special thing was that it was lying on its side, with its eyes closed and a smile on its face. Jack said, 'Remember to keep our voices down! Let's find out where the 100 gold bars are!'

But besides this big Buddha statue, there was just only a stone inside the cave. So Jack went over and moved the stone away. He found a paper underneath. It said, 'I have taken the gold bars. In 1921, Pirate Don!' Jack whispered, 'Tom! You come and look!' Jack showed the paper to him. Tom read it and felt very angry so he shouted, 'Oh my God! The gold bars were preempted by the pirate!' Jack covered Tom's mouth with his hand at once and said, 'You forgot.....' At the same time, a voice came from behind, 'Who's talking?'

Tom and Jack turned their heads and found that the sleeping Buddha opened his eyes. They shouted in horror. When they wanted to escape, a voice suddenly came, 'Bellow –' and the Nine – Color Deer appeared. It ran a lap around them, then they were tied by a rope. They could not move and say a word. The Nine – Color Deer said, 'How dare you come here to steal the treasure? I trapped you here! Sleeping Buddha, what do you think?' The Sleeping Buddha yawned and replied, 'I'll sleep first. Let's talk tomorrow!' The Nine – Color Deer left. Jack and Tom started to cry.

The next day, when Jack and Tom woke up, they finally saw the little Golden Buddha. 'Please let them go! I want them to have a good life after they took the gold bars. It is because they are poor and miserable.' The little Golden Buddha pleaded. The Sleeping Buddha replied, 'For the sake of your kindness, I let them go now.' After he waved his hand, the rope disappeared. Jack and Tom were able to speak too. Tom said sincerely, 'Thank you very much, Sleeping Buddha! We won't covet other people's belongings again!' The Sleeping Buddha said, 'Little Golden Buddha, you take them home!' Then the Little Golden Buddha said, 'M-O-G-A-O!'

After Jack and Tom arrived home, the little Golden Buddha said, 'I took you a trouble!' Tom immediately said, 'It wasn't your fault! It was my greed!' At last, the little Golden Buddha said, 'All right! We shall meet again someday. M-O-G-A-O!' Then a pile of smoke spouted out and he disappeared.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Ho, Lai Ting – 11

In the Gobi Desert, the sun was shining very brightly. A monk, named Chan Leung, stopped and drank some water. Then he kept walking. He had to go to the Mogao Grottoes and learn why they were made, according to his master's wishes. The Mogao Grottoes were ancient caves from more than a millennia ago, and they are in China, Gansu, Dunhuang. They are so ancient, which makes them a UNESCO World Heritage site.

After a long walk, Chan passed the Gobi Desert ... passed the Sanwei Mountain... passed a lot of land... and finally arrived in the Mogao Grottoes. He stood in front of them, staring at the millennia-old caves. He had arrived.

There, he saw a tourist group, to which the tour guide was explaining how the Mogao Grottoes were discovered. Chan sat nearby and heard the whole story. He was fascinated by the history of the Mogao Grottoes, which made him more excited about visiting them.

He went to the queue to get to the Mogao Grottoes. It was a very very long queue! But he thought that it was worth it. Time passed, and after ten minutes of waiting, he finally got inside. The Mogao Grottoes, also known as the Mogao Caves, was really grand. Chan looked at the walls of the caves and could see that the paintings and sculptures were, indeed, ancient. He and a lot of other visitors oohed and aahed when they saw the paintings and sculptures. Chan examined them, slowly and carefully, so that he would not miss a single detail. He took a magnifying glass from his pocket and re-examined them again. Then, he learned the wonderful story of why the Mogao Grottoes were made.

Chan marked the story into his notebook, and also, he tried to draw the paintings in his notebook too. He could imagine what his master would say, "Very good, Chan! You are the best!"

But, first, he had to begin the long journey from the Mogao Grottoes back to his hometown. He went out from the caves and sat for a short break. He was drinking some water when he saw two men arguing. The first man seemed to be demanding something.

"How rude," Chan thought, but he was curious, so he crept nearer to hear what they were saying.

"Buddhism makes me sick," the first man spat. "These Mogao Grottoes are useless, and the story is a lie."

"You can't say that," the second man said. He seemed angry. "There are many people who trust in Buddhism, and for the last time, Wong Sum, I am not going to demolish this antique just because you want to build your resort."

"Who cares about Buddhism when you can build a luxury holiday resort for everyone to live in," the man called Wong Sum shot back.

"I care," Chan interrupted him. He had enough. "How rude of you to say that."

Wong walked away, saying "You'll know it when you see it..."

Now Chan was even more curious. He repeated Wong's words in his mind. "You'll know it when you see it"? Will he really go and build the hotel? Wong was so suspicious that Chan felt like he had to follow him. But Wong turned around and saw him!

"The monk who ruined my plans!" Wong growled.

"I'm doing this for many people in the world!" Chan shot back. "You stubborn, selfish Wong, just because you don't trust in Buddhism doesn't mean you can demolish this antique!"

"I do what I want," Wong said stubbornly. "It's none of your business!"

Chan went away, thinking of a plan to convince Wong. But it had to wait until the next day.

“Two million dollars!” Chan was rudely awakened by the sound of Wong. “I’ll give you two million dollars to build that resort,” Wong was bargaining with a man again.

Just then, someone tapped Chan’s back. He turned around to see his monk friend, Chau Ting.

“I’ve came to help you,” he said. “We must stop Wong as we can never let the Mogao Grottoes be gone.”

Chan was relived. At last, he would have an ally to help him against Wong!

After some time, Chan and Chau had agreed on a plan. They went back to the caves to find Wong.

When they got there, they saw Wong making a resort map. Uh oh, they have to act soon!

“Minks,” Wong spat as he saw them.

“Hi Wong!” Chan greeted him. “How are you?”

“Don’t bother me,” Wong grunted. “Get out.”

“Whoa, we just wanted to take you see a movie,” Chau cut in. “We want to apologize for our behavior. I like a holiday resort too!”

“Yup!” Chan said, playing along.

After some time of persuading, Wong bought some popcorn and gave in.

“The movie you show me has to be good,” Wong grumbled. Otherwise... beware!

“OK,” Chau said then winked at Chan. The first part of the plan is a success!

The movie was about Buddhism. It interviewed most of the people who trusted in Buddhism and how important the Mogao Grottoes were to them. “The caves are truly a wonderful antique, a tunnel to the past. I’ll kill myself if the caves are broken or demolished,” one man even said.

Wong finally gave in. He knew how his action were selfish. Without a word, he left the caves and never went there again.

After a big “Thank you!” to Chau, Chan went back to his master. His master was so happy that he gave Chan a holiday. Chan went back to the Mogao Grottoes, hoping to uncover more secrets about it.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Kong, Chi Ting – 11

The Mogao Grottoes Caves in Dunhuang is both solemn and well-known to have amazing historical value. Far back to one and half millennia ago away, there was a monk called Yuezun who had a vision of a thousand radiant Buddhas on the cliff face, which inspired him to begin excavating the caves. Later, with the development of Buddhist activities, the number of caves increased day by day, and the cave making was booming and lasted for more than one-thousand years. The monks back then created many rare and precious artworks, and even the world's earliest printed dated book was discovered there too!

In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, because of historical changes, the Mogao Caves were gradually forgotten and left untouched and the entrances were choked by sand from the Gobi Desert. Finally, in the 1890s a Daoist monk called Wang Yuanlu had settled down there for a few years. He was cleaning the Mogao Grottoes when he found many ancient books and art works. The news spread around the world and attracted many explorers to come and bring sculptures from their own country. The Mogao Caves have been popular since then and are considered to be priceless as the artworks are uncommon nowadays. The Mogao Grottoes are highly respected from historians since they hold a rich collection of manuscripts, documents, and many more things.

One day I read a story about Yuezun's life living in the Mogao Grottoes. He was drawing artworks with other monks peacefully when suddenly some thieves entered. It was the worst nightmare of Yuezun! He and the other monks started chanting to protect the caves and it worked! The atmosphere scared away the thief just like magic.

Everyone loves the Mogao Grottoes, but do you know anything about what it has gone through? When Yuanlu looked after the caves, he was careless and didn't know some of the explorers were sneaky and stole up to 13,000 pieces of the artworks and documents. That's why the Mogao Caves were shut down unfortunately since Yuanlu didn't feel trustworthy anymore.

As I have mentioned many times before, I love the artworks a lot. Are you curious about which painting I like the most? It is the Mural of Avolokitesvara. This is the definition of simple yet elegant. It is my dream to create such an outstanding piece of art, it stands out to me the most among the others.

Have you ever been to the Mogao Grottoes? I have been there when I was little. The experience was unforgettable and fascinating. My favorite cave is the Library Cave (Cave 17). There are many ancient manuscripts, silk banners and paintings. I was amazed by the creativity of the artists. The most remarkable artwork for me was the Tribute Horse and Camel painting. It is a sketch of two grooms leading a horse and camel along the Silk Road. This painting tells us about the transports in the ancient time which is very captivating.

There is a connection of the Mogao Grottoes and the Silk Road. Many people who tried to go all the way from east to west had stopped in Dunhuang which also became a valued gateway to the west and the centre place for the Silk Road. In Dunhuang, people traded silk which is used for making clothes for royalty. Also, people there before exchanged different rare materials such as china, animal fur and food. Dunhuang became very well-known and crowded for trading and soon the Mogao Grottoes attracted many people to believe in Buddhism. In a twinkling of an eye, the number of the monks rose quickly. The caves' numbers leapt up day by day and there were more and more fantastic artworks.

An extraordinary example of a monk is Xuanzang. He and another monk, Faxian, passed through the Silk Road to learn more knowledge about Buddhism. In Cave 17, there is a painting called Travelling Monk. It is a picture of a monk with some scrolls on his back. Beside him, there is a fierce tiger and a Buddha sitting on a cloud. Many believe the monk is Xuanzang and he was about to give a speech about Buddhism in public which is his experience in different temples around the world.

Growing up in a family that believes in Buddhism, I've been told about many tales about many wonderful temples, Buddhist monks and of course the Mogao Grottoes. In Hong Kong, I've visited countless of temples like Pak Tai Temple and Wong Tai Sin Temple, but the trip to the Mogao Grottoes was still the best and most memorable for me. Inside the place with the world's largest collection of Buddhist art, which is really shocking to me since I love to learn more about Buddhism. When I visited the Mogao Grottoes, I felt like I was travelling in a time machine, I was

like being back in ancient times with the other monks, facing the problem they had before, it was like a dream come true for me! The most exciting part is that you can look at the lovely paintings and sculptures very closely unlike seeing it online, it is a whole different world to me! You can see the texture of the artworks and the amazing techniques they use. On the other hand, if you are not interested in artworks, the cinema is always welcome for you. At the cinema, you can watch films about famous monks. My favourite one is about Faxian, he brought so many pride for the religion by translating Sanskrit texts for both Indians and Chinese which helped them to learn more about different cultures back then.

After all of my many tales and facts about the Mogao Grottoes, I hope that my writing can make more people to boost their interest and knowledge about the Mogao Grottoes as it is a treasure in China and should be valued forever.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Lai, Ka Lam – 11

I remember in one of the school vacations my parents and I joined a tour of the Silk Road. Firstly, we got a flight to Xi'an China, as Xi'an is situated in the eastern end of the Silk Road. When we arrived at Xi'an, our journey started. After visiting Xi'an city, we went to the famous museum of Emperor Qinshihuang's Tomb figures of soldiers and horses. After that, we followed the route the Silk Road to different places for sightseeing. When we arrived at Dunhuang, the tour guide brought us to the well-known Chinese Buddhist grottoes ---- The Mogao Caves.

The tour guide told us that more than a thousand years ago, a monk had a vision of a thousand Buddhas bathes in golden light, inspiring him to build a cave at the oasis in the desert of Dunhuang. From that time onwards, the site gradually grew, the monks built the caves and painted the Buddha pictures on the walls. To pass the Buddha's message, these caves were elaborately painted and serving as aids to meditation. A large number of the caves and two large statues of Buddhas were constructed with funds from different donors. During the Tang Dynasty, Dunhuang became the main hub of commerce of the Silk Road and a major religious centre. As time went by the Silk Road changes into another route and the Mogao Caves were gradually abandoned.

The tour guide showed us the way to Mogao Caves. A nine-story temple first came to our sight. Inside was a giant Buddha Statue. "Oh! How could the people build such big and tall brought is to see some of them. In those caves, I could see different pictures painted all over the walls and ceilings. The paint was made from different plants. Some paintings even used gold for the decorations. Furthermore, the sculptures were also brightly painted. All these features represented the art of Dunhuang coming from different periods, cultures and nations. Because Mogao Grottoes was on the path way of the Silk Road, the style of the paintings and sculptures were influenced by different cultures and places, for example, Central Asia, India, even a part of Europe. The tour guide also mentioned about the Dunhuang Flying Apsaras (Feitian). Those made me think of the angels of western religion. "Would the Feitian and the angels were the same but with different presentation and appearance?" I murmured.

Lastly, we went to the Library Cave. This cave was accidentally discovered by a monk called Wang Yuanlu. Unfortunately, shortly after the discovery, many explorers and archaeologists from the west, Japan and Russia rushed in for exploration, so many of the ancient manuscripts, silk banners and paintings were taken away and distributed all over the world. At the same time the wall paintings were also damaged by the explorers. It made me feel sorry about what happened at that moment.

After that, we went back to hotel. My brain was fully occupied by the images of Mogao Grottoes. I had a lot of questions about Mogao Grottoes: How could the paintings and sculptures keep for so many years? What were the meanings or messages that the murals wanted to pass? Will there still be some caves that have not yet been discovered? Was the Library Cave not the only cave? According to the history, there were so many people who donated money and gold. Will there be any "Treasure Caves" that haven't been found yet? So I decided to find out the answers. I started to search from the Internet and planned to go to the museum the next day.

From the Internet, I found that one of the murals told us to sacrifice ourselves and become a selfless person who could help most of the creatures in the world. Some of murals told us about the Buddha, Heaven and the Earth. The others murals mentioned the living style and the utensils in different dynasties. I could also find different musical instruments in the paintings. The most impressive was that mural that showed the twelve Zodiac Signs and the ancient Chinese astronomy. The more information I found from the Internet, the more I was curious and wanted to know further. At night, all my dreams were full of murals of Mogao Caves Visitor Centre Museum. When I saw the museum "Wow! Are we on another planet? It looks like Mars." I cried out. The outlook of the museum was the great sand dunes looked like covering a UFO. We watched two digital presentations in a domed theater. The virtual images brought me back to the caves again, not just the experience being in the caves but also a closer look to the paintings.

Under the digital images, we can pass through so many caves, I could learn much more the stories and styles of the murals and know them according to the time-line. After the breathless virtual presentations, I suddenly realized that I had already found the "Treasure Caves". "The Mogao Grottoes is the treasures. Oh! I find it! I really find it!" I shouted excitedly. At that time, people around me smiled at my excitement.

I thought that those treasures should be known by the world. We should let the people come and see the most valuable cultural heritage. However the change of climate, the large numbers of the tourists, the light and air pollutions could damage the murals. So they used the virtual reality technology to replicate the experience of being in the caves. Those techniques can be shared and shown the murals of Mogao Grottoes around the world.

I was so glad that I had a journey to the Mogao Grottoes. And I finally got the “treasures”. I would recommend people to go and visit Mogao Grottoes to discover their “treasures”.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Leung, Lai Yin – 11

More than one and half millennia ago, there was a monk that lived at an oasis in the middle of the laziest monk in the group. He never prayed or helped find water. His master was dissatisfied by his actions, so he decided to order the lazy monk to go to the Silk Road as a punishment. Well of course, the monk disagreed. But his master told him that if he refused to go on the journey, he would be trapped in a dungeon forever. The monk had no choice and decided to go to the Silk Road.

He packed his backpack with some supplies and went on the Silk Road disappointedly. He walked and walked for days until there was a serious sandstorm. The monk wasn't hurt but he saw a tunnel appear in the desert. He was shocked and he didn't believe his very own eyes. However, he still went in the tunnel. The sandstorm stopped as he went in the tunnel. He wasn't dreaming, it was really a tunnel. He saw a blinding light at the end of the tunnel. He walked there and found something amazing—a cave. He found a pickaxe on the floor with a note on it.

The monk read it which says, 'Grab the pickaxe. It will be useful.' The monk grabbed it. 'Bang!' The tunnel that he went in was blocked by heavy stones. The monk tried using the pickaxe to break through them, but it was useless as they were too hard and thick. The monk was sitting in the cave, helpless. He said to himself after a while, 'I need to do something.' Suddenly, he heard a strange voice echoing in the cave, 'It is useful.' The monk was puzzled, 'Who are you? What is useful?' Then, he remembered the note. The pickaxe is useful! He eventually tried digging another way around. So after hours of digging, he found a big place with water surrounding it. The most shocking thing is that there was a Buddha in the centre. The monk couldn't believe his own eyes. He said, 'I've got to tell this to the master.' Then, he remembered the track and went back to the oasis, but he fell in a deep, dark hole. He was lost! He tried to call for help but no one heard him as he was in the middle of the desert. He was trapped for days with very little water and very little food. He was even attacked by wolves for several days. His skin was covered with scars and wounds. 'I can dig my way out with my pickaxe!' However, he unfortunately lost his pickaxe. He had no hope, but sitting in hole, he saw some skeletons next to him. He said, 'If there are skeletons, that means that some other people fell in here, helpless.' Just at that moment, a long, thick rope fell in the hole. The monk looked up, confused. It was his friends! He climbed up the rope and thanked them, 'Thank you, but how do you know I'm here?' 'Oh, we were just exploring the desert and saw you in a cave.' One of his friends said. 'And by the way, how is your adventure?' the monk's friends asked. He replied, 'It is a long story so I'll just say the most important things. I saw a Buddha in the middle of a shining lake.' The other monks were surprised. On the way back to the oasis, the monk told his friends about what happened. He thought, 'Actually, I don't think this is a punishment after all.'

They went back to the oasis. The monk told everyone his journey. He said, 'the Buddha is in a cave. Let's dig it up together!' 'The other monks thought for a second and eventually agreed. The monk led them to the location of the Buddha. They monk led them to the location of the Buddha. They made their shovels and dug. After days of digging, some of them decided to give up. The lazy monk seemed to be still digging. After some time, everyone gave up except for the lazy monk. Finally, the monk dug the Buddha up. However, it was too heavy that the monk can't get it. In a sudden, the Buddha floated to the air and said, 'I like your perseverance. You did a great job.' The monk was rewarded a chest full of gold. The monk was happy, of course. However, he never gave up on his 'dream'. He explored around the world. Found precious jewelry, paintings and some more statues.

Until now, the things that the monk found are either in the museum or a famous tourist destination.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Lo, Tsun Lung – 10

China is one of the most mysterious countries in the world, especially the Mogao Grottoes and Terracotta Warriors. There are many things that I want to know such as Buddhism, the culture of the ancient cities, etc. I hope that I will have an adventurous journey at Mogao Grottoes with my friend.

One day, I went to Disneyland with my best friends Raynald and Raydon for the celebration of my birthday. We played on the roller coaster at the “Space Mountain”. It was very dark inside the tunnel. Many children were accelerating very rapidly. Suddenly, our cart flew out from the original track and entered into the other “bright tunnel”. Raydon shuddered and asked us, “What is happening and where are we going?” Then Raynald squinted at me and two drops of tears formed in his eyes. My lips were trembling and my mind was racing at that moment too.

We seemed to fly back to the past and saw a lot of pictures on the wall of the tunnel about ancient cities and people. We passed by many countries and saw Mogao Grottoes. I shouted, “Stop, it’s my beloved place!” Raynald and Raydon said, “That’s good, let’s go down there.” At once the cart stopped and left the “bright tunnel”. We were thrown out from the cart and fell to the ground.

Raynald was surprised and shouted, “We are staying in Mogao Grottoes now, that’s amazing.” Then we walked around. We saw a cave over there. Then Raydon was shivering and pointed to the cave and said that a big Buddha statue was walking towards us from the cave. The Buddha asked, “Little boys, where do you want to go?” I answered, “Mogao Grottoes is our dream place. We want to visit here and know more about the history of Mogao.” The Buddha statue said, “Then come with me because I have stayed here for a very long time, so I must be the best tourist guide for you.” We followed him and went into the caves. That was a wonderful place. We could see those dancers were dancing in the air. When Raynald and I looked at the wall pictures closely, it was so funny that Raydon tried to imitate the dancers’ movement with his jacket. Suddenly, they flew out from the pictures and became real creatures too. We ran wildly scared and screamed loudly but those dancers were chasing us. The Buddha statue shouted, “Don’t worry!” But we were so afraid to control ourselves, we kept on running because it was terrible to be chased by so many flying dancers. “Step on it!” I shouted. “It’s a fuse!” In front of us was an open trap door. Then we were falling in a dark space. Our body hurt. We hit the ground and felt agonizing pain. Raynald yelled, “Who can save us?”

It was dark and cold there and we couldn’t walk well because we were injured. We were crying and shouted, “Buddha statue, please help us! We need your help!” It didn’t come even though we had waited for an hour. Raydon hugged Raynald and said, “I am so hungry and cold.” We looked for the exit but in vain. We sat down to take a rest. Then, we saw a mysterious book which was in the crystal box that was about the history of famous persons in the world. It included many beautiful paintings and interesting stories, like Mona Lisa, Van Gogh, Kongzi, Emperor Qin Shihuang, Journey to the West, etc. When we read the final page, Raynald was surprised and read it out, “If you call them out just to say the magic words together with their names. Raydon whispered, “Mona Lisa, please come out.” I yelled, “No, she is not strong enough to save us, she is only an elegant woman in the famous painting.” At the same time, she appeared in front of us instantly. Raynald said, “Oh my God, we need a troop of soldiers instead.” Suddenly we heard noises of horse’s footsteps coming down there gradually. I screamed and pointed at our left side, “It’s great! They are Terracotta Warriors. They are marching towards us.” One of the soldiers lifted us and Mona Lisa up to the horses. The dancers were chasing us closing. Fortunately, the Buddha statue appeared and helped us to fight all of them.

While they were fighting, Mona Lisa led us and the troop of soldiers left the cave. Raydon shouted, “What’s going on?” I heard the Buddha statue said, “Please help me, I can’t beat them.” I suggested, “I call for an army general to help us, his name is Patton who is a famous general, please come out and lead us to fight out the dancers.” Raynald was surprised, “Woo...he is coming over there.” Mona Lisa led us to hide behind the big stone. The Buddha statue was injured and the dancers were flying to our side. General Patton’s army was ready! Make ready! We must beat out all of them.” Then his army faces the dancers, and the army shouted, “Go, Go, Go, we fight now.” Suddenly, all the dancers knelt and pleaded for forgiving them. The Buddha statue started to walk towards the dancers curiously and asked, “What is your meaning?” They answered “Why are the soldiers and you fighting at us?” We are no malice to

you.” Raydon, Raynald, and I tried to approach them. They pointed to Raydon and said, “We saw you were dancing in front of us, but you danced wrong so that we just wanted to teach you.” We looked at each other and laughed out loudly. Then, we danced with each other happily, it’s a wonderful time.

When we were engaged, the mystery book dropped on the floor and opened, all the characters were dissolved into the book. I said unwillingly, “It’s time to back home.” We finally took the roller coaster and back to Disneyland.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Tsai, Man Hei – 11

‘Ding Dong!’

The school bell rang and I walked home with a heavy heart. This was the second time I failed my history tests. I must be scolded tonight.

After I took a bath, I was dazed in my bed. Suddenly someone knocked on the door.

‘Can I come in?’ said the boy.

‘Who are you?’ I asked.

‘I am Dorabobo, an AI-robot from the future. I know that you are worrying about your tests result. I can help you.’ I was wondering was it like the famous cartoon character called Doraemon. I jumped out of bed and opened the door immediately.

‘Hi! Aiden. Nice to meet you.’ Said Dorabobo.

‘Hi! Dorabobo. I hate History very much. Today the teacher taught us about the Mogao Grottoes. So boring!’

‘Aiden. Actually the history of Mogao Grottoes is full of mysteries and interests. Let us go and find the hidden secrets there.’

‘How?’ I asked.

Dorabobo took out a door from his backpack. ‘It’s an anywhere door, when you think about that place in your heart, you can reach that place after opening the door.’

Dorabobo opened the door and called me to go inside. We were not in our house!

‘Where are we?’ I asked.

‘We are at the Mogao Cave 275. This Cave was constructed during the Northern Liang regime in the end of the Sixteen Kingdoms period. It is one of the earliest extant caves at Mogao. It belongs to the category of Hall Caves.’

Then we saw a statue. It was very big, Dorabobo told me that it was 3.4 meters high, sits on a Leo seat with crossed feet, and casts a wish seal with his left hand to express the satisfaction of sentient beings’ wishes. The triangular backrest behind the Bodhisattva was shaped like a brocade with the technique of floating sculpture, which is also seen in the caves in Xinjiang and Afghanistan. This kind of cross-legged Bodhisattva is generally considered to be a statue style from Western Regions.

Dorabobo took out a magic wand and pointed to the statue. The statue started moving! Dorabobo explained that anything pointed by the magic wand will become alive. It was interesting!

We walked for a while, and saw a mural. It was painted on the north wall.

Then I asked Dorabobo, ‘How about this?’

Dorabobo used the magic camera to take a photo of the mural. The camera was talking! It said the name of this mural was Jataka and the idea behind this mural was telling the countless stories of Sakyamunis good deeds in his previous life. All stories of this life depicted on the north wall are designed to show the protagonist’s comfortable attitude in adversity and emphasize his self-sacrifice and perseverance to pain.

After admiring this mural, we went to the south wall and we saw a statue which was in the que – shaped niche and sitting with crossed feet. Dorabobo told me that Que – shaped niches are one of the forms of Buddhist niches. Above the front of this niche is the roof, and there is a high and low fault on each side. Que refers to palace gates, palaces, and residences of emperors, symbolizing the supreme imperial power. The supreme imperial power.

The combination of the Han Que and the Buddhist niches to show the Tusita Temple where Maitreya Bodhisattva lives is the first in this cave.

‘Oh! The architectural features of this statue are really special!’ I said.

‘Of course! The mural and the statue are all very meaningful. They all have a long – term story behind it. Let’s continue to visit another mural.’

Then we went to the north wall and we saw another mural, it’s called ‘King Sibi Jataka’

‘You said there’s a long –term story behind each mural and statue, what is the story behind this mural?’ I asked Doraboba.

‘Let me use the magic wand to help us!’ Dorabobo answered.

After Dorabobo use the magic wand pointed to the mural, the people in the mural became alive!

‘What is the story behind you?’ I asked the mural.

The mural answered, ‘My name is King Sibi Jataka. The story behind this mural is King Sibi was the ruler of the Sibi Kingdom in ancient India. As a devout Buddhist, he pledged to save all sentient beings from suffering. In order to test him, Indra and his minister Visvakarman transformed themselves into a hawk and a dove. The chased after the dove trying to eat it. The dove sought refuge in King Sibi. However, the hawk begged the king to let him eat the dove otherwise he would die of starvation. In order to save the dove as well as the hawk, King Sibi decided to offer his own flesh to feed the hawk. The hawk accepted the offer with the condition that the amount of flesh he received from the king be equal to that of the dove. King Sibi promised and let a butcher cut out his flesh, which was placed on one side of the scale while the dove was placed on the other side. However, after cutting out nearly all his flesh, the scale still showed that the dove was heavier. Then King Sibi sat on the scale to indicate that he was offering his entire self. Moved by King Sibi’s virtuous deed, Indra finally restored his flesh.

‘Oh! It was an interesting story!’ I said.

‘Yes but it’s time to go home now.’ Said Dorabobo.

‘Oh...Can we come here again?’ I asked.

‘Yes! Let’s say goodbye to all statue and mural first!’ Dorabobo said.

When we went through the ‘anywhere door’ again. My room appeared behind the door again. Dorabobo said, ‘Aiden, I have already finished my mission, I need to go back to the future.

‘Goodbye!’ Dorabobo smiled and disappeared.

Next week, it was the history exam again. I was very excited since the exam was all about Mogao Grottoes in cave 275. I like history now.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Tsai, Tsz Ching – 10

A long time ago, there was a monk named Yuezun. He grew up in a poor family and made a living by growing fruits. When he was five years old, his parents died. Since then, he became an orphan, begging everywhere. One day, it was raining heavily outside and the sky was freezing cold. Yuezun hid in temple to escape the cold. After he entered the temple, he felt an incomparable strength in his body. He didn't feel hungry or cold anymore. He thought it was the Buddha who cared for him, so he decided to become a monk.

There was very little food in the temple, but Yuezun was extremely tenacious. He "eats what people don't eat, and lives doing what people don't do." He practiced in this difficult situation. One year later, in order to be able to further search for a place for meditation, Yuezun decided to leave the temple alone with his simple clothes and hike to the west to seek Dharma. He walked to an oasis on which there was a cave. Yuezun was there. He decided to use this cave as a safe place and began to sit in meditation and recite the Buddha. He didn't know, this cave was originally the residence of tigers. When the tiger came back from hunting and saw a monk in the cave, he could not help but let out a low growl threat. The monk was so scared that he fainted. At this time, the place in the distance was shining. At first glance, it turned out to be a Buddha statue. After Yuezun saw the Buddha statue, his body was full of power again.

He plucked up the courage to shout at the tiger 'Amitabha Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, this is not your activity place! You should go to your own place. Please leave here immediately!' After the tiger heard that, it turned its head and left. Yuezun believed that this was all the power of the Buddha, so he determined to stay there and promoted Buddhism, and that place was the famous Mogao Grottoes later on.

After discovering a Buddha statue, Yuezun wiped the Buddha statues one by one with a cloth every day, and all the Buddha statues were bathed in golden light. It might be that the Buddha had mercy on Yuezun who was a diligent young man. It seems that Yuezun had the help of the gods overnight. Many Buddhist stories appeared in his mind. Yuezun then used words and pictures to carve these stories on the rock wall of the cave on by one. Above, thanks to Yuezun's efforts, the entire stone wall of the cave was filled with statues and murals of the Buddha, and stories of all sizes were recorded on the wall, which was more like a museum that promoted Buddhism.

Yuezun had a strong belief: to promote the Dharma. It was a pity that even though he worked hard to sculpt the cave every day, no one had ever passed through there, not even a person who had entered the cave, so how could he spread the Dharma to the world? So he decided to build more and build more and bigger caves, hoping to let more people know the Buddha.

Yuezun wasn't afraid of hard work. Every day he transported soil from the mountain to build caves. Unfortunately, the people who lived there believed in their religion. They couldn't allow Yuezun to go to build temples. They secretly destroyed the caves that Yuezun built. The things were built by Yuezun would be razed to the ground as soon as possible. Yuezun was very discouraged.

Once, the villagers even asked officials to remove the cave where Yuezun was hiding. They also planned to remove a statue of Buddha. When Yuezun saw a large number of officials coming, he was unable to resist. When the situation was critical, it was magical. What happened: more than a dozen armies wanted to work together to remove the Buddha statue. No matter how hard they moved, they wanted to send more armies to move the Buddha statue. They couldn't move forward. Seeing that the armies who entered the cave hadn't come out too late, the leader of the army decided to bring more armies into the cave for fear that they would have danger. Soon, hundreds of armies gathered in the cave, and they all found that a statue of Buddha would glow brightly. They were so frightened.

At the time, an army officer suggested that since the Buddha couldn't be moved, it would be better to burn the entire cave with fire. They all thought that was a good idea, so they lit a fire and set fire around the cave, but no matter how the fire burned, it was useless. Therefore, the Buddha or even the entire cave, had no trace of being burned by fire, frightening all the armies to flee the cave desperately.

That incident quickly spread throughout the country, and soon, the emperor approved Buddhism to spread freely in the country.

Ten years later, Yuezun built more caves in Mogao Grottoes. He divided Mogao Grottoes into the north and south areas. The north area is mainly composed of monk's rooms and meditation rooms, used by past practitioners to meditate, cultivate, eat and live. The southern area retains caves, murals and colored sculptures. Yuezun sat on the ground and meditated and passed away with a smile.

This Mogao Grottoes has become a familiar place for the world. It is a collection of paintings, sculptures, architecture and East and West. An artistic treasure house of culture.

Tales from Mogao Grottoes

Farm Road Government Primary School, Tsai, Tsz Yau – 11

More than one and half millennia ago, there was a monk named Yuezun who wanted to practice Buddhism in Gansu. Yuezun was bald and the clothes that he wore favoured the right shoulder. As Yuezun walked to an oasis, he found that there were as thousand golden Buddha statues there. He thought that was the Buddha's manifestation and talked to him, hoping that he would stay and do something for Buddhism, so he decided to stay there and built the cave, hoping that people could use this place to concentrate on Buddhism.

Yuezun was not afraid of hardships and built caves day and night, so the caves were quickly completed. The Buddha saw Yuezun did a good thing, so he used his divine power to help him dig more caves, and this beautiful places is named as Mogao Grottoes. The Buddha not only helped Yuezun build the Mogao Grottoes, but he also gave Yuezun a maid and guards, hoping to help him transform Mogao Grottoes and promote Buddhism. It was a pity that Yuezun couldn't resist the glory and wealth in front of him. He only played every day, completely forgot the reason why he came to the oasis, and even forgot to build a Buddhist temple in Mogao Grottoes so that more people could worship Buddha. The Buddha was very disappointed, and decided to take back all the things Yuezun had, and then turned the magnificent Mogao Grottoes back into a dilapidated, plain cave. Yuezun lost everything suddenly. He had only a pair of tattered straw sandals, a tattered straw robe, and a Buddhist scripture in his hand. Yuezun did not reflect on his own fault at all, but instead blamed the Buddha for being cruel. He made a lot of noise in the cave and even threw the Buddhist scriptures in his hands far away. The Buddha saw that Yuezun was blinded by the material nature, and he shed tears in sadness. In an instant, the shy changed from bright to dark, a strong wind blew in the sky, and there was a squally heavy rain. And this violent storm lasted for a full week, and Mogao Grottoes were washed away because of the tprrential rain, and everything changed back to the appearance before the arrival of the moon. Yuezun did not know where to go, and the straw shoes on his body were also washed away by the water. Yuezun walked back barefoot to the Buddhist temple where he lived before.

Yuezun's deeds quickly spread to the ears of all the monks in the temple. Everyone felt ashamed and angry at Yuezun's greed and vanity. When everyone saw Yuezun arrived at the Buddhist temple, everyone threw eggs and rubbish at him, and some even slobbered at Yuezun. Yuezun originally thought that he world stay in the monastery for the second half of his life and continue to be an ordinary monk. He never thought that he would be treated like that by other monks. After he arrived, his body was all dirty, he was shocked and scared somehow. But also because of that encounter, Yuezun began to deeply reflect on what he had done. Suddenly a picture appeared in this mind that seemed to be replayed, as if God approved the world. The wrong things that Yuezun has done in his life were broadcast back completely, and Yuezun felt very regretful for the wrong things he had done.

Yuezun regretted his greed and vanity. He was willing to be punished and decided to stay in Mogao Grottoes for the rest of his life to build more cavs. He changed it sincerely and rebuilt the caves. That time, the Buddha did not give him anymore court ladies and attendants to help him build the cave together, but Yuezun became more diligent because there was no help. He hurried to work day and night without sleep. When he barely fell asleep, he even sculpted exquisite murals and statues in each cave, and copied Buddhist scriptures. He hoped to make up for everything he had done in the past. On the other hand, he hoped that more people could know the Buddha and promote the Pharma. Yuezun suffered a lot during the construction process and was often injured, but he did not give up. He went to the mountains and the sea to find wood and building materials, and designed more beautiful and magnificent caves for the Mogao Grottoes.

The Buddha felt that Yuezun could correct his mistakes, so he returned what he had lost before, hoping to make his mission smoother and Mogao Caves more beautiful. Yuezun was very happy and quickly thanked the Buddha. Because he learned his lesson, he was able to endure the temptation before him that time. In addition, he also promised the Buddha to build more beautiful caves for him and to promote the Pharma everywhere. Finally, he made that place the largest and most abundant Buddhist art site in the world.

This story gave me a deep reflection. We are like Yuezun. We have a goal at first, knowing that we should study hard to gain good achievements in the future. But after a while, we will not able to stand the temptation from outside, completely forgetting that our most important task now is concentrate on study. At last, we waste time every

day. Until we see our exam results are not satisfactory and our parents are disappointed. We realize that we have done something wrong. But there are many things in the world don't have a second chance. For example, if you don't be filial to your parents and always hurt their hearts, when you grow up and want to repay them for your time, maybe your parents are old and you don't even have a chance to repay them. Therefore, we should always remind ourselves, do what we should do, stick to our beliefs, and don't be tempted to do improper things.

The Legend of the Mogao Caves

French International School, Hong Kong, Miller, Alexander – 9

A.D.460

The sun lashed Octavius' skin until his blood boiled, but he was determined to keep walking. Right now it was more like hobbling. There were no other travellers on the Silk Road and Octavius' sandals were broken and ripped to shreds. He was an undefeatable overlord Roman soldier but he was left behind by the General because they had an argument. He was still a Roman soldier inside but outside he looked ragged and tired.

Now Octavius was breathing dust, and carrying a precious bag.” When I get back to Rome, I will sell the silk and spices, and buy a farm,” he said to himself. Octavius' mouth was hot like an oven and he had a painful blister. The few precious drops of water from his canteen cooled his lips. He only dared drink a few drops at a time. Suddenly, Octavius heard rumbling under his feet. It grew louder and louder. He saw the sand like a devil rising from the ground and rolling towards him. The sand devil rose up suffocating the sky. Octavius ran blindly as the raging sandstorm licked his feet, and then engulfed him.

He ran towards the Mogao caves and squeezed into a crack. The caves cooled his body in the tranquil darkness. Octavius had heard about the Mogao caves but now people took a new route so he did not meet anyone. He heard the sound of crackling echo in the caves that had many chambers. He followed the sound to an inner cave when he saw a campfire.

Octavius saw a young man with black hair, kind almond shaped eyes, and wearing fine silk clothes. “I am Chang. I am travelling back to my village. I did not see a living soul for days,” said the young man standing next to the fire. “I am Octavius. I am glad to meet you,” replied Octavius.

“Where are you going?” asked Chang.

“ Home near Rome. I have been lost many times because I do not know the land. I might never get home,” sighed Octavius. Tears filled his blue eyes. Chang said, “Life is about discovery. A journey may be bad but it might take us somewhere good.” Octavius scratched his head and looked confused.

“I don't usually take this route. But I am glad I did. I met you. We can be friends,” said Chang. That warmed Octavius' heart. He had not had a friend for a long time. The fire crackled and lit up the cave walls to reveal its secret. “These are beautiful drawings of the Chinese paddlefish with their long bodies and extended paddlefish snouts. They are as ancient as time,” said Chang. He admired them and took in every detail.

“Have you ever seen one ?” asked Octavius.

“ I can only hope,” laughed Chang. “ But I know the Emperor has seen them.”

“This is the desert. We won't see any fish here,” said Octavius. “ There are no plants and there is no water.” Chang shared his water with Octavius and he was so happy.

Octavius was tired and sat down on a rock. Then he saw something in the corner of the cave. He picked it up and it was covered in black misty dust. He used a cloth to wipe away layers and layers of black to reveal a mirror

with paddle fish carvings on the border. He held up the mirror to his leathered face and curly blonde hair. “ I cannot see my reflection in this mirror,” said Octavius. He passed the mirror to Chang but there was no reflection.

“ It looks useless,” said Chang. He tossed it into the fire but then it bounced out by itself. The cave suddenly lit up magically revealing a map of tunnels on the cave ceiling.

Chang and Octavius followed the map in their memory deep into the caves, twisting and turning in tunnels until they entered the deepest cavern. A magnificent sight greeted them. They saw an enormous crystal clear lake with sparkling water. Octavius and Chang gulped down the sweet refreshing water. Suddenly, something swooshed between their feet. They looked down into the water and couldn't believe their eyes. “ Paddlefish! They are real!” shouted Chang. Octavius said, “The sandstorm was bad but I discovered that there is a secret lake hidden in the desert with paddlefish.”

Chang smiled and said, “ Journeys must be discovered, good and bad. “ They swam with the paddlefish and they both agreed to take one paddlefish each. “ I will help you return home,” said Chang. “ It is always good to have a friend on a journey. I can't go with you all the way but you will know I will always support you.” Octavius hugged his new friend, “ Journeys must be discovered, good and bad.”

2022

The tourists flooded into the Mogao caves admiring all the drawings on the walls. Suddenly, there was shouting. “ Amy ! Amy ! Where are you ? “ shouted a woman. She ran deeper and deeper into the caves until she saw a little girl. “ I told you not to wander off by yourself,” cried the woman. “ I went exploring. I heard the fish calling ,” said Amy.

“ Fish? Oh, those are just cave drawings. They are paddlefish and they are extinct,” said the woman. The girl held something in her hand. “Mummy, I found a magic mirror . Look, I can see fish inside.”

A Man and an Emerald

Fukien Secondary School Affiliated School, Cheung, Wing Yin – 10

“Cough! Cough!” shouted Tang San, a slave whose job was to carve Buddha statues in Mogao Caves. Every time he slowed down and rested without permission, his supervisor would whip him. “Whoosh!” Tang San bit his lips. He secretly muttered revenge in his mouth. As he was about to leave Cave 53 for the next cave, he saw an emerald stone underneath the ruins. He looked round, made sure nobody was looking, and hid the stone in his pocket.

After a long day of work, he sat on his bunk bed, which he shared with another slave worker. While everyone was sleeping, he carefully took the emerald out of his pocket. Strangely, the emerald was shining with bright light. He tried to cover the light with his shirt, but the light was simply brilliantly bright. Eventually, it raised the guard’s suspicion. He thought Tang San had stolen from the cave, so he seized his arm and took him to a dark torture chamber specially used for punishing slaves who misbehaved. He made Tang San take off his clothes, and whipped him hard. He also had to stay in a dark cave for one night. There he saw someone being tortured because he hadn’t worn his clothes properly. He shook with anger, or maybe it was because of the unbearable humiliation. He didn’t say a word for he knew it would only bring him trouble. The next morning, he went out from the cave. He looked down and saw his blood-filled wounds glisten in the sun. Luckily, one of the guards was merciful to let him rest for a few hours. As he sat down, he felt something hard in his pocket – the emerald. After a few hours, he continued the gruesome work.

On the second night, he attempted to throw away the emerald. However, every time he threw the emerald, the emerald would come back in some way. Tang San thought for a while and came up with a conclusion that it might be useful for an escape.

At sunrise, all of the slaves went back to work. At Cave 54, Tang San nearly finished the carving. Unfortunately, he accidentally broke one of the statue’s ears. Just when he was about to be pulled to the punishment cave, the emerald appeared. The emerald zoomed around, miraculously ‘punching’ the guards in the face. The other slaves realised that this was their only chance for an escape. Therefore, they rushed in the confusion and aided the emerald to an escape route. In 10 minutes, the victory was won by the slaves. The slaves stole the guards’ weapons. The moment the guards saw the slaves holding their weapons, they fainted. The slaves seized this opportunity to escape from this ‘hell’.

When they arrived at the city, they suddenly realized that they had no money! Just when they were about to discuss what to do, the emerald flew out of Tang San’s pocket and stole a handful of coins from a store next to him. They used the coins to buy three apartments. Nevertheless, the three apartments were way too small for a hundred people to share. Therefore, they reached a compromise that half of the people would sleep inside the apartments while half of them would sleep in the streets. The next day, they would switch places. This cycle would repeat until a new apartment was bought.

One bitterly cold and windy night, Tang San woke up. He slept-walked back to the cave that imprisoned him. He did the carving for days without waking. The moment the statue was finished, he woke up. He looked round and said to himself, “Where in the Buddha of the world am I?” To his surprise, the cave rumbled slightly. His whole gang was sick-worried about him. They searched for days and nights. Suddenly, the emerald came out, showing a holographic version of itself, and bellowed, “I am a cursed gem created by the space beings that you humans assume as ‘aliens. To the fact that I am cursed, you will be buried alive beneath this wretched cave.” The holograph vanished without a trace. The cave continued to rumble, burying the group alive. The emerald also lost its cursed power.

One and half of a millennium years later, a group of archaeologists and scientists rediscovered the Mogao Grottoes. They saw a lot of dead bodies exposing in the cave. It took more than a bit of time to unveil the truth, but after the truth was revealed, it changed more than a bit of history.

The Mogao Caves

Fukien Secondary School Affiliated School, Wong, Hoi Ling – 9

“Every Sunday, I stay home and clean the basement floor. One day, while I was mopping, I found a tiny and bright button located on a wooden table my great-grandfather had crafted. I went and picked it up, to see that there was a dusty surface, displaying a carving of monks, mountains, and temples. These carvings on the button reminded me of history. I was never intrigued by any history stories. So I just set the button aside. But once I placed it down, a small but cone shaped cloud suddenly came out from a small compartment of the button that suddenly opened, and started to float right above my head. All of a sudden, the cloud sucked me into a room of darkness. I panicked and flipped around, but something hit me and then I fell unconscious.

When I woke up, I slowly opened my eyes, I saw an enormous purplish-pink creature standing next to me. “Hello, I am Quinky. You summoned me. I guess you would like to explore the Mogao caves.” He asked with curiosity. I was terrified and trying to run away from him. But he caught me and tossed me right onto his back for flying to the Mogao caves. When we arrived, Quinky slowed down and landed to get in line with other monsters that were also carrying little children the same age as me.

“This is the Mogao caves,” Quinky introduced calmly. I observed that there were many caves in here. Quinky brought me into one of those caves and I saw different carvings, paintings, and some antique vases. “The word, Mogao, means “peerless”. These caves were constructed about 1,700 years ago. These caves actually contained the world’s largest collection of Buddhist art!” Quinky exclaimed. After he said that, I noticed that he had taken out a book in which he had sketched some scribbles and begun colouring it.

“Wow! Tell me more!” I exclaimed. It started to realize that history could be interesting!

“Have you heard of the Silk Road?” Quinky questioned.

“No, please tell me more about it,” I responded eagerly.

“The Silk Road was related to the Mogao caves as there were many documents about the Silk Road inside the caves. The Silk Road was a network of trade routes that connected China and the Far East with the Middle East and Europe. Although it has been nearly 600 years since the Silk Road was used for any international trading, the routes have a lasting impact on commerce, culture, and history that still resonate now.” Quinky explained. “Still, some considered the Silk Road had some drawbacks. They believed that Black Plague was spread along it. Bandits and thievery were a serious problem back then as well. Bandits would raid merchants’ caravans and outposts, and often murdered the merchants as well, which made travelling the Silk Road alone very dangerous and risky. It was also difficult for citizens from other countries to buy goods in the past! Mountains, rivers, valley, deserts, and plains were some of the geographic barriers for the travelers, which allowed traders to mark up the price of the goods. The other reason was that the longer the merchandise travel, led the more expensive they became.”

After I heard that, I decided that I was going to the Silk Road. Quinky agreed, and he bought things that were called the Timer Rope and the DO opener. Quinky and I walked through a portal, and we were on the Silk Road!

We were exploring around, when a roaring of horse gallops and men shouting started to come closer. We tried to fight them, who we discovered were thieves, but Quinky was captured and I had to hide. He had dropped the Timer Rope and DO opener, and I could remember his last words: “Timer Rope capture, DO opener shape open slice!” Those were simple words, and I had the chance to escape! But I couldn’t leave Quinky there, so, I used his words to figure it out! Timer Rope would bring the enemies back to the past, while the DO opener will open a portal for us. I was once a winner at swinging around ropes, so I followed the thieves, had a really fierce battle with them, and finally rescued Quinky. We soon drew the shape of the portal with the DO opener and got back to the real world. Quinky thanked me, and soon the end of the day came.

I got on a special bus from Quinky, and there was a little book about the remaining facts of the Caves and the Silk Road, with the pictures (handmade) by Quinky. The present, which was the book, soon encouraged me enough to learn more about history, and become a history teacher to teach students more.” I smiled, as my mind pictured Quinky, and as I, a real history teacher, tell the whole story to my own class.

The Mogao Caves

Fukien Secondary School Affiliated School, Wong, Hoi Yee – 9

Yesterday, I watched videos about the Mogao Caves for my project at home. I heard jingling near my bed. I looked around my bed but saw nothing. I got more and more scared. I tried to ignore the sounds but I couldn't pay attention to the video. Suddenly, a fairy appeared in front of me. I rubbed my eyes but the fairy was still there. My eyes immediately widened.

She said, "Don't be scared. Would you like to go to the Mogao Grottoes? I am the tour guide that you are looking for. My name is Lily. It's located in Dunhuang, Gansu, China, which is not very far from here." I thought for several seconds, "Mogao Grottoes! Here I come! Yay! I just can't say no to a great adventure," I whispered happily to myself,

"Cool, let's go!" I answered Lily.

Lily took out a green cape quickly and asked, "Would you like to become a bird or do you prefer remaining in human form?" Transforming into a bird was always my dream as birds always looked very cute. So, I decided to become a bird. Lily made use of her green cape to wrap me up. In the blink of an eye, my body changed, especially my hands and legs. My hands had turned into a pair of flappy wings and my legs were much shorter. When I looked into the mirror in my bedroom, I could not believe that I was transformed into a blue bird. Then I followed Lily and flew all the way to Dunhuang. At first, I was very happy. My excitement faded as soon as I realized that being a bird was really tiring.

I saw a lot of temples in the Mogao Caves. Lily told me that there were about five hundred temples altogether there. I could not believe it. Then I looked around the area and discovered many caves, where the inside temples were located. I got more and more interested until I could not hold it in anymore and said, "Tell me more! Tell me more!"

Lily was not able to understand me because I tweeted like a bird. Luckily, Lily had an idea of putting on her Birdy Translator to understand what I said. She explained to me, "The Birdy Translator is like a real translator, but for birds. It also pairs up with the Birdy Headband to hear what the bird is saying. When the bright red light flashes on the Birdy Translator, you can point the Translator to the bird you want to listen to. Then, you can hear and understand bird language through the Birdy Headband."

Later, we flew around the Mogao Grottoes and she said, "One of the most famous caves here is called the Library Cave. It was discovered by a man named Wang Yuanlu. It is located at Cave 17 and was originally used as a memorial cave for a local monk, Hong Bian (from a wealthy Wu family) whose death was in Year 862. During his lifetime, Hong Bian. was responsible for the construction of Cave 17, and he decided that the Library Cave would be used as his retreat after his death."

"So who was the first one to discover the Library Cave?" I asked. She explained, "Well, the first one to discover the Library Cave was priest Wang Yuanku. There were around 50,000 books inside the cave. In particular, a really precious book was found. Can you believe it?" I was confused, "What is so special about this book?" I queried curiously.

"It's the world's oldest book!" Lily screamed. Then she shared some information about the paintings and temples inside the major caves in the Mogao Grottoes. It allowed me to learn some unforgettable historical knowledge about this area. Lily also gave me a model of the Mogao Grottoes.

Suddenly, my stomach grumbled. Lily and I laughed. I asked, "Can we go back now? My mom would be very worried if she found me missing. By the way, I'm really starving." She quickly transformed me back into my human body. "Poof!" She took away her green cape, and I returned home to enjoy my lunch. I was wondering, "Was that adventure real?" When I got back to my bedroom, I found the model of the Mogao Grottoes. "It wasn't a dream after all!" I realized with surprise.

Immortality

Fukien Secondary School Affiliated School, Wong, Kin Long – 10

Lang clasped his grandfather's hand for the last time. His grandfather heaved his final breath, then drifted to the world above. "He's gone," thought Lang sorrowfully. Lang hugged his grandmother tightly, in tears. Lang's grandparents had been looking after him for the past ten years – ever since he was born.

One month later, Lang decided to find the Elder of the village, the wisest man there. Standing right in front of him was the Elder's house, perched on top of a high hill overlooking the circle of houses of the village. From there, Lang could see the huge fountain at the centre of the circle, grand and powerful. Lang took a deep breath. Just as he wanted to knock on the door, the Elder already greeted him, "Welcome child, come in – what brings you here?"

Lang's eyes gleamed, "I want to become immortal!"

The Elder furrowed. "Is that what you really wish, child?"

"Yes!" cried Lang.

"Very well," replied the Elder. He looked as though he knew what Lang thought. "Travel towards the Mogao Grotto caves and enter through the main entrance. You shall discover the Pearl of Immortality in the depths of the cave."

After showing his gratitude to the Elder, he couldn't wait to start his journey to the Grottoes. The Elder sighed quietly, "Youngsters... soon this child shall discover that immortality is a curse, rather than a blessing."

Thunder roared. Rain lashed like a thousand knives from the sky. Lang was treading through the water, his eyes drooping and his shoulders falling, but the path was only getting more and more arduous. On the coarse and rocky ground, he couldn't control his legs anymore. HWOOF! Wearily, Lang gazed up. Snow and hail fell from the sky. The arms of the wind choked him, stopping him from going any further. Panting heavily, Lang wanted to stop, but he couldn't. He needed the Pearl.

Lang sighed. Memories came back to his mind: past days when Lang would sit on his grandfather's lap and listen to his stories. Back then his grandfather trained him in Kung Fu, they used to go up on the hills to find wild-flowers. In his grandfather's final days, Lang took care of him lying in bed – all of these memories made his life a life.

Why did a person finally have to part with his beloved ones? Why does a man have to vanish from the world at the end? What is death really for? From his blurred memory he remembered a story about a never-aging man from his grandfather. "Grandfather already guided me!" Lang unhesitatingly moved forward.

Another gust of wind. A large shadow seemed to appear out of the fog. It caught his attention. He whipped around abruptly. Then a giant figure landed in front of him.

"Wh-wh-what?" Lang stuttered.

Standing in front of him was a colossal dragon. Its entire body was sapphire-blue, dotted with amethyst and silver scales. His eye sprinkled with an emerald scale, like a teardrop. "He looks like a majestic creature," Lang thought, "Authoritative, but kind."

Suddenly, the dragon's eye narrowed. "You look familiar..."

The dragon's eye shimmered with a glow. Lang found himself whisked into a vision. These were scenes of someone like his grandfather, as young as Lang was now, determined to find the Pearl of Immortality, scaling a mountain, covered with sleet and dirt.

Lang gasped. "Is this my grandfather? Have you met him before?" "Tell me more!" But just as he wanted to look up at the dragon, the dragon was gone.

Lang was bewildered. Tears welled up in his eyes. All of a sudden, thick mist enveloped his body, interrupting his thoughts. A magical and mesmerizing sight formed in his eyes.

He arrived. He was surrounded by the spellbinding caves of the Mogao Grottoes. Evergreen trees covered the area, circling the entire place like a guardian. Majestic temples came out from jagged rocks, and the highest pagoda rose imposingly to the sky as if to reach the heavens.

Swiftly, Lang ran into the largest temple, racing down the stairs. He was getting closer to the Pearl— he could feel it. He felt his grandfather was leading him along the way. He went in deeper and deeper, for he knew the Pearl must be in the depths of the cave.

Abruptly, Lang halted. There was another cave entrance in front of him. It was seven feet tall, vast and intimidating. Two giant statues were on both sides of the cave. They seemed like the sculpture of a dragon. Words were sketched onto stone: “MAY THY TRAVELER SEEK IMMORTALITY STONE HERE.” “Finally!” he thought excitedly. His eyes were glowing. He exhaled, nonetheless, his heartbeat still drummed unstoppably. He rushed into the cave.

A bright light shone. The cave was decorated with gemstones and diamonds. At the centre, perched on a rock pedestal, was the Pearl of Immortality itself, luminous and bright red.

Triumphantly, Lang held the Pearl up. He has beaten Death!

When his heart was filled with joy, he saw a rusted-up scroll. Why would there be a papyrus in the middle of the cave? Curiously, he picked it up.

It read:

Love is eternal. But time is not.

“Love always wins.”

“Love prevails.”

“The loved ones are always with you, no matter where you are.”

His grandfather’s words came flooding into his mind. The dragon appeared again. He growled, “You’re correct — this was written by your grandfather.” His eyes glowed once more.

Lang saw from the dragon’s eyes that his grandmother was dying; then, one by one, all of Lang’s friends were passing, and he saw it all. At last, where his own beloved wife and sons and grandchildren and great-grandchildren all had passed away, leaving him behind.

“No.” He put down the Pearl. And with that, he ran as quickly as he could back to his house, wrapping his arms tightly to his grandmother in a warm embrace.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Fukien Secondary School Affiliated School, Yan, Ho – 9

It was a bright Sunday morning when Lucas and his best friend, Marcus, set off for their uncle's house. Uncle Robert was watering the plants and waving to them, "Come in! Come in!" When they went into the house, they discovered a book called "The Mogao Grottoes".

"What's in it?" wondered Lucas. They flipped open the book; there were some pictures of Mogao Grottoes and a sculpture of Buddha. Suddenly, a gust of wind enveloped them, their heads started spinning and their hearts started racing.

After felt like a millennium, a beam of sunlight shone on their faces, and they wiped the sleep crust out of their eyes. They were startled when they woke up as they were no longer in Uncle Robert's house. From head to toe, their bodies were covered in sand. They sprang up and found themselves alone in a pure sea of sand. It took a few minutes for Lucas to realize where they were. They were in a desert stretching out in all direction without an end in sight.

Marcus exclaimed, "This is the Gobi Desert that we had just read about in our uncle's house, near the ancient oasis town of Dunhuang, China. The valuable Mogao Grottoes must be nearby!" Lucas nodded in agreement.

After that, they kept wandering around until they saw hundreds of caves which were cut into a side of the cliff. Each cave was about two kilometers long. Marcus and Lucas glanced at each other and realized that they were standing at the entrance of the Gigantic Mogao Grottoes.

"Let's go in!" suggested Marcus with a grin.

As they walked into one of the caves, there were some sculptures in three small niches and some inscriptions carved on the wall. The words were written vividly. Besides the inscriptions, some figures were painted on the wall.

"Look at this mythical figure— It has a human head with a snake body," Lucas pointed to the painting.

"Yes, I also see a figure which has three heads and six arms. This is amazing!" cried Marcus.

After a while, they walked into the second cave; they spotted an enormous Buddha sitting cross-legged on the throne and there were some small statues sitting beside the big Buddha.

Lucas exclaimed, "What a fantastic scene!" They gawked at the historical murals and touched the sculptures. Suddenly, a shriek came out from the cave and the statue came alive. They were scared out of their minds and they started to run frantically. They kept running until the statues were out of sight. Something unexpected reached Marcus's ear when they were about to sit on an ordinary rock.

"Hey Lucas, do you hear a giggle behind us?" asked Marcus.

"Don't freak out and stop tugging on my shirt!" scolded Lucas.

"I didn't. Oh my goodness" denied Marcus.

The vivid sculptures started to move.

"Help! Help!" they yelled at the top of their lungs. The echo bounced on the walls of the cave. They scurried and scurried around until they were out of breath.

They had stepped into another cave. In this cave, paintings of Pure Land Paradise were fantastically depicted on the wall. They saw an old and lonely monk who was sitting in the cave holding his beads bracelet.

“Who are you?” asked Lucas.

“My name is Yuezun. I built this cave in 366 AD,” answered the monk. “Why did you build this cave?” questioned Marcus.

“It is a long story. One day, I had a vision of a thousand Buddhas bathed in golden light here and this inspired me to carve my own cave for meditation. I live here and keep praying for my family’s happiness,” Yuezun said.

“I understand now. The painting on the wall is fantastic. Do you know what this is about?” Marcus asked.

“It is believed that God lives in a Pure Land Paradise in the Far West and he will bless those who are pious followers. This is the entrance to the Pure Land Paradise and the painting on the wall is describing the life there,” Yuezun smiled.

“This is a haunted place and we were almost attacked by the sculptures. It is horrible!” yelled a terrified Marcus.

Yuezun patted both teenagers’ shoulders to ease their anxiety.

“Calm down. Calm down. Those moving sculptures you saw are actually protecting the caves. These caves have remained undisturbed for centuries, preserved in its original beauty. In the late nineteenth century, people discovered the caves and the peace of this place was ruined. The caves were damaged and vandalized. Hence, God has transformed the sculptures into the gatekeepers to guard the caves. They won’t hurt you if you don’t damage the caves.” explained Yuezun. The boys nodded.

Suddenly, a flash of light lit up the cave and Yuezun mysteriously disappeared. They heard a deep rumbling as the cave began to collapse and rocks fell everywhere. A swirling cloud of dust surrounded them.

“What’s happening?” they shouted over the dust.

Then, they saw an open door. They ran through it without any thought.

“Where am I?” Lucas mumbled.

He looked around and found himself in Uncle Robert’s bedroom with Marcus sleeping next to him.

“Wake up, Marcus! Wake up, Marcus!” Lucas shouted at Marcus.

Marcus yawned while he was opening his eyes, “Where is Yuezun? What happened to the cave?” “How come we are in Uncle Robert’s bedroom?”

At the end of the day, Lucas and Marcus had to go home. Uncle Robert bade farewell and waved goodbye. To the kid’s amazement, on the right-hand wrist of Uncle Robert was beads bracelet which looked extraordinary familiar.

“Is it the same bracelet the Monk wears?” whispered Lucas.

“Yes, yes ...” echoed Markus.

“Do you believe it is a dream?” asked Lucas.

“I have no idea, but one thing I’m sure of is that Mogao Grottoes is a truly extraordinary place. We have to visit once again!” answered Marcus.

The Treasure of the Mogao Grottoes

Fukien Secondary School Affiliated School, Yeung, Elizabeth Yi – 9

It was nearly midnight, Victoria was lying under the bed covers, reading a book. Her bedroom door opened suddenly, Victoria didn't even bother to look up from her book as her younger brother, Jim, peeked in. "Oh hi, bookworm!" he smirked. "What book are you reading?" He plonked himself onto the bed and stared at the book cover, "Wow... I want to go to the Mogao Grottoes too!" As the words left his mouth, he caught a glint of glow in the corner of his eye. Before he could see the source of the light, he and his sister were swept from the room, along with Victoria's book and toy camel.

Victoria blinked open her eyes, she and Jim seemed to be in some sort of desert. It was very hot and a bead of sweat trickled down Victoria's cheek. She nudged Jim hard in the ribs and he sat up at once, looking blearily around. "Hang on," he muttered, "This place looks familiar..." But as his eyes met the massive, boulder-like caves not far from them, he suddenly understood. "We're in China? At the Mogao Grottoes?" With a yell of excitement, he leapt up and grabbed Victoria by the shoulders. Victoria winced, she knew how adventurous Jim was but was not feeling the same excitement. She had no choice, Jim was already dragging her towards the entrance of the caves. "Come on," he shouted, "Let's go inside and explore!"

As Jim and Victoria neared the main entrance, something large and fat slithered out to meet them, causing Victoria to step back in shock. It was a bloody, red snake, gliding towards them as if on wheels. Its icy, emerald eyes widened in surprise as it saw the children. "Stand back!" Jim cried, drawing out a paper sword and pointing it threateningly at the snake, "Don't go another step closer!". The snake's eyes contracted with disappointment as it stared unblinkingly at Jim, "I'm not going to hurt you!" it said in a surprisingly gentle voice, "I would not even dream of it!" Jim let out a snort of disbelief. The scarlet serpent took a rolled up piece of parchment and handed it to Victoria. "Read this message when you enter a bare chamber with nothing but an empty sawdust pit," it told them, "and remember, you cannot ever be greedy when you see a treasure chest in front of you." From behind a clump of dead bushes, the snake drew out a ball of green wool. "Take this," it said, "let the string drag behind you so that you can find your way out." The snake threw the ball of thread at Jim's feet and with a loud sizzling sound, vanished into thin air.

Jim half dragged, half pushed Victoria through the many caves, examining the glorious display of paintings and sculptures. Victoria however, was not even glancing at them, she was thinking about the red serpent at the mouth of the caves. It was not until they reached what felt like the 350th cave that she finally discovered that they were lost. Jim, who was blissfully enjoying the arts of the cave walls, was posing with the sculptures, grinning joyfully. Victoria seized him by his arm, spinning her brother around so that they were nose to nose with each other. "Where are we?" Victoria demanded, glaring at Jim, "You promised

that you would be the one to keep an eye out for where we're going!" Jim was speechless, "Let's go to this cave." he muttered, pointing into a large opening.

As they entered the cave, they noticed that it was not an artistic one, but with plain walls that were coated in sand and dust. Inside an empty sandpit however, was a big treasure chest. Jim reached out his hand to touch it but Victoria seized him by the collar and pulled him back. She took out the parchment the snake had given her and read it out loud.

Dear friends, listen to my story,

When you think it's time for glory.
There's nothing worth it inside this treasure chest,
For your hard work and courage on your quest.
Only darkness awaits you,
Now I warn you two.
That when you approach with terrible greed,
You'll only get ten times less than what you need.
So forget about necklaces, bracelets and rings,
And other things you'll find with the richest kings.
For Magao is not famous for silver and gold,
But for paper and others you can easily fold.
Portraits and arts dated before
Any human had ever appeared to be poor.

Good luck,

Snaria

(P.S. Look at the walls!)

They quickly searched the walls, hammering against cracks and thumping on holes. At last, Victoria's hands felt soft fabric and she pulled out a pink bag that was made from what felt like rabbit fur and peered into it. She gasped, inside was hundreds of art projects by many different artists from the ancient world of Asia. "Hooray!" cheered Jim, "We can get those to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum for display!" "The only problem is we don't know how to get home!" Victoria said dryly. "There is a way!" a voice said, Jim and Victoria jumped and spun around, Snaria the serpent was holding Victoria's toy camel and the ball of wool in her mouth, "You dropped these when you entered the caves." she said, "Just make a wish and you'll be back home in no time!" Victoria took the camel and placed it carefully in front of her. "Goodbye," she said to Snaria, who winked, "Thanks for everything!" Jim made a wish while Snaria waved her tail in farewell. There was a blinding flash of magenta light and the siblings were soaring in cold night air. Back to the place they loved most, home.

And that was how the treasure of the Mogao Grottoes was found by two youngsters who journeyed to the Mogao Grottoes alone.

The Hidden Secrets of the Mogao Grottoes

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Belal, Joseph – 10

My heart started to race with excitement as I entered the unknown and spooky caves. I had planned to go on this quest, as a priest from my homeland told me of the Mogao Grottoes, and told of amazing treasures buried in its depths. I had listened to him raptly and was so fascinated by his story, that I had decided to go on this once in a lifetime adventure to the Dunhuang district of Gansu province myself.

The dust settled in these not so appealing grottoes, and glimmered, catching the light of my torch. The place was lifeless and without the light that I had, I would not have seen a thing.

I slowly crept into the dank cave. I wondered how the vast network of tunnels had come to be here. I walked further into the cave and saw the entrance to a room. Holding up my slowly fading torch, though still glinting softly, I stepped in. The room was stunning. By firelight, I could see everything. It had colour everywhere I looked. The awe-inspiring stone walls were cold and rough to the touch. There were incredible statues of people standing on a ledge on the single, highly decorated pillar of colour and life, directly in the middle of the room. The people seemed to be worshipping the largest person. Buddha. It was a shrine, I had cleverly deduced.

I snaked through a slim passageway at the back of the room, camouflaged by the overload of brightness and colour. It seemed to go on forever, but I knew to keep going.

Very soon, I found something that I wanted to investigate further. A small spot of light shimmered at me teasingly. I crawled forward desperate to see what was at the end of the passage and saw light up ahead. I stumbled out of the slightly large but cramped tunnel and stepped clumsily into the room. There was a huge window through which the sun's rays flooded the room. I could see a breath-taking view of many tall and sturdy pines and steps leading up to the place that I was in. I looked down and I realized that I was standing in a towering palace! I must have come in through the back entrance instead.

It was beyond anything that I had ever seen in my life! I was about to return to my tunnel to continue exploring the caves when I saw something; a small box in the corner of the dusty old room. Since everything in the room was brown, the little chest was camouflaged perfectly. I picked it up but I could not open it. It was locked. I had decided to keep it out of curiosity about what might be inside the box and whether it was anything valuable or not.

I clambered hastily back into the tunnel and realized that I had been so intrigued by the light, that I did not notice the smaller tunnels leading off the main one. I crawled into one of the passages branching off from the snake-like tunnel and had to kneel as it was very tight.

At the end of the tunnel, I saw another room full of colour and thought that I was just leading myself back to the one that I had started in. I tumbled out of the tunnel and found myself to be in another incredible chamber.

'The rooms were all so lively and colourful; they all looked so similar!' I thought to myself in an incredulous state. In this room, the walls seemed to stretch up forever into an endless sky and were just as colourful and intricately detailed but there were fewer statues. Buddha still seemed to be the main attraction in the middle, but all these statues were life-size and were much more impressive.

I checked in my bag for the mini chest and took it out. Surprisingly, I found that I could open it, as if by magic, and saw a small pile of purple powder. I looked up to process what I had just seen and was so startled by the seemingly alive and angry faces of the warriors surrounding Buddha, that I dropped the chest. The mystery purple powder sprayed all over the statues and I could no longer retrieve it. I screamed in despair as now, no one could study it, but the statues seemed even more lifelike, in fact, too lifelike . . .

Not only had the statues seemed to come to life, but they had actually done so right before my eyes! Gradually, what had seemed to be terracotta, turned to soft, silky robes, pale, smooth skin, and for some, cold hard armour. I backed away from them, not knowing what they could do to me. I tried to tell them, "don't hurt me, please!" however, the only thing that escaped from my mouth was a small terrified squeak, though barely audible in the gargantuan room.

At this, however, the statues seemed to be very taken aback and in a stern voice that was surely not meant to be on purpose, they said in unison, "If you are here for the treasure hidden and guarded very safely by yours truly, then we cannot help you." I had just realized that one of them hadn't spoken and I was intrigued as to why.

Suddenly, that very statue, the most realistic of them all said, "but surely, master, he was the one, was he not?" I hadn't the faintest idea what the 'one' even meant so I continued to listen. "He returned us to the natural world and so we have to serve him and his one command."

After this, there was a lot of muttering and they all decided that they would take me to the treasure and that they would let me take as much as I wanted. My heart raced with jubilation. Suddenly, the caves shook and all of the tunnels collapsed, along with my hopes. Would we ever get to the treasure?

July 1975

... We walked on and on, not stopping because of the scorching heat or the freezing cold. I, Emma, was really hoping to get a result soon, as we had been on this expedition since March. As we trailed along the Silk Road, I thought about how my surname got missing when I was a baby and how I agreed to come with this team on a voyage to find hidden secrets in China.

Just then, I heard a shout of joy, for someone had unearthed a cave, full of ancient treasures from top to bottom. We excitedly got inside, unaware of what would happen next.

Unexpectedly, we spotted a gleaming, golden door. On the door, there were carved words saying:

*Open me if you dare,
but do beware,
of what lies ahead over there.*

Once we read that, Paul, one of the other explorers cried, "Whatever it says, let's go in! We're explorers! We face our challenges."

We all agreed. The next moment, we were all in.

Before we noticed, the door was locked, and we had no way out. A scroll dropped down out of nowhere. It said:

*This is the Land of Nothingness
There is only one way to
get out of this place:
Select the right key.
Here are the four keys you can
choose from on the table beside you.
Each one has an inscription.
If you choose the one with the right inscription,
you will successfully get to the Hall of Everything,
which holds all the secrets of the universe.
If you choose the wrong one, then
the whole place would go up in flames.
Choose carefully.*

Silence.

One minute later, we were looking at the magical keys to our left. One said, "*If you choose me, you will always have success for the rest of your life.*" The second one said, "*If you choose me, you will have infinite beauty.*" The third said "*If you choose me, you will have limitless wealth for the rest of your life.*" Finally, the last said, "*If you choose me, you will not get any significant rewards, but you will see the good in life after this.*"

Which key should we choose? It was hard, as each key had a temptation.

Hours later, after lots of discussion, we already forgot where we were. We just wanted to get out of there and continue. We did a final vote: there were ten people in total. After careful consideration, I voted for the last key with another five people. That meant the last key was chosen! I cautiously picked it up. What was going to happen?

The moment I touched it, everything went dark. I held my breath and closed my eyes. It seemed like forever. When I opened my eyes again, we were in a place with shining stones and swirling blue portals. We were in the Hall of Everything! I had a sudden urge to explore the place. I noticed that memories were displayed on stones. There was a section for everyone in the world, even for those who passed away or were not born yet! That's when I found this huge stone, with a wooden sign above it saying: *your truth*. I was so curious that I peeped over. As quick as a flash, these words showed up: *Hello Emma Bradley, what would you like to know?* It was really cool! It was like a magical computer! I was even more curious when it said that my surname was Bradley. So, I typed in with a keyboard that popped up on the stone: *What is my surname?*

The result was: *It is confirmed, **Bradley**.*

I didn't know what to do next. I checked a few times, but I always got the same answer. I was delighted! I finally got my surname back! I typed a few more questions in. Soon, it was time to leave.

We found a portal to get out. We jumped in one by one.

Once we all got in, a voice menacingly said, "It seems like you have arrived."

It was a cursed portal! That's when we found out who spoke. An enormous statue loomed over us, twenty metres tall. Its vicious laughter sounded like thunder. "Err, can we leave, please?" Angeline, another teammate of mine, pleaded.

"Never!" the statue boomed. "You will stay with me forever!"

With that, the evil statue pulled a hidden lever, and we all came falling into this glass sphere, which rolled down a wide tunnel. The sphere was three metres tall and three metres wide. While we were rolling down, we were screaming. Not like if we were on a roller coaster. At that moment, we came tumbling out into a wooden tray. What I saw was a surprising and horrifying sight: the surprising thing was that there were many other glass spheres containing humans in them, but the horrifying thing was that some contained the dead bodies of people and starving people. As I looked further in, there were bones too! That's when the giant-like statue opened a tiny slit in the top and shoved a loaf of bread and a bottle of water in. Though we had that, it wasn't enough. We needed to escape! Everyone went paranoid but I tried to calm down. I started breaking the glass and finding anything that could help in my backpack.

Presently, I found the key from before was glowing in my hand! I noticed there appeared a button that said, *press me in peril*. I pressed it right away. The statue started crumbling and everyone was set free. The next moment, we found ourselves on the Silk Road. Now I knew that place was a part of the Mogao Grottoes!

May 2025

"Grandma, we're setting off to the Mogao Grottoes!" That's my 24-year-old grandchildren calling me. So, I told them my story there. After an hour, I finished with: Wherever you are, always remember:

Face challenges with
courage and determination.

The Lost Paintings of the Mogao Grottoes

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Coatham, Annabel – 11

Walking towards the caves, the sandy path under my feet, I realised I felt something like almost holiness. The warm summer breeze lifted the folds of my robes, the silk flapping. I looked behind at the imperial palace, my mother's garden with the lake full of white cranes and shimmering, scarlet fish.

I saw Ping, my maid, going out of the palace stepping onto the stone steps. I knew I had to come back here.

"Princess Shiori, it is time for afternoon tea." she called from the steps.

But I didn't want to go. After feeling that sensation of holiness, returning to the palace just wasn't an option. Using the jade hair clip in my hair, I tied my long, black hair into a neat bun, hitched my robes up and ran towards the caves, ignoring Ping shouting at me. Suddenly, I tripped on a stone and the last thing I saw was the floor come to my face.

A voice echoed far, far away, encouraging me to wake up. As I opened my eyes, I gasped in shock. On the cliff face, the same place where I was looking before, there were a thousand buddhas radiating a heavenly light. Falling to the ground, I was bathed in this glow, its warmth wrapping around me. I heard the voice again, calling my name. Until the vision disintegrated. Blinking the dust from my eyes, I was back in the original world. I knew there was something special about this place.

As I stood at the foot of the cave, I heard faint whispers telling me to go in, drawing me in. Slowly, I walked, then ran into the entrance, closing my eyes so I wouldn't fear the dark. Drip drip drip, the water ran down from the roof of the cavern and the drips echoing through the cave. Slowly, step by step, I walked forward, using my clammy hand to trace the mossy stone wall. I tripped over what looked like an extinguished torch. Using the pocket flint in the pockets of my robe, I lit the torch; the flames roared up, bathing the walls of the cave in a faint orange glow; I gasped. Breath-taking murals covered the walls, so beautiful that the Mona Lisa was just a scribble. Paintings with so much detail, my eyes hurt. So many colours that the paintings seemed to just fly off the wall. But they weren't just drawings, the colours seemed to tell a story. All I could hear were the vibrant colours in my head. I reached tentatively to touch the murals. Ripples spread through the paintings, distorting the colours, leaving me spellbound with awe. Then, I realised what I had done. The paintings were not paintings anymore; they were just puddles of muddled colour. I had ruined them. Letting out a cry of pure grief, I sank down on the floor like life did not matter anymore. I had ruined them. They were gone. Suddenly, a tiger as large as life bounded out of the shadows, roaring angrily. I screamed as loud as I could as the tiger ran towards me, its roar becoming louder and louder. Frantically looking around, I forgot how precious the paintings were. I broke free from the spell just as I realised that my hand had gone through the ripples, meaning that... Without thinking, I leapt into the ripples letting the paintings take me into their story.

Landing heavily on my back, I found myself in a small village in the depths of a bamboo forest. Feeling light-headed and dizzy, I walked to the nearest house. Wits Shiori, I thought as I walked towards the house. What would a mother do in this situation? That's right, she would ask someone. Good job, Shiori. I thought to myself. Realising later, I was actually wearing different clothes, but I guess I was too dizzy to realise.

"Why hello traveller, what brings you here?" asked the villager

I looked down at myself, Surprise, Surprise; I was not dressed in the same clothes. Instead of my soft red dress, I was wearing a long, golden embroidered robe tied with a white satin belt and a sword attached to it. Suddenly, a deep rumbling sound came from the mountain above us. The villager swore, "That's the tiger," said the man, "Every month we need to give him enough food or he will burn the village down".

“Has it ever happened to you” I asked

“No, but legend says that someone from another world will slay the tiger,” admitted the villager

I froze. “What?” The villager repeated his sentence. Then asked me if I wanted to stay at his house. Before he could say anything else, I took off, heading up the mossy stone steps to the mountain.

I was soon breathless. The spiralling steps seemed to go on forever. I slowed to a stop and looked down. Below me, a bamboo forest stretched for miles and in the heart, was the village, just a tiny speck from my sight. Smelling the crisp, fresh air from this height, I noticed a dot of orange and black – the tiger. It was prowling around the steps about 10m above me, looking for prey. Then, he noticed me...

I recognized this tiger. It was the one in the cave. Before I had time to think, the tiger lunged just as I thrust out my sword, closing my eyes tightly. My life flashed before my eyes just as I heard a loud boom.

“Princess?” Ping’s voice rang through my aching head... Blinking the dust from my eyes, reality dawned upon me.

It was all a dream.

The Mystery of the Mogao Grottoes

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Gao, Luna – 10

More than one and half millennia ago, a monk (name unknown) decided there was something special about a cave he found at an oasis in the desert on the Silk Road in China.

Over the centuries, thousands of pilgrims arrived and decided to stay, digging more caves, and spending their time creating sacred art and literature.

But time passed, and more than 1000 years later, travellers started taking other routes. The Mogao Caves in the Dunhuang district of Gansu province in west central China were forgotten, becoming little more than a dusty legend.

I was just a little child, living a normal life when the Mogao Grottoes were discovered in 366AD July the second by a mysterious monk. He did not leave his name. He had a hood over his head all the time. He spoke in an almost alien-like voice ‘I discovered a cave. I call it the Mogao Grottoes. Do not change the name. You can use it but never, EVER destroy it, Understand?’ Then the mysterious monk left without a trace. Most people believed that he was a God, but who knows? A few days later, the villagers found a piece of paper soaked in blood that said ‘My Name is Le Zun. A second monk named Fa Liang will join me. Goodbye.’ Next to the paper was a body. That is when the village knew we were cursed.

After that little incident, the townspeople made prayers in every 500 caves everyday for at least one hour and sacrificed a sheep to all the gods. No one dared to steal or make any mischief because they knew that it would upset the gods and that would make things worse. They continued it for a few months before disaster happened.

One day, it was my family's turn to make a sacrifice. I woke up as usual and ate some breakfast, then I went outside and had a little walk when I bumped into the village priest. He insisted that my family should go to the sacrifice today. I agreed. I regret it.

I went inside the Mogao Grottoes and found myself in paradise. I saw incredible paintings of Buddhas and fairies; unbelievable temples and about 2,000 painted sculptures. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was beautiful. I walked into the first room that was full of buddhas and sculptures that looked phenomenal. The next room was even more impressive. It was a Library! The walls were full of stories of battles and people fighting to live and the rights of women. There were tables full of things that had a hard cover and you could flip the things inside it. I did not know what it was called but I named it a ‘book’. It was pretty nice and I kept it.

The next room was not that pleasant. It had a sculpture of a girl and her family being slain. The girl looked a lot like me. There was a painting of a Buddha trapped in the mountains, trying to get out but failing. The painting looked like it was screaming for help but no one could hear it. That room gave me the shivers. I quickly made a sacrifice and just when I was about to head out, a gigantic boulder came out of nowhere and blocked the entrance. I panicked. I did not know what to do. I was about to scream for help when the paintings came to life and grabbed me by the throat and slammed me on the wall. I fainted and hit my head. Hard.

When I woke up, I found out that I was tied to a chair and a cloth stuffed in my mouth. I tried to scream but no sound came out. Thoughts came to my mind. “Why am I here? What am I doing here? Why can't I be home and eat with my family? Why did the paintings kidnap me?” I had so many questions that were not answered. What is going to happen to me?

I tried to get out of the chair but instead, I fell on the floor. I hopped over to a wall and bashed the chair against it. To my surprise, the chair broke to pieces and splinters were flying everywhere (I got a splinter but nevermind that). I brushed the wood of my dress and I was just about to scream when a mysterious guy dressed in black came out of nowhere. He spoke in a ghostly voice “You will never escape my child. You are mine now.” “I will never be yours,” I scoffed at him, trying to slap him or at least make a mark. “First you kidnapped me and now I will be yours, what's next? I die?” He was about to say something when I lunged past him and tried to run.

I sprinted like never before and tripped. He followed me. I picked myself up and ran as fast as possible but I had

no idea where I was going! Was I running in circles? I swear I saw those statues before. I kept running. “Keep running,” I told myself. “I need to keep running.” After what felt like forever, I found a rusty door. I didn’t know if it led to freedom or something but it’s worth a try to open it. Locked. I tried again. Locked. Have I come this far just to meet disappointment? I think not. I kicked the door as hard as I could but it must’ve been made out of steel or something because I didn’t even make a dent. I chose a statue I was going to bash to pieces and I threw it at the door. The door shattered to pieces and I was free. I ran outside as fast as possible. That is the end of my story. After that little incident, the mysterious monk was never, EVER seen again. And after all these years, I wonder where he is now...

The Mystery of Mogao Grotto

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Gidumal, Devyn – 10

Walking along a dark corridor, caves lined the walls on either side of me. Cautiously I stepped into one of them. The space was dark, lit only by a candle that flickered weakly in a corner. There was a strong earthy aroma that wafted around the room and stung my nose. My hand slipped and it pressed against the cold hard wall of rock that surrounded me on all sides as if it would suffocate me that made the cave even colder as if no light could penetrate the darkness. I tasted the rot and decay that filled the room. Not something I wanted to try again in a hurry. As I turned around I saw something I hadn't seen before. There were intricate carvings cut into the stone. Then the candle went out and filled the room with darkness and shadows.

Before I start, I just want to say something my names Jake. As soon as the light went out. I started running. I had never been a fan of the dark and that room scared me out of my skin. I stumbled on the uneven dirt path. I didn't know where the path led but I knew it led me away from the caves. Soon I came to a stop, checking my bag to see what I had. I had my water and a box with a little food in it but not much. As soon as I stood up I noticed something different about the place I was in. It looked like a palace entirely different from the caves. When I tried to walk my legs fell and I fell on my back and blacked out.

I noticed that I wasn't looking through my own eyes anymore. I was a warrior standing in front of a throne. Standing in the same room but a hundred years before. I turned my attention back to the throne and saw a man sitting there. I didn't know who he was until I realised that was a king. Then I realized something else: the man was my father in a past life and I was this soldier before. I noticed something else when I stared up at him. I saw he was just a cruel evil man with nothing in his heart but jealousy. As soon as he saw me the dream exploded into a million pieces.

I decided after that to leave and find something else. I came across a huge iron door. I would never get inside then from the corner of my eye I noticed that there was a crack in the iron. Just big enough for me to slid through. I squeezed inside and my jaw dropped to the ground. It was a massive room where statues as big as skyscrapers lined the walls. Beautiful paintings stared down at me from the ceiling as if watching my every step. I started up to the heavens and kneeled down praying to the gods. But as soon as I did, all the statues in the chamber moved at once except for one and I ran toward it for cover.

As soon as I reached the statue one of its hands started to reach down and tried to pick me up. At first I thought I was hallucinating but I wasn't. The hand scooped me up and placed me on its head. This will surprise you as much as me but a chair appeared on top. I sat on it and like I had hit a pressure plate I started to lower into the head of the statue. I thought that the head would be solid but it was actually hollow! And when I got inside the head a video game controller appeared out of nowhere in front of me! Looks like the people who made this place were more advanced than I thought. Where eyes would have been there was a giant glowing screen on it where the words ready pilot. I sat on the chair and the controller flew into my hands. The screen turned on and I saw things about the statue I hadn't before. This statue had a sword and a bow while others had spears and shields. I started moving the joysticks and the statue seemed to rumble and move as well. This was just like a videogame! I played loads of them so this would be easy. The screen had all of the controls on the side and I studied them carefully. After a minute I was ready. I walked toward one of the other robots and slashed at it with my sword but it fought back with deadly accuracy and the model of my robot started flashing red. I shot my bow and pierced its arm with an arrow. But I tripped. Before I could lose my balance I used the sword to push me back up.

I was about to take a sigh of relief when the other robot threw a spear at my robot, almost impaling me. How did he throw it with such accuracy? Then when I tried to block a sword something popped up on the screen. It was an upgrade. That's why they were so strong. I looked at my options. A chameleon that lets me go invisible or a dragon which lets me do fire damage. I chose the dragon. I didn't know what had happened but when I shot my bow the arrow turned into a scorching inferno that burned everything in its path. I was awestruck. Out of nowhere I saw a blade about to kill me but something blocked it. Did someone else save me .I was scared but then that suddenly melted away . I fought for hours until I was the only one left standing. I had done it. I won the battle of Mogao Grotto. I had won the cave!

The Walking Statue

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Kan, Kaitlyn – 10

The caves stretched across the sandy ground of China, the musty air blurring the scenery making it seem like you couldn't see the end. The many ancient doors on the caves surrounded me. The treasure map swayed with the slightest breeze. I gripped tighter on the map as I glanced at the doors, begging me to come visit. But the treasure map only needed me to visit one door. As I put my hand on the doorknob, I felt a rush of warmth and excitement tingling through my whole body. Slowly, the door opens with a nails—loudly—scratching on chalkboard sound. I rubbed my ears, feeling like they would never feel the same after that screeching sound. Stepping into the musty, dark chamber, I lit a candle and realized all the walls were covered in strange markings and paintings. I reached to touch them but the second my fingertips brushed the wall, the door slammed shut. “BAANNNNNGGG!!”. Feeling faint, I told myself, Okay. I'm still going to get out. I have to. But it was no use lying. I carefully made my way across the gloomy corridor. After probably 10 minutes, and what felt like hours, the path split between two directions. As I eyed the map for help, it didn't show anything about the forks, and my mind pondered, “Left or right, left or right, LEFT OR RIGHT!?”. Well, right could work cause it's right but that could be a trick. I took a deep breath and trusted my instincts as I made my decision and cautiously walked towards the right path.

★ ★ ★

I found myself in a room with a humongous statue in the middle of the room. The statue was laying down on its right side, with its head resting on its right arm. Many statues of little people, compared to the big statue, and mostly men, were positioned to embrace toward the huge sculpture. I turned my head to the left, and there were mice scurrying across the room, towards a door I never noticed before. I headed towards the mysterious door that was covered in pictures and carvings and runes that I couldn't decipher, but that was fine as I was way too eager to discover what secrets lay behind it. I twisted the knob to realize that it was another chamber with statues. This time there were 3 statues in the centre, side by side, and the middle one had arched eyebrows and was looking directly at me. Weird. I quickly pushed the thought away to concentrate as I noticed another door. Then another chamber of statues. Another door. Another chamber of statues. Again and again, until the rooms stopped appearing at the 12th room, which, unsurprisingly, was locked. I peered at the map to notice that it is the treasure room. I looked into my pocket and saw my keys. I tried them all into the lock, including my special keys, but none of them worked. I came up with a different tactic. I searched the whole room, trying to find a clue on how to open the door. One of the walls was covered in strange markings. With a hunch of what these markings mean, I went back to the second room and sure enough, I found that the middle statue there was looking at the statue on its left. My eyes widened. I blinked my eyes. I tried rubbing them. I forced myself to think that my eyes were playing tricks on me. But the statue still stared at the left structure. “Eeeeeeeeee” a sound filled the room. It went off again. “EEEEEEEEEEEE” louder this time. I scanned the room as I tried to step back but my legs were frozen in shock. The statue moved again. This time I stepped back as my puzzled brain tried to understand what I was seeing. The statue moved faster towards me as my scream pierced through the air, like a sword's slicing through butter. The statue's legs started separating outwards and walked slowly as its mouth opened to talk. “I know this is scary, but don't be scared,” the statue said. Of course I just screamed louder. “It's okay,” it said, trying to calm me down, “My name is Xi and I am the protector of the tomb,”

“Wha... what tomb?” I asked with my voice barely coming back, still shocked by what I have just seen.

“My master's tomb, in the last room,” he replied. “You will need a key to open the door, but I will only give you one clue.” he paused for effect and said, “Look on the door. That is all I can say”, then he closed his eyes and opened them again when he went back to his original position as though nothing had happened. I checked all the doors, stopping on the 4th one that was engraved with some symbols. Wait a second, I thought I recognize that. It was in the 12th room! I pumped my fist into the air with victory and ran towards the 12th room. I rushed to the wall with the strange markings and skimmed the wall with my fingertips. A low, rumble sound started coming from behind me. I turned around to notice that the ground beneath me was shaking ever so slightly. I looked at the door which was locked as something shiny and metallic dropped down. Stepping closer, I realized it was the key! Let's go! My brain cheered as I knelt down to get the key. The second I was about to hold on to the key, the shaking shock

even more, knocking me off balance. Small parts of the ceiling started coming off, like a rock avalanche. The last thing I could see was rocks falling down as my eyes slowly fluttered shut.

★ ★ ★

I finally came back out safely. But you might ask why did the Tomb protector help me by not doing his job? It turns out that I'm the grand-grand-grand-grand-grandchild of the ancient King!!

The Griffin of the Mogao Caves

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Mo, Charlotte – 9

He stared down at the compass and remembered the embarrassing moment he had with his friend David Livingstone. His cheeks had burned like fire when the national hero who had named an African waterfall after Queen Victoria saw the hideous flying pig that he had etched on the family heirloom when he was little. He had no idea why he had chosen to etch a most peculiar pig on something so special, and it was special, instead of having letters to show the directions, (North, East, South, West) the face of the compass had mystical symbols. The heirloom was an ancient compass passed down from generations and generations. His ancient grandfather had bought it back with him from his travels to Central Asia. Apparently he saw the legendary cave of the thousand buddhas but had to cut his trip short and returned home because of illness. He passed the compass down to his son before he died from what was known as the Black Death.

David had gone off on another expedition in Africa, so he decided to go on an adventure of his own. He wanted to feel the golden light that bathes on the buddhas. Perhaps he could also find something from the lost city of Central Asia and name it after their great Queen too. Surely the mystical symbols on the compass will guide him to something glorious?

Full of excitement and hope he set off through an enjoyable journey through Europe, (from crossiants to spaghetti). He loved sniffing the air filled with olives and cypress scents and enjoyed the salty ocean spray of the Mediterranean Sea. Warm Turkish spices flooded his nostrils once he set foot on land.

Little did he know things would take a turn for the worse. After a few weeks he didn't care for the exotic food and smells as he was evermore determined to find the Mogao Caves. Weeks turned into months, some of his men got ill and even the camels grew disobedient with the sun and heavy load beating down on them. Even his beard was beginning to itch.

They travelled through tall mountains and dry deserts. Just as they thought they were too tired to go any further the wind whispered that he had arrived. As his men sat down to rest alongside the river, the camels drank from the cool waters, begging for a longer rest. He asked and asked his men for their company to continue their search. However, his men were not willing to go, not yet, not until they had some water and a nap. So he decided to go solo.

He grabbed a backpack with a renewed sense of hope. He scanned the river and an unusual grey hill behind it searching for a cave opening. After a long time of walking alongside the flow of the water, he thought that he should climb the hill as he might get a better view. He welcomed the cool wind blowing across his face, making his hair wild. He did not see any hints of a cave and he plodded on. A few days passed and his hunger grew and his feet were sore but STILL no cave was to be seen. He felt frustrated, his ancient grandfather was an explorer, who had sighted the caves. Why couldn't he find the Mogao caves? The symbols on his compass were useless, they were meaningless and there was nothing mystical about them, or so he thought. He threw the compass angrily and it slipped between two rocks and disappeared. As soon as he had done that he regretted it. Why had he done that? The compass was precious, possibly valuable and the only heirloom his family had. He put his hand through the crack but could not feel his compass no matter how he tried.

Feeling gloomy and extremely upset he made his way back to his men and set off home. The journey back was cold and stormy and the waves crashed against the boat wildly. Rats scuttled across the uneven planks of the deck looking for food. He felt dizzy and sick from the swaying of the boat. He was miserable and sad and grew quiet and quieter on his long journey home.

When he finally arrived home, he found out that his friend David had died. That discouraged him even more from talking about his journey. He never even thought to mention one word about it until about forty years later, when he was old and frail with no heirloom to pass down, he read about an explorer named Aurel Stein who had found the Mogao caves. Stein had brought many items back from the grottoes. Items like old scrolls, beautiful sculptures and wooden prints. Stein had found many caves he even had been to a secret cave named the library cave. In this cave, Stein had found a special item that excited Stein the most. It made everyone think that people from

ancient China knew of or had seen the mythical, magical creature of a Griffin as it was said to have been etched onto one of the items that had been found.

When he saw a black and white drawing of this special item bought back by Stein, he gasped and his eyes grew wide when he realised what it actually was. He knew it was not a Griffin... it was HIS ridiculous-looking flying pig!

The Secret of the Mogao Grottoes

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Pollard, Freddie – 10

A long, long time ago, in the year 366 AD, along the old and beautiful Silk Road somewhere in the Gobi Desert, an old monk stumbled across a temple dug into the side of a mountain. This temple looked ancient and mysterious, and so with a sense of trepidation and fear, he decided to explore.

He stepped inside cautiously and gasped. Because he had found the most beautiful paintings he had ever seen. They were of Buddhist Gods flying in azure blue skies, gods walking amongst lush green fields – the vibrant colours took the old monk's breath away. The statues that looked like they had been carved just the day before were so life-like that the monk had to prod them softly to reassure himself that they weren't real. The statues were of gods, animals and soldiers, and their eyes seemed to follow the monk as he walked around the cave in amazement. There were piles of books and scrolls that told the story of Buddhist history which were handwritten in beautiful Sanskrit language. The old monk had spent his whole life helping the poor, feeding the hungry and following the teachings of Buddhism. Now, he was surrounded by the very teachings that he had lived his life by. He was so overwhelmed by it all that he had dropped his bag onto the floor. THUD!

After spending days wandering around the caves he finally left, astounded and astonished at what he just found. He was in such a daze that he even forgot that he had left his bag behind. The bag which was full of his life's work. Meanwhile, in the grottoes, a fluorescent, green light burst out of his bag.... then, like a tornado, swirled around from statue to statue! And amazingly, the statues came to life! Stretching, yawning and blinking as they got used to moving around. The monk's bag, full of his own learnings, full of the goodness and warmth of his heart and full of magic enchantments, had awakened all the beautiful art and they were ready to have fun!

From then on, every time they were on their own, the statues came to life. But if anyone was exploring the caves, they stayed still and silent.

A long time passed since the monk had made his extraordinary discovery. He had told many people about it and the caves had become popular with visitors. However, gradually as the years went by, people forgot about the caves until in 1907, a man called Marc Aurel Stein came across the grottoes in his travels. He was a Hungarian–British explorer and lecturer, known for his Central Asia Explorations. Just like the monk, he was fascinated and moved by what he saw. Paintings that looked like they had been freshly painted. Sculptures that looked like real, breathing people. There seemed to be an air of magic, peace and tranquility around the statues. Marc had never experienced anything like this before and he decided there and then that he should tell the world about the beautiful Mogao Grottoes. He explored every inch, and tried to capture the essence of the caves by drawing pictures of the wonderful things he found inside. Everyone loved his story and went to visit.

Over time, Marc began to think something was strange. He noticed that paintings had moved. Statues were in different positions. What was happening? Was he mistaken? So, he decided to visit the caves late at night when he could investigate by himself in secret.

One cold night, Marc hid outside of the caves and kept watch. Just as he was about to drop off, he suddenly smelt something smoky. Startled, he looked into the caves and he saw a fluorescent green light weaving its way through the caves and what was that? The statues were moving by themselves! They were moving fluidly and elegantly, smiling and chatting happily with each other. The animal statues grazed around the feet of the Gods and soldiers contentedly. Marc stared and was filled with a sense of wonder and calmness. He had found the secret of the Mogao Caves! He did not want to interrupt the magic so he slipped away quietly.

Back home, Marc kept his secret until he was on his deathbed. His four favourite students whom he had taught were crying around him – Lando Tremblay, Ellie Wartod, Garcelle Russel, and Jack Eghead. Lifting his weary head, Marc comforted them saying, "Please do not weep over me. I have had a rich, peaceful life teaching wonderful students like you four. Go visit the Mogao Grottoes at night and find its secret..."

So the four students decided to make the journey to the caves along the same beautiful Silk Road. Just like the monk. Just like Marc Stein. And they too waited until the cover of dark. Their patience was rewarded – they could see a fluorescent green light weaving its way through the thousands of grottoes that made up the Mogao caves.

They were in disbelief. Then they felt terrified. What on earth had they just seen? Ghosts? Aliens? Whatever they had seen, it was not something anyone had ever seen before. This was not normal!

The quartet began to run away, but the statues cried, “Stop!!! We just want to talk to you!” The four looked at one another and slowed down. “Please listen to us!” The statues cried again.

“Whhh.... What do you want?” Ellie asked, nervously.

“We want to tell you our story...”

And with that, the four students sat down in the Mogao Grottoes and watched and listened as the statues talked to them about how the goodness in the monk accidentally gave them the power to move.

And today, the statues lead tourists through the grottoes, telling everyone its history and how goodness can bring happiness and peace on earth.

I mean, who needs Disneyland when you have the Mogao Grottoes?

Book

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Tang, Hailey – 9

Once upon a time, there were two travellers. They were eager to travel around the world to find stories about the past. Andrew liked going everywhere. He is very energetic; he always gets really excited about going on adventures. But Alexander is really calm. he is the complete opposite of Andrew. He just looks around and doesn't want to think. They had heard about the ancient Mogao caves along the old, bumpy silk road, they got excited and set off on the silk road with all their equipment: a tent, a sleeping bag, enough food and water and a camping mattress. They camped on the dry desert, talking about how they could get to the caves. Until one day, Alexander said "I'm tired. I can't even see any caves. We've been walking for months" "Come on, I'm sure we can find them if we keep going." urged Andrew. But, they had completely no idea, that they were on top of the Mogao caves. Of course, there are other explorers, historians and archaeologists around the world. A few months later, a team of explorers also heard about the mysterious Mogao caves and decided to find the caves themselves just like the two explorers. A few weeks later, they found that they were looking at two pairs of footprints. There was also a very narrow slope leading down to ... somewhere. One of the explores called Fred suggested that half of the team should go down the slope. There were twelve people in the team, so six people each group. Each person turned on their bright torch lights and went down the steep, narrow slope.

It was a very long way down. It got darker every silent step they took. Some felt very tired of walking down the steep slope. When it was completely dark, they turned on their torches and realized that they were only half way down. About one hour later, they slouched to the very end. The floor was flat. They turned on their head lights. Still, it wasn't bright enough. So, three people lit their candles. Now it was better. They could see three giant dim holes. This must be Mogao caves! They got so excited that they forgot to tell the other group on their walkie-talkies. They found the Mogao caves. Again, they split up into three groups. 2 in each group. They hoped good luck to each other and stepped into the caves. What an amazing sight it was! The paintings were so beautiful! There were also sculptures and marvellous literature written and carved inside the caves!

Meanwhile, the other group was walking nonstop. They searched in mountains when they could find one. "I'm pretty sure they can find one." Panted Fred.

"Yeah! Me too!" sighed Aaron. "I've told them to send a message to as if they found the caves!"

"Do you think we should rest a bit?" asked Cecelia.

"Yeah, we should. The sun is already setting." Said the Fred. So, they set up a small camp somewhere flat and talked about what they might see when they find the Mogao caves.

Deep down in the underground, the three groups definitely do not know that it is evening already. So, they kept observing at the fantastic paintings and sculptures. One group found a book lying on the floor. The explorer was called Illa. She opened the book and "AAAAGH!" she screamed.

"What's wrong?" asked Ginny, the other explorer next to Illa.

"There was a big spider." stammered Illa shakily.

"It is just a spider." said Ginny, as she picked up the book. "Wow, this book is really old." Muttered Ginny, flipping through the pages. "This looks like the oldest printed book!"

"I'll tell the others," said Illa excitedly, holding her walkie-talkie. After they all got out of the caves, they set up a fire in the darkness and put torches all around the camp.

Up outside the other group had been arguing if they should go back to the slope or not. Some of the group wanted to go check on the other group. But the other part of the group protested that they walked far away from the slope. "Okay! We need to have a decision. Rock-Paper-Scissors shoot. They were excitedly showing what they saw in the caves.

"I saw paintings of monks. They were sitting down." One of them said.

"I saw a sculpture holding a book!" shared another.

"Hey guys, guess what I found!" cried Illa.

"What!"

She put down her rucksack and took out the ancient book. "Cool!" exclaimed George, one of the explorers. They kept talking and discussing what the book might write inside. When they got back up to the ground, they headed to

where the other people were. The team got back together and went back to their headquarters to write down what they found out. "It was like a hole to visit the past." Said Ginny. Do you remember the two travellers that tried to find the caves? Well, they were shocked when the team found the caves. If they couldn't find it, how could the team find it? So they contacted the team and asked how they could find it. So, the team told them they had to go down the slope.

One of the travellers had seen the slope but thought it led to danger, so he didn't tell the second traveller. The team went on to more successful adventures. So that's how I've found the Mongao caves.

The Secret of the Mysterious Mogao Caves

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Wong, LongLong – 9

Recently, I was going on a trip to the Mysterious Mogao Caves (莫高窟) in *Dunhuang* with my mum and dad . According to the Explanation of the Mogao Caves , it was one of the most mysterious places of Buddhism in the world and an important Chinese landmark . We went on the shuttle bus that will ride us to the caves from the Mogao Caves Digital Exhibition Center. I was so excited that I jumped up and down because this was my first time going to a place with so much Buddhist culture in China. We arrived at our destination very quickly and got off the bus . I looked at what I was seeing , there were hundreds of grottoes carved into the grey stone walls , a gigantic nine floored building that looked like a temple , and some Chinese artifacts to make prayers to the Buddhas for example , *Ding* (鼎).

After a while , I was bored of looking at the outsides of the caves so I decided it was time for me to go inside and take a look at some legendary sculptures and maybe even take some glorious photos of the Buddha and me! Dad was taking photos of the outside of the Mogao Caves . I asked my mum eagerly if I could go inside and explore a bit . She said “Okay , but you must promise me that you must come back RIGHT HERE at THIS point after you finish what you want to do inside the Mogao Caves . Also , you must come back here before 11:30 because we need to get lunch or else we’ll be STARVING!!! Also we need to get Dad back from taking those crazy photos of the caves .”

I said okay and headed off immediately for the insides of the Mysterious Mogao Caves .

In a short amount of time , I arrived inside the Mogao Cave . It was pitch dark inside but at least I had my little blue flashlight that made it a little brighter . This feeling made me feel like Great Howard Carter who discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun , in Egypt , this made me feel like the Great American archeologist Hiram Bingham who discovered the ruins of Machu Picchu , the ancient Incan settlement in Peru ...

I continued to venture in the caves and soon , I gasped at one of the most magnificent sights I have ever seen in my whole lifetime . Pillars with bright Buddha carvings that were carved very carefully , ceilings with patterns of lines and suns and flowers , walls with detailed paintings of buddhas and bodhisattvas , sitting around the Big Buddha ... Then, I took a photo of a Buddha and me . CLICK! The picture was taken . I checked the time , PHEW , there was still half an hour left before I needed to get back outside . I put my hand on one of the bodhisattvas and took another picture when the sounds of ancient Chinese music came running into my ear .

Ahhhhhhhhh!!! I landed in a thump and I muttered “Oww!” I looked around , monks wearing all sorts of ancient Chinese clothing were painting and carving on rocks . I looked at myself, I was wearing a blue and pink *Tang Dynasty* (唐朝) female dress with a golden hairpin in my hair . “This is so strange , why am I wearing a Tang Dynasty dress now ? It isn't a Mid-autumn festival or Chinese New Year , let me ask someone.” I thought . “Umm, excuse me mister monk , what Dynasty is it today ?” I asked an old monk . I knew it sounded totally ridiculous to the monk , but that’s the only way I can know where am I in the world .

The old monk chuckled “Silly girl , it is the Tang Dynasty . Look at your beautiful clothes , you’ll recognize it immediately , ” he continued to chuckle disgustingly, “ by the way , it is a year when emperor *Tang Gao Zong* (唐高宗) is ruling .”

“ What , the great Tang Gao Zong ! He is a very important emperor in Chinese history ! And his wife *Wu Ze Tian*(武则天)

is the only female Chinese emperor in Chinese history ! So I guess I’ve been teleported to the famous Tang Dynasty !This is unbelievable! But how do I go back?” I wondered urgently.

The another old monk chuckled and continued the other monks sentence with lots of things I didn’t understand about the Ancient Tang Dynasty government about advisors and ministers but his last sentence made me shiver with fear , “ Little girl , Little girl , beware of the dangers out here in the desert , you must go back to *Chang An* (长安)and live a peaceful life . Not in the threatening Gobi Desert where people share death together .”

And when he finished the last word of his sentence, fierce wind circled around me and in the blink of an eye , I was back in the Modern Era . No more chuckling monks , no more Tang Dynasty and no more fear . I stood up to my feet , took the last picture of the bodhisattva and walked out of the cave in exhaustion. When I got out of the cave , I asked my mum “Can we have some chicken and corn for lunch ?” My mum nodded and smiled , and we went on the shuttle bus and went to eat our lunch .

Ten years later, when I was 19 , during my summer vacations , I went to the Mysterious Mogao Caves again with my friends Ivy and Jasmine , but that is completely another story.

The Spirit Caves

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yeung, Jacqueline – 10

More than a thousand years ago, a monk was riding on a miserable donkey on the long path of the Silk Road, while feeling quite down and depressed himself. After miles of pain, suffering and sunburn, he had no high hopes for the journey ahead. Instantly, as if the weather could read his thoughts, his eyes widened he stopped abruptly at the foot of a tall, slender cave. The monk immediately knew that this cave stood out from the rest. It was different somehow. As he entered the cavern, he felt connected to it somehow. This puzzled him deeply. He knew that there was something special about the cave, he just didn't know what it was. Drawn to this palace of wonder, he spent days in it, gradually discovering the cave's majestic secrets. 'The world holds many secrets,' said the astounded monk. 'But this cave must be the biggest secret of all.' And it was. However, the monk had yet to discover it. Before his departure, he vowed to find this cave again. The monk felt his sorrowful spirits lift. It was the last happy thought he had before he flew up into the Heavens.

Years after the monk's death, people came to find the cave the monk had talked about in his will. They brought valuables, including gold and crystals to honour him. Then, in the same place the monk had stopped at many years ago, they thought to themselves, 'Could this be it? The cave of magic and wonder?' They had this thought as they entered the cave, eagerly and slowly. All their questions were answered as they walked into the cave. 'What the monk said was true. This really is a cave of mysteries and wonder.' And it was. The people soon also felt drawn to the cave. It was a time of hobbies, stories and legends... it was magical.

Everything they created had a destiny. Each fortune alone would be buried for centuries to come. The spirit cave soon became lost in history and no more than a dusty legend down as people took other routes. In less than 100 years, the spirit cave stood there buried in the dirt. This couldn't be the end, could it? There had to be more to the story. And there was. But not until a thousand years later. Then, as time unfolded itself, the miracle happened. It was re-discovered.

The spirit cave was re-discovered by a young maid. Her name, Mabel, and her job: cleaning the castle. She was a hard worker, but wasn't as good as she looked. Every night she would steal food or rubies from the palace and rush back to her house by the hill to serve her family, as they were very poor. She was also a very mischievous girl. Back to the cave, as it was soon to be re-discovered. It all began on the hot, humid day of May 1956. Mabel was given her first and last task of the day. To dig up the Queen's ancient ruby bracelet. Mabel knew, as well as the rest of the staff, that the Queen was a magpie. She would always be very specific about her jewellery, always addressing them like people. 'Mabel', she had begun, 'find my 1000-year-old Chinese dragon, ruby red jasper bracelet. And then you shall be dismissed. Oh, and it should be by the hill side. Dear me, I must have dropped it when I was taking my morning stroll.' She gave a small grin then. 'Now off with you!' She waved her hand, and Mabel walked stiffly out of the royal's room. Mabel carelessly strolled through the Royal's enormous, emerald garden, walking straight onto the grass instead of the stone pavement. She plucked a ruby from the golden chair and put it into her pocket. Mabel wandered into the gardening shed, allowing her mind to stretch its thoughts as she absentmindedly grabbed a decidedly large shovel. A butterfly flew past her and towards the direction of the mountain, reminding her of her family. The hill might be a good place to start, Mabel thought to herself. After all, that is where the Queen said her bracelet would be. And that was where her great discovery was made.

After digging for many hours, her shovel hit a hard surface. Now what might this be, she wondered. Eager and puzzled, she decided to dig around the strange rock. Later she found out that it wasn't a rock after all. It had a small opening on the top, but it was very tiny. Mabel called loudly, for the castle miners. They came in a hurry, bringing their finest gear. Her mouth still wide open from the shock of the discovery, Mabel stepped back, afraid to get too close to the noisy, dirty drilling machines. As she did, her pocket came loose and the ruby came tumbling out. It rolled onto the top of the cave, matching the ruby that was already there. She saw in her mind a civilisation of people in that cave. She saw art, people telling stories and so much more. Mabel immediately picked it off the floor and ran to the hillside, by the river. She cried out to the waterfall:

“Oh river, I know that you are old, but please tell me where this ruby is from. I feel like there is something special about this gemstone, even though I plucked it from a chair. How is it connected to me? Why is connected to me? What have I got to do with it?”

When the river did not answer, Mabel burst into tears. She was crying for her future, which did not seem so bright in her eyes. Her tears dripped into the river as it carried them along.

“Do not fear, young girl”, a voice said back, “The ruby in your hands is part of your future. There is nothing wrong with that, is there?”

Mabel’s eyes widened.

“It is? But why? Why me?”

“You have been chosen to bring on the fate of the holy spirit cave.” answered the river.

Upon hearing this, Mabel ran back to the palace, back to where she started, and back to her thoughts, where the cave had been newly dugout. The miners stood by it, looking very proud of themselves. The scientists researched the cave, digging out many things that were said didn’t exist. Mabel never did find the Queen’s bracelet though. A legend states it was demolished along with the ground. Nobody knew what happened to it. As the sunset that night, Mabel let the ruby slip into the river, it was better than the scientists found it. After all, it was her little secret, and she was determined to keep it. She no longer stole from the palace. As the ruby drifted out of sight, so did the thought of Mabel herself being unimportant.

Curse of the Abbot

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Zhu, Ethan – 10

The Abbot

He had been travelling for ages in search of the perfect place for literature. Envisioned with the image of a thousand Buddhas bathed in shining golden light, yet with no place suitable to display them. And the fact the emperor had justified the means of building underground. A meaningless action to stop the spread of so-called mysticism when they concocted those themselves! Digging the caves, one hand at a time filled everything with elaborate masterpieces. He printed books and, most importantly, had a thousand gold buddhas in gold in the vicinity. The area became a monastery, and a grant from the ruling families raised the cave count to a thousand. But he could not stop there, this was his creation! Of all shares, he would be the sole owner of this wonder! The History Books! Printed with his name everywhere and anywhere! Desperate for some glory, he took a drastic measure and left.

As everyone was starting to leave for the last time, he gathered all the white sand he had collected from the Gobi Desert that had blown here and started to seal up the caves with the power of the Wind and Water helping, cursing anybody who dared to enter again. As the light started to set on the world, the next time it would encounter light would only be a few thousand years. As the red hue gradually faded over the horizon, the Abbot slipped and fell to his death.

The Middleman

A day in Tokyo started as usual for people, but Otani Kuzui was not a normal person. And he was not in Tokyo either, he was in the conquered territory of the enemy, exploring recently discovered caves filled with literature, art and porcelain. He was just entering with his group when the doors slammed shut. The air was filled with a cloud of musty dust.

The light disappeared.

Otani Kuzui was not a coward but rather the risk-taker, he was always the one who led the group and took chances. The maze-like corridors were unforgiving and twisted into complex patterns of levels. The treasures distracted everybody, having everyone wander in different directions.

He found himself, no group, no companionship, in front of a glowing door with serpentine patterns. The hole in the door gazed at him as if expecting this day. It was a creepy sight, but curiosity got the better of him. Upon entering, he saw gold, jade and opal pottery shatter before his eyes. The impact blinded him. But he could not stop from a minor injury.

Hobbling back into the outside, he slipped on a rock and fell over the cliff. The last thing he would ever experience was a blinding pain all over his body, intense heat roasting him from all sides for a split second before everything turned black.

The Explorer

A mote of dust that may have sat for a century floated down and sparkled as it contacted burning flames. Howls of the night echoed through the intricate chambers as a small light weaved itself through the corridors and hallways. The Daedalian paths made every step treacherous, yet the magnificent carvings and statues urged at it, invited it, even dared it to venture deeper.

As the burning flame started up a flight of stairs, he could no longer hold in its excitement. Footsteps reflected onto the walls at a rushing pace as it raced up and up, ghosts and spirits seemed to stir and darkness took hold, but it seemed not to care, it kept going and going. Running with such determination, he didn't notice the burnt torch.

Finally, he stopped, wheezing and panting like a pug. The atmosphere was off, it seemed as if something had placed a magnet inside of the hall. As he checked the walls, he noticed a sealed-off door. Red light glinted in the intricate patterns and arrangements, but one small detail escaped his attention, a hole, ominously staring at him.

The door swung open.

The room was stuffed with the most exquisite and astounding art and porcelain he'd ever seen. There were treasures everywhere. Gold, Jade, Opal and much more were scattered around, but it seemed unusual. It was unnatural. There was a decayed mess in front of him pierced with gems. Glancing again, he realised to his utmost horror everything he was looking at was destroyed, looted and razed to the ground.

The burning hope that had kept rising in his heart extinguished seeing the destruction that had presented itself so abruptly. His knees fell and shoulders slackened as his heart stopped mid-beat, and the one thing that had kept him carrying along shattered. As he turned to leave the room, he saw the one thing that had not been touched, a book, dismayed, he dropped the manuscript and left the room untouched.

As he retraced his steps through the corridors, he felt his empty heart slide between his ribs. His muscles ached as the tiring steps seeped the strength out of him. As he fought his way up the pathways, he saw the exit. With a final nudge, he was in the open, the breeze billowed as the light fought its way through the darkness. The smoke in the distance marked the campfire, returning, he fell straight into a cliffside and tumbled down to his death.