

# Poetry

Group 4



# Legends and Lies

*Carmel School – Elsa High School, Berman, Orly – 15*

A stolen key that opens the doors to a single bookshelf. Should have seen the signs,  
Books with missing pages never before seen in his village,  
Not long until his tale too is a ripped page in a story.  
Ancient legends of enchantments and immortality sit between the lines,  
Wanting attention like a gallery image,  
Rather than being burned in a flame of so-called glory.

Burning leather whips slash his back, leaving welts upon his spine,  
Dark thoughts intrude his mind, leaving the sweet scent of death.  
“Half man half beast, the immortal hybrid feeds off the living”  
Whispers from his subconscious flood though, repeating only that line.  
The agonising pain won't stop until he takes his last breath,  
Holding on to every moment, the trial of his expulsion was made without forgiving.

Despair and Desiccation flood the desert land,  
Siren sounds compel the lonesome man to follow the path.  
A deceitful cave will soon remove its masks, revealing its true face.  
Carvings on the walls tell secrets of what is to be contraband.  
The air feels heavy, like it's carrying centuries of anger and wrath.  
Artefacts, Literature and Enchantments fill the chamber like flowers in a vase.

His whole body, drawn to a dusty leather book in the corner,  
A grimoire filled with incantations and sorcery, the ink almost bleeding off the page.  
He reads the words so naturally, like he wrote them himself.  
Although he is nothing but a simple foreigner,  
The more he reads the harder it becomes for him to escape the cage.  
The same siren sounds compel him to read like he did with the secret bookshelf.

His head is screaming at him to read the last page. The Hollow.  
A blue shimmer shines upon the cave wall,  
The legend of The Hollow is one ripped from the village books,  
An ancient ancestor who fed on power, caressing gifted people to follow.  
It had grown more powerful through death, sending out its secret call,  
Terrorising the unfortunate souls who came across its tale, slowly sinking in its hooks.

Unaware of what The Hollow was doing, embedding itself into his subconscious mind  
Accessing the darkest parts of his soul, twisting around his heart,  
The Hollow had complete control.  
The ability to see, yet he's completely blind,  
Power fills his blood, bubbling, boiling, bursting and it's only the start.  
Exploring the cave for more, searching around corners like he's on patrol.  
The books are shouting but it's a deafening silence,  
The Hollow won't stop until it's free, the fire burns hotter and hotter.  
Terror and disgrace follow him like a shadow in the sun.  
Having gained enough knowledge to destroy the world with great violence,  
Trying to breathe but his head is underwater.  
In the eyes of The Hollow, all will be won.

A small crevice in the cave wall had the same blue light shining upon it,  
As he creeps inside, there is nothing but a gold framed painting.  
The Hollow whispers in his ear to stay away, but for some reason he cannot resist the urge,  
Words around the frame, written like poetry. Leaning in to read just a bit.  
“Blue lights appear on the village walls like the reflection of heavy raining,  
Kids scream at the sight of a childhood myth, The Hollow's merge”.

Merging with the kind and pure hearted, stealing bodies to then leave them in the dust,  
The Hollow feeds on strength. Nearing the end, he reads the last two lines.  
Disgusted with realisation, he's unable to stand,  
A feeling of betrayal, he thought was his fault. All the broken trust.  
Crept into his mind from the very beginning, tangled up like vines,

If only he could confront his unwanted passenger as his final demand.

“Half man half beast, the immortal hybrid feeds off the living,  
Death follows within the hour of his fatal bite”.  
I am haunted by these words, hopefully I am safe from the curse  
The Hollow promised me power in return, but it took more than it was giving.  
I am surrounded by this constant darkness, I see no light,  
It’s claws were too deep, the more I struggled to survive the more the pain became worse.

After taking my last breath, I am free from the agonising pain now, ready to let go.  
My village needs a saviour from The Hollow’s exigency, I lack the strength to do so myself,  
I can’t fight any longer, my soul is like a supernova, exploding through the sky. I’m shattered.  
My story will be left here amongst the others. One day people will know.  
With my soul now free, I will not be a ripped page in a book on a crowded shelf,  
A sense of freedom. Slowly collecting pieces of my past self, I will no longer be shattered.

## Temple

*Creative Secondary School, Chan, Rody – 15*

Calm breeze—  
Pain? Suffering? Greed?  
Must be Relinquished  
Abyss of Emotions  
Incantations Enlightenment  
Namu amida Daibutsu  
Gently empty demon confiNmind  
destroy deviants  
destroy kleptomania  
destroy deceit  
N i r v a n a.

## The Temple

*Creative Secondary School, Chard, Chloe – 15*

From walking through the desert under the sizzling sun  
And pushing through the harsh winter winds  
I finally reach it  
The temple  
With blisters and cuts on my skin  
I light a torch  
And crawl my way in  
Past the creatures and the many crystals in the cave  
I come across a ray of light from where a symbol is engraved  
I strike the wall from which the light illuminates  
And climb through the small crack I made  
I crawl towards the figure  
Of the man sat on the edge of the mountain  
But my body goes stiff as I approach the cliff.  
My vision goes blurry and finally black  
On the mountain, I lie  
A body  
motionless, lifeless  
On its back

## When the Doves Cry

*Creative Secondary School, Clarkson, Ethan – 15*

The Mogao Grottoes gives me the shivers  
Located on the east side of China  
Wind so smooth it be moving like rivers  
Guiding me to the holy messiah

There is no way for the rain to fall down  
There is no place for the doves' sorrow  
Bearing the sweet, sweet sunshine all around  
There is no time here that we can borrow

There are the towns where there is no city  
There are sounds which can be heard at the end  
There was a time when all was so pretty  
There is something that I can comprehend

Sounds echo when all the animals cry  
Just wishing for one more chance to not die

## Summer in the Grotto

*Creative Secondary School, Gabutina, Kimiko – 16*

Instead of a trip to the Bahamas  
stuck in some spiritual purgatory  
worshipping something, praying to Buddhas  
And thus my children, begins the story

'Cause then I see him... in all his glory  
look how he's shimmering under the sun  
And praising him should be mandatory  
not an imperfection or flaw, not one

So farewell my beautiful grotto fling  
Bye for now, but you won't be forgotten  
The pain in my heart is excruciating  
Treasuring the memories I've gotten

Why am I already wondering when,  
Oh how I will never see him again

## What is Left

*Creative Secondary School, Harper, Sanibel – 16*

A place of worship,  
Dedication to their faith,  
Reflection and peace,  
Snap! Snap! Goes the camera,  
Now a tourist attraction.

## Grotto

*Creative Secondary School, Hui, Keon – 16*

Going downstream on the  
River of history,  
On the bank down 1600 years  
The art of the forgotten, still present in the moment  
Telling stories  
Of the past

## Realisation

*Creative Secondary School, Lai, Sharon – 15*

Grey rocks surround  
Raging sounds  
Of animals living inside  
Trinity of the Buddhas  
Tremoring, the man inside  
Obediently bows down

# Darkness

*Creative Secondary School, Lee, Isaac – 15*

Here crew,  
What's that?  
As we swiftly fly through the winds,  
We find something.

In we go,  
Deep and dark,  
Discovering and detecting,  
Nothing but confusion.  
As a wall closes in on us,  
We see a beating heart,  
We can feel it,  
We can touch it...

Down into the caves,  
Light is lost,  
Like a basement without lights,  
Like a maze in without an exit.  
Walls of stone,  
Statues of limestone,  
Artifacts of gold,  
Paintings on walls,  
Stretching out in front of us.  
Down the stairs,  
Nothing but stone,  
More endless exploration.

Deeper down we go,  
Nothing but darkness,  
Cold continues,  
Rooms, Corridors,  
All unseen.  
Lost like a bird,  
Flying in the sky,  
Endlessly...

Trapped,  
Desperate,  
Hopeless,  
Praying for light.

We walk and walk,  
We seek and seek,  
Until an eternity has passed,  
We find the light!  
Poking through a collapsed ceiling,

We can see our fingers,  
We can see ourselves,  
Vision slowly increases,  
We can leave,  
At last...  
We are free...

Leaving the caves,

A sight we never thought of,  
We never imagined,  
We'd see again...

## Promised Land

*Creative Secondary School, Lee, Jasper – 15*

Hulking Buddhas in jaw-dropping grottos  
Located in the heart of the mainland  
Where tourists and Buddhists come say hello  
Leading everyone to their promised land

Immense and staggering carvings on rocks  
Marks the spread of hope in a religion  
Widening from India to Bangkok  
Building up a following of thousands

Start of civilization carved on walls  
Forming a colony of disciples  
Rescuing adherents from devil's maw  
Saving humanity with his arrival

The arrival of peace and unity  
Forming harmonious communities

## Winter in the Grotto

*Creative Secondary School, Tessariol, Asia – 15*

Now, instead of watching the Northern lights  
I find myself back, where it all started  
Tired of the number of sleepless nights  
Ever since then, I've kept my heart guarded

The grotto, I look up and admire  
All the history and secrets it holds  
All the prayers and all the desires  
You'll find a stone heart, not one made of gold

I'm grateful I decided not to stalk...  
because that would have pushed him away more  
I'll see him again, once the statue talks  
It's fine, I still have more years to explore

Feels quite cathartic, I feel kind of free  
At least I know, it was not meant to be

## Sonnet de Grotto

*Creative Secondary School, Wong, Danny – 16*

In the grotto, which lies in the desert,  
We seek ancestors, those who we worship.  
We've come such a long way, from our own yurts,  
To serve them well, they might give us a dip.

We approach them, we kneel, and start to pray,  
The spirits hear our words, then they respond.  
“Thank you for showing our people the way,  
We reward you with a dip in the pond”.

We were so grateful, and send them our thanks,  
For we know we shall continue to serve.  
We give them some food to fill up their tanks,  
We left for the pond, just around the curve.

We dipped our heads in, and splashed some water  
For this will only make our deeds better.

## The Story of Yuanku

*Creative Secondary School, Yu, Justin – 15*

Curious Yuanku traveled on his way  
Alone and along this bone-dry place  
Nothing to be seen, just the sun burning bright  
Except that small cave that hid on his right.

Sharp-eyed Yuanku went into the cave  
Settled down, and decided to stay  
Cool and cozy, unlike the desert outside  
Here could be a station for people to halt their ride.

Creative Yuanku started drawing on the walls  
Designing the ceiling, and also the floors  
Travellers passed by and stopped to see  
What the grottoes had finally come to be.

Digging and digging, more caves were made  
Day by day, plans for more caves were laid  
People came from the east and the west  
Grottoes filled with jewels, like a magpie's nest.

Hundreds of sculptures and thousands of paintings  
Decorated the grottoes like a staining  
Buddhists worked without rotation  
Grottoes reflected their imagination.

Long after Yuanku passed away  
People decided not to stay  
Abandoned grottoes covered by the sand  
Forgotten by people in this empty land.

Little Yuanku had travelled on his way  
And created the grottoes in this unexpected place  
Thousands of years since the grottoes lost their sound  
Thousands of mysteries to be found...



# Tales from the Mogao Grottoes – In the Place of Apogee

*ESF Island School, Babu, Nivedha – 14*

In the place of Apogee  
Set in East of Stone  
A vision Glowed  
Glowed Gold

A thousand of the Awakened One's Shone

A man Began his odysseys all alone  
Until his sight was known and grown

Enlightenment  
Awakened Ascent  
The Truth of all Fours  
Where stories were told

One Soul Forever  
Changes like the River  
Life is Endless  
It is you who Possess

Do not Expect  
Help the Lifeless  
Prince Mahasattva  
Did it for Himself

Honesty, Sivi  
Commendable Honour  
Filial, Syama  
Love is Stronger

The Stories which brought Apogee Together

# Perfection

*ESF Sha Tin College, Lai, Hei Yiu Justin - 14*

“I march towards death  
though I wish it were my own”  
Ah... perfection

But.. is it really?

I heard there was a special place  
Where men could escape  
the prison of perfection

A library of walls  
The cave of a thousand Buddhas

I am the artist  
I am the art  
I... am beauty.

But...

I am worthless

I am pitiful

I am trash

No...

I will show them all  
Wicked and divine

I am infinite

My art is infinite

My art is infinite

My...?

My art?

Is it my art?  
Is it not just...?

My pain?

My struggles?

My... my life

My

...?

# Timelessness

*Heep Yunn School, Chan, Lok Yan Betty – 17*

An oasis —  
in the desert cathay,  
chanced upon  
by a pious monk on a pilgrimage.  
Its sweet spring waters  
quenched the traveler's thirst.  
There I emerged:  
golden, glistening, glorious  
“*Maitreya!*” he gasped,  
“*Splendiferous.*”

Into a scarp he carved such cave with  
ascending  
    levels  
        of  
            prickly-red  
                porches  
and lined the walls with works of art  
that imitate my proportions to  
replicate his vision.

Soon arrived the devout  
who sought to construct  
a place divine  
a beehive of grottoes  
for worship and meditation.  
A site christened — the Mogao Caves!  
None higher; none superior.  
There I sat:  
cross-ankled on a throne  
flanked by russet lions  
my copper-sculpted body round and rotund  
bare except for a clay-moulded skirt,  
my lotus-bud eyes bespoke  
serenity and solemnity.

Before me came men after men —  
corrupted sinners, saintlike souls  
unlettered folk, scholastic savants.  
Their bodies are a miniature clone of mine.  
Their faces are sunflowers  
seeking nourishment  
in every nook and cranny  
under every eave, every niche of the caverns

to attain

*Enlightenment* —

elaborate murals of Buddha's renounce of the temptations offered by demon Mara  
his right hand caressing the ground  
the 'earth-touching' gesture  
calling on the Earth Goddess to affirm his awakening

to learn

*self-sacrifice* —

scrolls in the Library Cave

recounting King Sivi's bloody thigh  
in the talons of a hawk  
in lieu of the dove  
to understand  
*Samsara* —  
the endless cycle of birth and death  
personified by sentient beings of Heaven  
erected out of mud and reeds.

Worshippers pored over  
the vast canvas of murals, sculptures, *Jataka Tales*,  
an amalgamation of teachings and virtues

And then they leave.

Bodies light with cravings gone  
eyes illuminated by the incandescent light  
of *Wisdom*  
And then more came.

There, deep in the caves, I observed:  
the dawn of the Tang Empire.  
I was the heart of a route to the West;  
the axis merchants on camels spun around.  
The teachings and virtues whispered  
from the still lips of mine, the silent scrolls of time  
to a pilgrim then his wife and then a merchant and then a marketplace for people of foreign skin and tongue.  
I felt the earth rumble, a breeze carrying the scent of freshly-dug soil —  
the Mogao Caves multiplied.

The presence of deities was more palpable than ever.  
It was the calm before the storm.

It presaged a long and trying time, and  
there, I helplessly witnessed:  
the persecution of my faithful worshippers.  
A fuse, lit by the Emperor, that set our faith aflame  
an accusation of social and religious disruption, raised by the dubious,  
that almost left us in ruins.  
Our monks and nuns stripped of their ordination  
forced into laylife our generous patrons  
confiscated of their wealth our shrines and temples  
abolished  
then  
demolished.

All but the caves.  
The caves were forsaken.

And  
eventually  
forgotten.

For what felt like centuries  
I sat  
cross-ankled on a cracked throne  
flanked by discoloured lions  
my copper-sculpted body tainted green  
no longer bare but clad in a layer of dust.

Nonetheless, my lotus–bud eyes still bespoke  
serenity and solemnity.

I listened to the incessant ticking of timeless time  
the trickle of dried paint falling off the walls  
like chapped skin peeled off by winter’s wind  
the tumble of perched scrolls that  
my arms were too rigid to rearrange.

Still, my faith was ever–steady  
my tranquility ever–present.  
The paste used as paint had darkened  
but eyes would forever brighten  
when a beholder’s glance  
flit over the images portrayed.

And then...

At last!  
After dynasties have  
risen and fallen  
risen and fallen again —  
the Mogao Caves were discovered!  
By Western wanderers with their laudable curiosity  
enthralled by our array of historical gems and religious treasure  
revive and preserve they did.

Now  
flocks of people come before me  
bringing rich paint,  
flashing bright lights that go  
“Snap!”  
They replicate my proportions,  
to demonstrate evolution  
And in return to them  
I grant utmost karmic merit.

The lessons and values disseminate  
from my old cavernous home, the century–long heritage  
to an artist then his wife and then a local and then an exhibition for people of foreign skin and tongue.

A trove of art —  
in the desert cathay,  
is restored by ardent believers.  
Its tales unfold  
yet there are treasures untold.  
There I reside:  
the Mogao Caves  
“Priceless!” They gasp.  
No,  
timeless.

# Sacred Buddha

*Heep Yunn School, Chen, Man Chin – 17*

★★ Li Chun (The Beginning of Spring) ★★

Sedate and still, as the hazel world had been  
I, an ordinary piece of chalk—white Kaolinite  
sat somewhere deep down in the soil.

*Have you  
beheld the Mingsha Mountain?  
They asked,  
The desert in Dunhuang?  
A flaxen dragon of billions and trillions of metres in length  
soaring high up to the sky, where the cool breeze in air tickles your chin, and  
with the crescent lake below, like a still glass of azure, meticulously reflecting the natural paradise?*

*There lies some grottoes...  
The secret caches...  
Of the four-legged intellectuals...*

So I longed  
and longed  
for the time I could leave the dirt  
longing for the moment they took me to the caves  
longing for the chance  
to see the world

and finally

hearty chortle creeping from far to near  
a troop of four-legged breed came  
with hammers in their hands  
flaring and glaring  
in dread aggression

Before I could bid farewell to my friends  
I were transported to the Mogao Grottoes,  
where they first splintered me  
into

innumerable

pieces

and mixed me

with other ingredients

then glued everything again

I forgot

how

long

I

had

slumbered

★★ Li Xia (The beginning of Summer) ★★

I was a mixture of porcelain  
wrapped  
in a gold foil of flamboyance

The “*Sacred Buddha*”  
so they call me

The troop of daunting pilgrims came, again  
a legion knelt down before me  
and chanted in a galling harmony:

*“O Blessed One,  
Honourable Buddha!*

*Our goodness and glee!  
Conferrer of philanthropy!*

*Thee, who love all beings without exception,  
Protect us and our master, in all conditions!”*

I just stared blankly.

Sometimes when the scorching heat of rays  
enshrouded the earth  
and when the warm breeze was chuckling and  
greeting the long stretches of camels and visitors  
deep murmur of thousands echoed in the mountain  
I would then hear  
the subtle chirping of  
an unknown bird  
somewhere

but was soon disrupted  
by man’s maddening chanting:

*“Praise our young master,  
For invoking the Great Buddha!*

*Commendation for his agreeable countenance,  
Which makes our clan a haven from turbulence!*

*When he inhales, the flower blossoms!  
When he blinks, the economy burgeons!*

*With him, the world is sublime!  
Fortune’s in the hands of yours and mine!”*

I remain silent  
and unmoved

★★ Qiu Fen (the Autumnal Equinox) ★★

I was still the “Golden Buddha”  
but slowly and subtly  
like the peeling of paints  
my colour wore out  
my eyelid was encumbered by an invisible weight

and never had I felt so tired before

Though immovable in the Mogao Caves  
I saw through my dusty eyes  
I felt with my chalky soul  
and I knew  
there was a war –  
the country was under attack

BOOM! BOOM!

The rapid firing of furious flames  
followed by  
painful pile of perished souls  
and dreadful cries and woeful weeping  
while the air  
was shot with crimson splashes of blood  
with ashes languishing

The “*honourable young master*”  
with a bronze jue on his left hand and an iron rod on his right  
roared with his blood–shot eyes

Buddhaaaa

Y’must paay for brekin’ your promoussee  
of protectin’ m’ country!

Catastrophee has landed aaand

My peeple are in a freenzied commoootion!

They smacked and smashed and squashed me  
into pieces  
and his men cheered  
in a ravenous exultant

No pain hit me  
as I was glad that I had returned to the grounds  
where I was from  
no longer bothered by the tumults of the four–legged beasts.

★★ Da Han (Great Cold) ★★

The country is  
nothing  
but burnt  
rubbles and remnants

One can occasionally discern  
the suffocating smoke smouldering in unresting ashes

The “ex–young master”  
or  
a feeble walking skeleton wrapped with torn grey clothing  
is on an exile



*“Why shall you detest me so heartily, Buddha?  
How have I wronged you  
Prompting you to make my life a misery?  
Why should you,  
Why, just why?”*

Sigh

Yet  
among the dusty gale of horses and carts  
a sapling bursts  
within the soil  
reviving this infernal land with all its strength  
and slightly tilting my head  
I smile and I know

*“Here comes spring again”*

# To: Whomever Seeking an Adventure

*Heep Yunn School, Fong, Hoi Ching – 17*

to: whomever seeking an adventure  
re: a yearning so soft  
and a longing so tender  
to find existence in a dream  
in an oasis we long to see

the first step entails  
a history so sweepingly  
sensuous, a fascination spanning  
across a century of  
fulfillment and  
wonder

legend tells its tale where  
from a buddhist to another  
the cave filled  
with spectaculars of art and  
sensational sculptures  
so that the eye would feel  
awe in the behelded  
beauty of the sorcery  
of the creation

a second step reveals  
the exaltation of mankind  
as the scene unravels a breath  
of heavenly paintings that  
coat the ceilings and  
walls

and in thine eyes shine the striking  
imagery of buddhas  
and bodhisattvas  
and fairies  
in such presence  
would thee not exclaim at the  
solemnity of the Buddha  
grand as the terrors of Hell  
for the wicked?  
Would thee who,  
in search of an adventure,  
not excite at the glories of  
the blissful backdrop  
where marvel and  
miracles lie?

the next few steps unveil  
the picturesque portrayal of the  
essence of life and the beauty of  
living – springing to action from the  
literature, murals and art,  
the tales of hunters, the flair  
of dolled ladies, the movements of  
stars, the competition between  
philosophers  
so that the heart would fill  
in content, in gladness at  
the sight of the  
prosperity of  
life

but beyond the brilliant beauty lies  
in a once popular marketplace  
a traveler's stop, a religious shrine  
a place of pilgrimage  
a sanctuary of the saint and the sacred  
would thee not bow in reverence to  
the majesty of the magic these caves carry?  
would thee who  
in search of an adventure  
not dance in wonderment of  
the divinity of the scenery?

the last few steps mark the  
end of the journey  
of an adventure where wonders took flight  
exiting the enchantment of  
murals, textiles, art, literature and  
ancient documents  
one simply has not time  
enough to appreciate the devoutness of the place  
and disappointed one must feel at departure  
drowsy and dreary  
but the body remembers –  
as one takes their final step  
the indescribable saccharine sensations of sanctity  
swim through our veins  
and this is where  
we come to comprehend:  
in our hearts, the legend lives on.

# Nirvana

*Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School, Poon, Yeuk – 15*

a grotto appeals like a luring bait  
as a beacon in the yellow seas  
to a bhikku in novitiate  
who slowly takes a tempting greeze

He docks at the peculiar bay  
A haven where merchandise nourished  
Like an offramp of a major freeway  
Different cultures converged and flourished

Standing over oscillating kings  
It became the epitome  
The distillation of everything  
Of chinese culture's divinity.

~

The Cycles of Life never end  
Eternally bound in the loop of time  
For another lifetime you spend  
The Nirvana is an unending paradigm

~

Finally meeting its inevitable demise  
When people turn to wealthier climes  
A dusty legend people surmised  
Sacred art locked in prison of time

~

Trapped in chains of the unerring loop  
The non-bowing soul struggles to shine  
It plots an unprecedented coup  
To restore its rightful place prime

~

In a curious search fatefully  
they stumble upon the sleeping giant  
awakened is a long lost friary  
the lost keys unchain the defiant

Marvels of the past unleashes ahead  
The tunnel to a forgotten space  
News of the lost legend quickly spread  
The ancient paths they now will retrace

# Peerless Reminiscence

*International College Hong Kong, Senaratne, Sera – 15*

Hidden –

Reap with millennia of ancient truth  
Carved of galleries of thought  
Travelling day through night, forgotten  
Beneath sabulous towers of isolation

Nothing above, nothing below  
Caught within prickling wild  
Dark flowing edges of earth  
Scarlet-seasoned tan

Resplendent treasures held deep inside  
Lotus enlightening among unassuming land  
Surrounded by a hexad of followers  
Soaring fractals of emerald and sundown

Crepuscule and new silhouettes emerge  
Unblinking in bewildering last light  
Mirage of a thousand monks besides  
Emulsions of turquoise and mandarin

Countless thresholds awaiting their reveal  
Colossal figure of belief laid to sleep  
Griffin's legs and echoes of the past  
Clads of royal armour and shield

Future, present, past altogether  
Bound tightly together with silk and scroll  
Underneath those dunes untouched for so long  
Now rebirth to teach another.

# The Great Mogao Caves

*Marymount Secondary School, To, Etta – 16*

Mogao Caves are what we see —  
Murals, Sculptures, the Buddhist Temples —  
Ancient Manuscripts, Rare Textiles —  
Mogao Caves are what we hear —  
Roosters crowing, Crickets chirping —  
Birds singing, wind howling —  
Mogao Caves are what we know —  
But their most inner mysterious side is yet to be unravelled —  
The interminable source of treasures  
Shall satisfy our thirst for the unexplored.

# The Mogao Grottoes

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Shao, Hsiang Han – 15*

Not coquettish, not desolate  
but simple yet vigorous.  
The Mogao Caves speaks of  
a thousand years of wind and sand,  
holding the weight of history for centuries.

The rise and fall of dynasties,  
the reincarnation of life and  
the survival of a species is written on the walls.

In the Mogao Grottoes, you relive the  
bitterness,  
sweetness,  
brilliance and the  
rage of civilizations.

Sights, sounds and feelings  
intertwine, disperse and fly away telling  
of an immortal myth.

The Mogao Grottoes, a meaningful story.  
The Mogao Grottoes, an ancient tune.  
The Mogao Grottoes, a myth that will never die.

# The Tunnel to a Lost World

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Shirley, Katija Isabella – 15*

A passage taken by many,  
through valleys, mountains and rivers.  
The Dachuan River – an oasis.

Rich with potential  
and shaded from the coarse cut-throat land.  
Rich with handcrafted caves  
filled with sculptures as strong as its creators.  
Rich with traditions of passers-by Maitreya  
sitting poised and cross-legged.  
Rich with history and culture  
and full of expression.

An elevated ceiling withstands copious time.  
The western wall cradles three sacred artefacts.  
Characters on the walls are the missing key to unlock the past;  
they talk of virtues as they seek luck in their next life.  
The cells are homes to the monks  
whose gods and myths unveil before them.

Route's change, dust settles.

The once hustling and bustling Mogao caves  
are forgotten,  
reduced to dusty legends.

Adored creations,  
crumble  
after years of isolation.

The 'Tunnel to a lost world'  
boasts words of scholars  
from around the world  
who uncover secrets,  
once cemented in time.  
Murals that engulf 700 caves,  
the oldest printed book  
and hidden sculptures come to life  
in Literature today.

## Sources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R29A0GyLYIE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHF5QCb-mKY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq43z8izEnQ>

# Who am I?

*Singapore International School, Boey, Jun Wei – 15*

What am I?

I am your existence.

I am your intelligence.

I am your history.

Buried within me, the knowledge you seek.

I am no god.

I am no deity.

I am no undying being.

I am but a keeper of time. Slowly waiting.

I must hold back.

I cannot release, the knowledge I keep

For if done too early, wars shall rage

And conflicts shall scorch the earth to black.

What knowledge you ask,

What information must I mask

Secrets of the world, how it came to be made.

Mysteries which you cannot yet comprehend.

But a day will come

When you are all ready.

To welcome and accept the knowledge I keep.

But till then, I will hold within me

the information that you need,

that you always seek

Patience, and answers shall come.

Your curiosity shall be satisfied.

Wait many more years.

And I shall extend further,

my winding tunnels and endless knowledge.

And you shall finally have your questions answered.



# Crumbling, crumbs—

*Singapore International School, Chu, Qiao–Xin Beatrix – 17*

*“Why has no one come to visit us yet?”*

How long must they sit,  
how long must they wait,  
have they not rested long enough?

Years of earth formed  
sculptures of their own  
on sculptures, long dead.

all that fly were  
dead.

Heaps of humanity sat crossed–legged,  
holding onto each others heads,  
heaving from the weight.

Rocks on the wall smiled at tiles on the floor,  
gazing in wonderment at the notches evermore,  
happiness bubbling with access to the unexplored.

Humanity cut percolated paper, made silk their dancing floor,  
galores of flowers frozen as though washed ashore,  
resting manuscripts sat still, their backs sore.

Travellers always did what they thought was best.  
Feet in pain as though trotting on needles,  
body as crooked as a librarian’s glasses,  
mouth as dry as ten Sahara deserts,  
they decided to switch routes.

Alas,  
they had to forgo treasures.

In reality,  
the treasures were rotting.

Carvings rose up the majestic space,  
their chiseled jaws clenched in place,  
cold stares ricocheting off others’ face;  
their calmness fed friends with grace,  
but time had all but frozen in place.

Secret conferences held hushed,  
in the center,  
nowhere really—  
yet parties still took place,  
celebrations!

Pools of scripts lay discarded,  
their edges frayed, stories untold,  
Wind whizzed past them,  
whipping the stories up – up into the world,  
as the hidden treasures cracked open to the world.

*“You see, my darling,  
all we had to do was wait.”*

## Samsara

*Singapore International School, Tom, Qian Ya Sara – 14*

From the moment I took my first step,  
To the moment I was greeted by its solitude,  
And as the sand that trickled along its path,  
Grazed against my calloused feet,  
I gave the onlookers a dreary old smile,  
As I drifted into the abyss of a thousand stories.

Look beyond the familiar facade,  
Encased in every wall lies a tale so unique.  
Colours that danced in a synchronised harmony,  
Lost scrolls which bled tears of a near forgotten past.

But I continued to walk forward,  
As the next life would not wait for me,  
And smelled the whittling flowers,  
As I blew out the candles.

# The Forgotten Dream

*St. Clare's Girls' School, Cheng, Cheuk Ying Charlene – 15*

In the youthful night so blissed and bright,  
Rests upon a hidden sight.  
There stood a cave, full of glittering gold,  
With hundreds of legacies to be told.

In the morning so full of hope,  
He headed off to a deserted slope.  
There he found a cave that stood,  
Just like the grottoes in the dreams would.

Here, people would come and go,  
Digging up caves for arts to show.  
And for a thousand years to pass by,  
A dull legend it now resides.

In an oasis so rich and serene,  
Across the oceans and from within,  
Returned people to its treasured cove,  
And for new comers to roam and rove.

Stepping foot into this ancient tale,  
Where years of history prevails.  
Feast your eyes upon the red pillars,  
To the ancient old gold and silvers,

Where well-adorned paintings tell you,  
What the dynasty had gone through.  
Where mythical creatures are built,  
With the finest layers of silt.

Here in the grottoes you shall see,  
How the future has come to be.  
A land full of promises and grace,  
Where the future and past interlace.

## From Hero to Zero

*St. Clare's Girls' School, Chow, Man Hei Agnes – 15*

Stories upon stories  
About the Grottoes he has heard  
His desire grew daily  
Longing to be free as a bird

Once upon a time a man  
Embarked on a journey to the north  
As he neared the caves, his story began  
As a spirit before him came forth:

'Welcome, O traveller!  
To the Mogao Grottoes  
Here we bear the fruits of labor  
Of the past's praises and woes

Come, traveller, and you shall see  
How the present has come to be  
From paintings preserved for centuries  
To letters addressed to folks long deceased.'

The paintings were entrancing.  
Even our hero could admit  
'Twas as a river was gently flowing  
And the cave, courtesy of the silver moon, brightly lit.

Our hero lunged forward to grab his prizes  
Alas, was halted 'fore he could seize it  
Restrained no matter his struggles and cries  
At last, heavy with exhaustion, he finally quit

Fatigued, he drifted off and hoped for the best.  
As he woke up, he realized something:  
Mogao Grottoes has disappeared, and so had the rest!  
Dejected, he trekked back home, armed with nothing.

In his village, our hero was once revered very much so.  
Yet now, scorned and laughed at, lowest of the low,  
All due to his greed for the ancient Mogao Grottoes  
A failed expedition, our hero now turned from hero to zero.

## The Wish to Mogao Grottoes

*St. Clare's Girls' School, Chum, Pui Hang Jane – 15*

“Go forth, across the gold dunes, over the blue lagoon!  
Soon you’ll find the grottoes, underneath the crescent moon.”

The traveler mutters to himself, chanting the ancient hymn  
Of words which were whispered by the wild winds to him.  
A jet-black serpent beckons, slithering along the sand  
Who promises he will lead him to the end of this land.

There he stood before them, the mighty Mogao Caves  
With the rising sun behind him, setting the world ablaze.  
Looming rufescent pillars, doused in liquid gold  
Forms a glorious image of what this land beholds.  
And through the gates to paradise  
With no warm farewell to the skies.

The caves were sworn to secrecy  
Their lips sealed defiantly.  
Secrets were ensepulchered  
Thought never to be rediscovered.  
But whispers now flutter through the air  
For it has been too long since anyone was there.

The forgotten scrolls are finally unsealed  
With legends of dynasties once concealed.  
Murals of cerulean, emerald and gold  
Paintings of pilgrims from long ago.  
Ancient statues high and above, towering the sacred chamber  
The traveler then took his last resort, lying beside the giant in slumber.

The sky gives way to darkness, the cold unsheathes her knife  
Ready to bring upon the death of men and those alike.  
While mountains engulf the last beam of light,  
He tumbles into the embrace of night.  
Finally, he welcomes the reaper with arms just as wide  
His final desire fulfilled as the sun arise.

# Rebirth & a new beginning

*St. Paul's Convent School, Chan, Zoe – 16*

Carved sculptures, unread literature, sacred paintings,  
all are displayed blatantly in the cave, showing the story of the pilgrims, culture and everything.  
But he knows, it's not enough.  
He knows, he has to do something.  
And so, he carries the petals with him whenever he goes in the cave, leaving a scented trail behind.

Daffodils, have a connotation for rebirth.

Years carry on,  
    The birds chirp before the crack of dawn,  
            The sun descends its angelic glow upon us.  
Nothing has changed, nothing, except for the cave.  
She watched the first roots of spring sprung from the soil, how they grow, but fell at the mercy of whirling machines  
and buzz saws;  
She listened to the symphony merely conducted by crickets of the summer heat, and lived vicariously through the  
melody;  
She witnessed the first leaf of fall tremble in the whirling wind and landed next to it;  
She bared the shivering cold wind of winter that wiped everything out and replaced them with snow and hail.  
Years carry on,  
The cave was rebirthed again, with a new layer of tough minerals covering its walls,  
It's auriferous, magnificent.

Daffodils, have a connotation for new beginnings.

The Cave was once filled with joyous pilgrims, and she enjoyed their visits,  
until they abandoned her.  
She learnt to bare through the dullness in the day,  
and the loneliness in the night,  
little does she know; her name still echoes in the city nearby.  
Parents, told their children about her every night before they close their eyes,  
Her tales and wondrous treasures inside, and sometimes, she even appears in her dreams.  
Yet, it's not enough.  
She wants witnesses, physical contacts, just someone to come in and discover her beauty, once again.  
A new beginning.

Finally, scholars wandered in,  
Their eyes glowed at the sight, not at the paintings or poems,  
But bushes of daffodils filled the place.  
The cave is restored.

# Poem by a Paper

*St. Paul's Convent School, Li, Cheuk Tung Elena – 16*

Born from the corpse of another,  
I awoke from the tickling  
Of the tip of a pen  
And the trailing of ink.

The mumbling mantras,  
The placid pacing,  
The tintinnabulation,  
Were the lullabies of my youth.

I lived in peace,  
With my siblings,  
The paintings on the walls,  
The sculptures' blank stares.

Until one day,  
Pacing turned into rumbling,  
Mumbles roared about the Karakhanids,  
Panic replaced the placidness.

Jostled and juggled,  
Shoved into a cave,  
A slam boomed  
And my stomach fell.

Darkness was all I saw.  
Whispers of my friends were all I heard.  
Nights turned into days,  
Days turned into nights.

The Vajrapani Painting,  
The Nestorian painting of Jesus Christ,  
And hoards of manuscripts  
Accompanied me through these silent days.

A musty smell choked me awake.  
A glow seeped into the cracks of the entryway.  
Brown curious eyes peeked in  
And we were found.

He slinked into the cave,  
Ferociously driving the darkness away.  
Rustling of papers echoed  
As he scoured around.

He came and left,  
Came and left,  
Until one day,  
He left and never came back.

The cave was sealed back up  
And we returned to slumber.  
But not for long,  
As many came to plunder.

There were the White Russians,  
The American Langdon Warner,  
And the Kuomintang soldiers,  
Who wrecked the place.

My brothers and sisters were carted off,  
Some were missing a piece,  
Others were trashed.  
But I could only watch through my tears.

While we mourned our lost friends and family,  
A kind man appeared.  
He only stayed for a while,  
But did more than the first had.

The murals were painted a better shade.  
Cracks were filled.  
The man would grin.  
Everyone looked almost new.

Now, I remain in the same cave  
That humans call 17.  
Peace and quiet were long gone.  
Oohs and Aahs took their place.

Every now and then,  
I would be woken by a flash,  
Or the screams of children,  
Or the shouts of tourists.

I shook myself lightly,  
Allowing 'fresh' air ripple through my body.  
My yellowed sheets crackled,  
And I wince in fear.

Though I am not pleased  
That my home has turned into a pen,  
I can do nothing,  
For I am but a measly scripture.



# Immortal Glory

*St. Stephen's Girls' College, Wong, Ka Ki – 16*

Down memory lane in the midst of a desert  
Golden fine grain danced in the mighty wind.  
Pilgrims wandered on camels, trodding on vast land  
Stopping at an oasis, they contentedly grinned.

“Shovels to work!” they chanted in unison  
And there emerged a cave on the endless Silk Road  
Showered with gold, who knew right here where the legend grows?  
But long—forgotten, the Mogao Caves silently closed

Centuries passed, with whispers of an ancient legend  
A scholar traveled along, searching for the cave  
And towards the dark caves, he reached out his hand  
In he went, through a time tunnel paved

He lit his candle, opening his eyes to a tunnel of time  
Gasping in awe at the riches of remains  
Breathtaking secrets, scriptures and rhyme  
Precious and valuable, though covered in stains

He came to a halt in front of the eroded cave walls  
A magnificent carving with stories from the past  
Memories from history unveil once man calls  
Who knew this masterpiece was engraved to last?

Legend says, across a bright gleaming cliff face  
Le Zun trod under the glorious golden sunset  
With nowhere to go, he had no trail to trace  
Yet fluttering fairies he saw, beaming Buddhas he met

Brightened eyes, empowered by the radiant scene  
He gathered his tools and performed his marvelous magic  
A sacred cave, a recreation of the vision he had seen  
Never thought he'd built history that would be made iconic

The scholar's mouth dropped open, lost in admiration  
Countless antiques! He rejoiced with greatness  
Such an unexpected finding — concealed revelation!  
Word spread; the pilgrimage site soon became famous

Longing to view the sight, tourists flew across the globe  
Just to absorb the holiness and spirituality within  
An indication of evolution with memoirs they hold  
Tracking down history of the past, a legend to begin

Possession of wisdom, such a trait  
Passed down in gold, a sign of time  
Precious to man, to be preserved in such state  
For the pillars he found — a show of civilizations' prime

# Video Game

*The Chinese Foundation Secondary School, Kon, Akina – 15*

Dark forest, birds tweeting.  
High mountain, water falling.  
A deep hole in the mountain, Magao Grottoes.  
Looks dark and mysterious, I don't feel safe.

A staircase in between the mountain's tears,  
with no one beside me, I go down by myself.

The ground feels like smeared peanut butter.  
The walls feel like melted marshmallow.  
The ceiling feels like grand crackers.  
Makes me feel like cooking over a fire.

Sun went down, stars awaken.  
Slipping further into the cave, so frightened.  
Artwork hanging from the ceiling.  
Suddenly the sound of a little girl screaming.

Straight ahead, a skeleton shouting.  
Creepily illuminates the entire cave!  
Now I'm floating?  
I land back on my comfy bed.

Are you telling me all of this is a lie?  
Or was it another universe?  
Was I in a Minecraft game?  
Or was my head just playing games?