

Winning Entries



FICTION GROUP 1

Judge Pao and the Frozen Army

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Van Hooft, Chloe – 8

The army officer moved his hand for another sip of soup. To his surprise, he fell over. He tried to get up, but he was frozen. When Gongsun Ce, Judge Pao's adviser, saw this, he immediately told Judge Pao that the man was paralyzed. Another officer reported, "This has happened a lot lately, and only half of the army is left, that's why we requested you to come here."

After lunch, Pao pulled Zhan Zhao, the royal guard loyal to Pao, to a corner of the tent and whispered, "Observe the kitchen closely and see if you find any clues." Just before sunset, Zhan Zhao hid in the rarely used huge stove. His eyes glued on every person that entered the tent, searching for misfit objects. He saw Shang He the cook leave the tent. Moments later, Shang He returned holding a bottle of unidentified yellow liquid, and poured it into a big pot of soup. Zhan Zhao found some spilled soup leftovers and took it back to Pao. Gongsun Ce tested it with a silver needle for poison. The needle turned black!

The next day, Pao went to Shang He's tent when he was cooking lunch. Pao heard a hissing sound and found a small cage with an inland taipan snake inside. The snake's eyes flicked forward and Pao followed its gaze, and some Mongolian documents caught his eye. The Han Chinese had been at war with the Mongol since Genghis Khan dominated the Mongol Empire. The documents were addressed to Genghis Khan, the sworn enemy of China, written by Bazar Gantulga.

Pao called Zhan Zhao and revealed, "Shang He is actually a Mongol called Bazar Gantulga. He has been poisoning our army with snake venom, and spying on us all this time!" Overhearing this, in a flash Bazar ran away, into the thick and treacherous forest. He darted left and right, behind trees and over logs, dripping with sweat, summoning all of his force to sprint to the fast approaching Mongol territory. Zhan Zhao was on his heels, his heart filled with rage that powered him faster and faster to chase after Bazar. But would he make it in time?

Suddenly, a light shot out of Pao's moon shaped scar into the forest, flooding the forest with light, blinding Bazar. Bazar dropped to the ground in agony, allowing Zhan Zhao to catch and shackle him.

"O-O Okay..." Bazar, shaking in fear, reluctantly agreed to spill the secrets of the Mongols in exchange for his life. He told the Chinese army about the Mongol's battle plans and the weaknesses of Genhis Khan and his troops.

One by one, under the good care of Gongsun Ce, the paralyzed soldiers got up strong and healthy, ready for battles.

Day by day, the Chinese army prevented the Mongols from invading, preserving the Song dynasty from the Mongol conquest.

Year by year, Judge Pao's relentless efforts helped restore justice for the people of China.

CREATIVE WRITING FICTION GROUP 1

New Tales of Judge Pao

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Hung, Song Yeo Jannie – 8

Long ago in China there lived a lady named Qing Xiang Lian. Her husband, Chen Shi Mei promised her and their children that if he became the number one scholar, he would not forget them, but all of that was a lie.

Soon, not only Chen Shi Mei became the number one scholar. He married the princess and became the Prince Consort. He refused to honour his promise and go back to his wife and children. Qing Xiang Lian broke down in tears and went to seek help from the legendary JUDGE PAO.

“So, Chen Shi Mei is your husband!?” Judge Pao asked. Qing Xiang Lian kneeled before Judge Pao in respect. “Yes, my lord. He is my husband. He abandoned us and refused to accept me and our children.” Judge Pao muttered, “Then I must talk to Chen Shi Mei.”

“I—I—I don’t know her.” Chen Shi Mei stuttered. “Qing Xian Lian said you are her husband. Are you sure you don’t know her?” Judge Pao asked suspiciously. “I am sure. She must be mistaken.” Chen Shi Mei lied. When Judge Pao left, Chen Shi Mei ordered the assassin to kill Qing Xiang Lian and her kids but the assassin spared them for selflessness.

Qing Xiang Lian went to find the sheriff for help because she was afraid Chen Shi Mei would track them down. But little did she know the sheriff worked for Chen Shi Mei and captured them. When Judge Pao knew all of this, he was furious and decided to interrogate Chen Shi Mei but he was too cunning and powerful. Not only he denied his wrong doings but also accused Judge Pao that he has no solid evidence. Judge Pao had no choice but to let go of Chen Shi Mei.

Judge Pao collected more evidence and put Chan Shi Mei on trial. This time he had no more excuses for his crimes and Judge Pao sentenced Chen Shi Mei to execution with the guillotine. However, the grand queen and the princess suddenly appeared. “I order you to release the Prince Consort at once!” the princess ordered. Then the grand queen requested Judge Pao to explain why he wanted to execute her son in law.

“Your Majesty, Chen Shi Mei has committed serious crimes, so we must bring him to justice. Everyone must be treated equally in front of the laws. Even the royal family should be no exception.” “You know the Prince Consort is my son in law and if you execute him I can revoke your power of being the judge,” the grand queen said. “So be it.” replied Judge Pao. He gave his order with no hesitation. “Execute!” he shouted.

In the breezy wind, Qing Xiang Lian was standing before the tombstone of her wicked husband. She knew he deserved this, and more importantly, she feels grateful that all people are well protected and they have someone to trust who will always dispense justice equally to everyone no matter how powerful they are.

FICTION GROUP 2

New Tales of Judge Pao

Singapore International School (Hong Kong), Lo, Ka Wai Jaymee – 11

Ravaging flames tore through the charred night sky. The blazing fire streaked throughout the museum, its smouldering heat burning everything in sight. Plumes of grey smoke unleashed their acrid smell, suffocating the palace grounds. It was crude and unwavering in its nefarious purpose.

On that day in 1040, the museum had been razed. Priceless artefacts were strewn across the floor, melted and cracked. All that remained hanging on the grand walls was, oddly, an undamaged painting of a young girl standing in a bounteous flower garden, a man kneeling beside her. His face was smudged out, but the girl's dark brown eyes shone with unadulterated innocence, her angelic features outlined clearly with every smooth stroke of the brush.

That painting was the sole survivor of the conflagration, the lone reminder of what had happened.

Eighteen years later, it was spring of 1058. Judge Pao furrowed his brow as he packed up the remaining items in his office, preparing for his upcoming retirement. Sifting through his dusty drawers, he found documents about his former cases.

Out of curiosity, Judge Pao flicked through them before his eyes rested on one of the headlines. It was of an arson case from 1040 which had eventually been deemed a natural disaster. He still remembered watching the investigators close the case. A nagging feeling in his core which told him they were wrong.

Judge Pao scrutinised the rows of tiny letters scrawled on the page, analysing the report carefully.

Only one artefact was recovered from the museum after the fire. It was of a young girl and a man, painted by artist Zhang Huang in the late 1020s. Everyone was aware of the oddity of a single unscathed painting, which was later moved to Emperor Renzong's coveted painting collection in the palace's west wing.

Judge Pao read the words over and over. If it had been arson, then why was this painting left undamaged? It would have been impossible to survive the ravenous flames.

"Unless someone made sure it wouldn't burn..."

Those words echoed in his mind as he slowly realised that someone had chosen to save this one special painting. But who and why?

Bemused and engrossed, Judge Pao dove deeper into the files on the painter, Zhang Huang. Upon learning that the painter lived nearby, he headed there immediately that afternoon, eager to collect new information.

"Mr. Zhang?" Judge Pao called out, knocking on the artist's door.

The door was opened by a weary old man with light grey hair and jaded eyes which crinkled at the corners. "Sir, to what may I owe your unexpected visit?"

Judge Pao smiled wryly, "I assume you are Zhang Huang? I am Judge Pao, prefect of Kaifeng. I'd like to ask you about a certain painting of yours."

"Of course," Zhang said quietly. Begrudgingly, the octogenarian let Judge Pao into his house.

"Your painting with the girl and the man in the flower garden... Who are they?"

Recognition flickered across the man's shrivelled face.

"The man was a palace official," Zhang Huang uttered slowly, "He was Emperor Renzong's favourite nephew, Zhao Ming. The girl was Zhao's very own daughter."

"Where can I find them?" Judge Pao questioned.

"You can find Zhao Ming," Zhang Huang replied nonchalantly, "in the cemetery down the road. They found him in bed, smothered by a pillow."

"And the girl?"

"Gone. She moved away with her mother shortly afterwards."

The frail elderly man gestured through the window, "That's their old house. No one lives there anymore." "Thank you, kind sir," Judge Pao said as Zhang ushered him out.

Judge Pao found himself gazing up at the palatial house across the street, analysing its dilapidated exterior. He frowned, wondering if he could secure a key to the abandoned residence. Gingerly, he made his way up the walk and tried twisting the doorknob. To his surprise, it creaked open. He slunk into the house undetected, shutting the door softly behind him. Silently, he crept down the dark cobwebbed hallway. When he rounded the corner, he stopped short.

He was standing in front of an open bedroom, door ajar, supposedly belonging to a child. Toy dolls in frilly dresses lined the shelves, but what startled him most was that the room was clean, dust-free. Someone had been here recently.

"What are you doing here?" A harsh voice called out from behind him.

Judge Pao spun around, only to find himself facing a young woman clad in black, a tightly bound scarf obscuring her face from view.

In one swift movement, the woman leapt at Judge Pao, attempting to tackle him to the ground. The detective barely swerved in time, making use of the opportunity to tear off her scarf. He inhaled sharply when he saw a deep burn slashed across her cheek.

"You have no right here," the girl snarled, trying in vain to cover her face.

Judge Pao circled her, gazing into her eyes. "Was it you who started the palace fire all those years ago?"

The woman's anger thrummed through her veins, "So what if it was? He deserved it."

"Emperor Renzong?" Judge Pao inquired, puzzled.

"No, my dastardly uncle, Zhao Qin. He was an investor who owned most of the works in the museum. Our family knew he was terribly jealous of my father, who was favoured by the Emperor. I'm glad to say that he went bankrupt after the fire," the girl murmured.

"I assume it was he who killed your father?" Pao asked.

"Yes, indeed. Through my open door, I spied him creeping out of my father's room just an hour before his body was discovered," she smiled mirthlessly. "By the way, it was my wet blanket that saved the painting. However, I pulled it off as I ran out, leaving the damp painting behind, safe and sound."

Judge Pao smiled, admiring the bravery of such a young child.

'Two final mysteries solved', he thought, stepping out of the derelict house, and into a much-deserved, rewarding life of retirement.

CREATIVE WRITING FICTION GROUP 2

New Tales of Judge Pao – The Two Murdered Girls

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Leung, Wing Sum Agnes – 11

Pao Zheng is a legend and cultural symbol of justice in Chinese society. He listened to the people's grievances and defended peasants and commoners against corruption or injustice. He established his fame of uprightness and justice with actions such as sentencing his own uncle, impeaching the Emperor's in-law and punishing powerful families. With no doubt, Pao was an astute judge. Moreover, Pao was born with the mysterious gift to connect with the afterlife which provided him with extraordinary capacity to scrutinise the most controversial homicide cases. More importantly, Pao was accompanied by his skilled bodyguard Chen Zhao and personal secretary Gongsun Ce, as well as four enforcers named Wang Chao, Ma Han, Zhang Long, and Zhao Hu, that they formed an invincible team to fight against the culprits.

In 1057, Pao Zheng was first posted to Kaifeng as the prefect and soon had an encounter with the afterlife.

On a warm spring morning, Pao was perusing case files with the company of Gongsun. Pao's attention was interrupted by the unceasing rapping sound of rat-tat from the drum placed outside the Yamen front door. Pao knew that there must be something happening and he quickly attended to the inquisitors, Mr Yao Meilin and Mrs Yao Lihua, the owners of the famous wine tavern. The couple burst into tears and cried when they saw Judge Pao. They muttered that the bodies of their two young daughters were found at the shores of West Lake.

Pao rushed to the crime scene with his team. They spotted Meifeng, whose body was lying beside a bush by the shore with a long slash from her left neck to her right chest; and Liqiu was found stabbed in the heart. Their bodies weltered in their own blood. The murder was brutal and left no clues behind at all.

Judge Pao interrogated each and every servant of the tavern owners, but they all knew nothing. The parents didn't have any vice affiliations that might attract brutal revenge against their children.

Pao also questioned the maids. They believed that the girls were graceful children who always practised the Four Arts at home.

Now, Pao knew that the two girls were last seen by the tea house assistant and two customers the day before their bodies were found. They said that a man, who had a long scar on his face and a large burn mark on his left cheek acted suspicious and followed the girls.

While Pao assigned Zhan Hu to find the scarface, he and Mr Gongsun were perplexed by the information of the case, including how the girls were being transported to the crime scene and the motive of the murder. Mr Gongsun only left Judge Pao when it was already midnight and the full moon had raised up high in the sky.

Judge Pao was still in his contemplation of the case details when a man in a long white coat suddenly appeared at the doorstep of Pao's office. The man had deep, empty and hollow eyes and his long straight hair covered more than half of his pale face.

Judge Pao reprimanded in solemn voice, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

The white coat stuttered, "Your Majesty, Judge Pao!My name is Kong Zemin.... And I'm the son of my late father. I passed away last summer because of my illness and my father was executed for his crimes last winter. Also, I don't have any vice intention but tried to reveal to Your Majesty the truth about the two girls who died by the lake."

"Tell the truth in front of me then and you need not be scared!" said Judge Pao. "Yes, Your Majesty. My father was an accomplice to a corruption case and was sentenced to death penalty by Your Majesty."

“My Father had jeopardised the lives of many innocents in order to make himself rich and powerful. His sin had passed onto me, so I had suffered from an incurable disease since birth and died painfully when I was only 20 years old. I cannot even have a reincarnation and my spirit was trapped on earth,” the white coat said bitterly.

“My spirit loitered in my home and I overheard my mother, Kong Qiaolian and my paternal aunt, Kong Xiuying. They were angry with you and Yao’s family as Mr Yao had testified about my father’s crimes. My mother and aunt wanted Yao to pay so they killed Yao’s daughters and misled you by a figment of the scarface so that you will also be rebuked for your inability to solve the case!” the white coat continued.

“My mother had paid the tea house assistant and the customers to tell lies,” the white coat added, “In fact, my aunt smuggled the girls to the lake side and they slaughtered them!”

Suddenly, Judge Pao was awakened by the cock crow and the white coat disappeared.

Pao could not differentiate if he really saw the white coat or if it was just a dream. Nonetheless, he immediately asked Zhan Hu and Mr Gongsun to investigate Kong Zemin’s mother and aunt. Judge Pao also ordered searches of their abode. Two daggers with dried blood were found in a drawer.

Eventually, the two wicked women confessed their sins during Pao’s interrogation and was beheaded by the guillotine with a dog head.

The people were amazed by Judge Pao’s competence to solve the mysterious homicide case so efficiently and competently, but they did not know that Pao had a special encounter with the afterlife.

Pao had other connections with the afterlife and resolved many more mysterious cases thereafter. He endeavoured in bringing justice and replenishment to powerless people who were mistreated or exploited. Most people believed that it was his noble character and abilities that convinced the spirits of the deceased to respect him and help him.

FICTION GROUP 3

The Modern Horseman of Justice

Diocesan Girls' School, Chan, Tsz Yau Astrid – 14

Natalie wonders if her cheeks are wet with rain or tears.

Neon colours of billboards are smeared across the pavement like glistening paint, the mixing hues only broken by her solitary silhouette. It's late to hail a taxi and all she wants to do is to burrow under her covers and pretend today never happened. Hands numb, she fumbles for her phone from her sodden uniform dress and opens the Uber app with trembling fingers.

She's thankful that she doesn't have to suffer in the downpour any longer when the car pulls up quickly. In the semi-darkness, the sinister gleam of street lights flicker like tongues of hellfire on the rickety hood. The heady whiff of incense ushers her in as she opens the door. It swings close by itself, unusual given the vintage car model.

"Sorry for the mess. I didn't bring an umbrella." She attempts to keep her voice steady.

"No problem." Came the gruff reply, laden in a thick mainland accent she can't quite put a finger on. In the dim light she can just make out a beard, the rest of his features are shrouded in shadow. The car revs to life, turning the corner and into the highway. As they soar along, Natalie feels the lump in her throat loosen a little and she has the urge to suddenly spill out the troubles of today. Strange. She is never one for small talk.

The words get pulled out of her like water to sponge. "There's a school fair tomorrow, and I'm in charge of setting up the stall, so I stayed until late at night. Everything was going well until the stash of products went missing. It's too late to do anything and I'm going to be killed by my classmates tomorrow." She buries her face in her hands.

"Do you have any clue who did it?" To her surprise, the driver is listening.

"I suspect that it's Clarissa from the other class who did it. She's jealous we have everything planned while she can't even keep track of who's ordering her products."

"Better late than never, I suppose. Try your best and everything will work out," comes the reply.

When she gets off at Tsim Sha Tsui, she has to admit that the clamour of string instruments and the rant does something for her spirits.

Jimmy staggers out in the dim street, feeling an urge to kneel on the pavement from exhaustion. His head pounds from hours of obsessive investigation, he can't quite bring himself to endure the din of the bus on the way home, so he presses a request for an Uber.

When the car arrives, he doesn't even notice it if not for the headlights, the ebony surface blending in perfectly with the darkness. He pries open the door and collapses onto the soft velvet seat. Vaguely, he registers a peppery whiff of incense and instrumental clanging that does nothing for his migraine.

Like on cue, the old driver turns a knob and the din fades to a bearable whisper. "Rough day?" A hoarse voice rings from the front.

Despite the haze of exhaustion, Jimmy pushes himself upright, smiling grimly. "You have no idea..." He trails off, expecting the driver to fill the silence. But he doesn't, and it turns a little too thick for his liking as the car whirs along.

However, when the stack of newspapers catches his eye, he can't stop himself. "Someone's gone missing two days ago as you know," he blurts out. "We've been working around the clock to figure out who it is. But there are no trails." The old man grunts in response and Jimmy continues, unable to cease the rush of words. "It's been months

since such a major event and the authorities are pushing us to solve it quickly. I've been running on caffeine for the past two days and I'm now on fumes." He continues, a tale of fruitless interrogating and rising tension in his department spilling from him, a never-ending spring of water triggered by a pressed button.

After a while, Jimmy pauses for breath and the old man speaks up. "Don't worry. Justice will always be served."

"Doesn't feel like it. Like they say, no body no crime. How many criminals have escaped the law because of lack of evidence?" Jimmy sighs. The old man doesn't argue further, but Jimmy gets the impression he isn't very convinced. Semi-silence once again suffuses the car, albeit rather companionable. Not a few moments later, Jimmy gets off, and the Uber vanishes around the corner just as abruptly as he had first seen it, leaving him standing in front of his apartment wondering if he's getting hallucinations. Yet he feels a little relieved.

The sun is still tentatively poking her head out when Natalie arrives at school, brimming with determination on fixing the mess despite the cold knot in her stomach. Since it's so early, she bides her time, keeping a keen eye on the classroom next door. When the other class's representative wanders off, she quickly runs over, rummaging through their lockers.

However, they are all stuffed with unrelated materials. As the number of lockers unchecked dwindles, numbing panic seeps in like ice water poured over her head. The only option left is the locked storeroom at the back. Rattling the lock, she frantically tries any combination she could think of. But it stays stubbornly stuck at each click. She doesn't even hear the footsteps behind her in her concentration.

She freezes, a deer in headlights. Knowing all too well how suspicious she looks, she turns slowly with an embarrassed smile to the girl behind her.

Instead of the expected anger, the girl looks conflicted, and even...guilty? "You might want to try 7463. Clarissa deserves the punishment." she mumbles before shuffling off.

Triumphantly, Natalie twists the lock to the number and pulls the door open, revealing the missing stash of products. Snapping a quick picture, she makes a quick trip to the headmistress's office. The paralysing anxiety she experienced last night is worth it at seeing Clarissa's smug smile getting wiped off when she's summoned upstairs.

Five hours feels like a snap of a finger, Jimmy prepares himself for another unfruitful day again. It's all ordinary until Laurel runs up to his desk, a smile edged with fatigue on her face.

"We have a possible lead. This is a drawing of what she made on the day the victim went missing." She hands him a sketch of a street, the scene the police visited like bees to honey the last two days. Nothing out of the ordinary except an ostentatiously blue Porsche is parked outside.

"The witness says the vehicle was parked there the whole day, but was missing around the time most people clock out," she pauses, then continues as an afterthought. "She didn't want to step up, but apparently she heard an invisible voice or something."

Jimmy is already running the database on possible matches before she finishes, fingers typing furiously with renewed vigour.

The rest runs together like wet paint, a blur of shouts and speeding vehicles, but Jimmy finds himself in front of the Porsche, feeling more satisfied than he has been his whole life. The war is far from over, but the suspects are handcuffed, and there are incriminating weapons that can wrap up the case nicely.

Two unrelated people in separate incidents, but later both of them briefly have the strangest urge to close their eyes, picture the driver last night, and whisper a thank you.

Just a coincidence, you say, but if you ever find yourself needing a ride late at night and have some injustice on your mind, request an Uber and wait for a beat-up black car that looks like it drove straight out of hell to pull up.

Your driver will be that elderly man, with the same whiff of incense and Chinese opera. As the car starts, the pent-up frustration gets unlocked and you let off a rant about your problems. The driver nods at the right places, assuring you everything will turn out right. You leave the car a lot lighter.

The next day, some fluke of luck allows you to serve justice and you believe the two tales because the same has happened to you. You assert it has to do with the ride yesterday, and muse about the mystery. But you move on eventually, like everyone.

If you had paid a little more attention during the ride, you would've noticed how the moonlight streamed through the curtains and landed on the driver's forehead in a slight crescent; or could've observed how the shadows darkened his skin; and should've noted how he never smiled. But you didn't.

Nobody ever does.

CREATIVE WRITING FICTION GROUP 3

An Act of Kindness

Shanghai Singapore International School, Srivastava, Aanandi Jambholkar – 12

It had been a long, long day for Judge Pao, after several court trials with people of all sorts. His bed was uncannily inviting, and he found himself drifting off to sleep, only to wake up a second later.

Instead of his moonlit room, he looked around to see dreary, dull surroundings. Tall, monstrous skyscrapers loomed over him, as he looked up at grey clouds, completely clueless. His traditional Chinese robes were the only pop of colour to be seen in miles. People were dressed in unconventional robes, with not a smile to be seen. He tried to ask someone where he was, but the only answers he got were confused looks of disgust. Finally, he heard a word, 'Lon – don', and all of a sudden he was fluent in the art of the British English.

It was 1887, and the homeless population far surpassed the one of the rich. Sadness and misery would dance through crowds, wiping the smiles off of their faces with their lace handkerchiefs. Commonality had financial issues, relationship issues, and would forget to believe in the good.

London was infamously filthy. Not only the people's attitudes, but the environment as well. The air was sharp and choking, with sooty residue forming the grey clouds. Factory fumes were inhaled like our daily dose of oxygen, setting people up for major illnesses. The Thames river would be thick with human sewage and turned a musty, brown shade. The first thing you'd notice the moment you stepped out onto the street would be the mud that lined the carriages, but of course, that wouldn't necessarily be mud. Rather than the sweet, romantic smell of rain, you would smell the urine that soaked the streets.

Judge Pao saw the miserable state of this could – be – great city, and blamed it all on the people, and the little faith they had in each other. He swore to instil hope into this society through believing in the good, and just needed the right inspiration. "The society needs a person, real or fictional, to believe in. Someone like me."

"Come and buy specially made locks from Sher!" Turning around, he saw a man yelling on top of his lungs, standing behind a stall on the side of the road. "Perfect, affordable homes for everyone on sale!" Another man was screaming from the other side of the road. All sound blocked out, and Judge Pao's eyes opened wide. "That's it! Sherlock holmes!" Suddenly, the sun shined, and the judge thanked his stars he stumbled upon this mysterious land.

He imagined a man, just like these foreigners. He would be 6 feet tall, but he would be so lean that he would seem even taller. He would have a gaunt figure, made even gaunter by his billowing grey cloak. He would have a thin eager face, with a long thin back, and slender fingers. His hair would be black, with heavy tufted brows, with a hawk – like nose. His steady grey eyes, sharp and piercing, would have the universe locked inside. He would be described as a calculating machine, with something particularly inhuman about him. He had rather an egotistical trait, one of being annoyed with people of less intelligence than himself. He was a detective, and believed that detection should be an exact science, and should be treated with nonemotional mannerisms. To have a partner or not would be the people's choice.

He was very proud of himself, considering what he had done for these poor people. Now he just needed a way to execute this master plan. He looked up at a sign telling him where on earth he was. 221b Baker Street. He tried talking to all the people that passed by, trying to sell his idea, but was ignored. He was just about to give up, when he mustered all his courage, and tapped a passing man on the shoulder. The man turned, and said; "Yes?" Little did he know, he would be one of the most successful writers in history.

Judge Pao smiled, and sold his idea. The man, who introduced himself as Arthur, listened patiently. He kept glancing at his watch, as he had an appointment to get to, but out of pure respect and kindness, he listened with all his ears open. As Judge Pao went on, Arthur's eyes began to widen, and he wrote everything down in his little notebook he carried everywhere. This was absolute genius. When the judge finished, Arthur exclaimed; "Blimey! That was ruddy marvelous, the way your mind works!", clapping the flushed Judge on the back. "I must be on my way now, lad, that was wonderful!" Arthur went on, making his way to the other side of the street.

Judge Pao, still dazed, at the kindness of a stranger, felt a warm glow inside, touched by Arthur's big heart. No one had bothered to stand and listen to him, but this man. He wished silently, "I wish Arthur becomes successful, and gets rewarded for what he did." Just as those words left his mouth, he was back in his bed, back home.

Judge Pao awoke to a sunlit room, and took a deep breath, smelling the clean air, and the familiar smell of home. He had a strange dream, in a colourless land, and he could speak an absurd language. "No matter," he thought in his native language, "it was all a dream, now, who's in court today?"

It was now 1887, and Arthur had become a famous author of the bestselling books about the infamous detective, Sherlock Holmes, and his sidekick, Watson. His first short story, A Study in Scarlet, was immensely successful. This just showed, that a small act of kindness could lead to something much bigger. Arthur Conan Doyle was a well known name in the households of London. This was just the beginning, Sherlock Holmes would become a legend for centuries to come, and would continue to gain fame long after Arthur's death. In 1902, Arthur would be knighted, for work in South Africa.

If there's one thing to be learned from this tale, is that, a little kindness goes a long way. If you just stop to pause, and listen, you never know what could happen.

FICTION GROUP 4

I'll See You Again Some Day

American International School, Jiang, Hui Hui – 15

“Tell us another story, sister Wan!” the children cried gleefully, running in circles around the older girl in front of them.

“Awww... but I think I’ve told you all the stories I remember already. I’m afraid there’s not much more for me to say.” she sighed, getting up from her seat. The children of Liyuan loved to hear stories from Wan, and quite frankly, Wan liked telling stories to them. So, whenever she had time, she would go visit the children and tell them various stories she had heard or imagined throughout her days. Today, in particular, she was chronicling the anecdotes of Judge Pao.

“A new one, then! Please?” the children called out again.

Wan thought for a moment, considering if she should entertain their request or not. “Hm. Very well then.” she smiled, gesturing for the children to gather around. The children cheered, eagerly sitting down to listen to what new adventure Wan had in store for them.

“Settle down, children, and let me tell you a tale. A new one.” she waved her hands dramatically, setting the scene for her story, “A bit of a tragic one though, if you wouldn’t mind?”

The children shook their heads.

“Well, it’s a good thing that I’ve once met this Judge Pao, then.” she began, “You see, this story took place in this very town, and it all starts with a mysterious case...”

Nobody had solved the case thus far. Well, technically, it was more of a question. A burning one that yearned for an answer. It was a relatively simple one, in concept. Two siblings were living together in the same household, alone. The younger sister, Ling Wan, was beloved, but also known to be frail and sickly most of the time, often not being seen around the village for months on end while holed up in the house. The older sister, Ling Zi, worked to provide food and shelter for the two of them, and was well respected as a role model for the younger children in the community. One windy night, not much more than a month ago, Wan passed away suddenly. Strangely, after the death of her younger sibling, instead of mourning, Zi appeared confused, not remembering many parts of her own life and even going so far as to have shown noticeable changes in personality as well. Many rumours had even surfaced, accusing Wan of switching bodies with Zi. And yet, nothing seemed clear. That one burning question remained unanswered: what exactly happened that day?

Judge Pao had arrived in the small town of Liyuan to investigate this exact case. It wasn’t like one of his usual investigations, but he had still felt the need to personally come to look into the incident. After all, if he didn’t do it, who would? The townspeople were desperate to find a proper answer to everything that had happened, and they had called on all the help they could afford to find. He was the only one left. Other detectives and officials alike had tried their hand at finding answers, and all of their attempts were met with resounding failures. Some of them had even claimed that a vengeful spirit haunted them throughout their visit, appearing before them whenever they tried to investigate and only leaving once they, too, left. Pao was one of the most renowned specialists in the country, and the moment he had heard of the story of the Ling siblings, he had wanted to find the answers himself. If it really was true that, in fact, a ghost had lingered behind, perhaps there was something more to the story that the others had missed.

“Zi” had been apprehended due to the rumours and suspicions, and the Ling residence was left empty without her presence. A good thing for Judge Pao, as he would be able to inspect things without distraction.

He stepped into the eerie interior of the house, the door creaking as it shut behind him. The dwindling lights of the setting sun filtered in through the windows, casting a dim light into the room.

It didn't take long for the ghostly apparition to fade into view, just as the reports had claimed. The spirit's appearance mirrored Zi's in almost every aspect, from her neatly tied hair to the long flowing robes that she had frequently worn when she was alive. Nearby objects floated around her in a protective sphere, as if ready to act at her command. To any other person, it may have simply seemed that "Zi" had somehow escaped back to her home, minus the floating objects. He made no mistake, however. This was not the same "Zi" that the townspeople had detained.

"Leave," she bellowed, her glaring eyes piercing through the muted ribbons of scarlet lustre and gloomy shadows, "you are not welcome here."

"Be at peace, earth-bound spirit," Pao said, giving a slight bow of respect to the spirit, "I mean no harm."

"So as the many that came before you have claimed," the spirit scoffed, balancing a porcelain teacup carried by invisible strings in between her fingers.

"I am only here to help. I can bring those who have harmed you to proper justice, if only you would assist me." he assured her in the calmest voice he could.

"There is none to be served here." she snapped back, the cup shattering into pieces in her hands and clattering to the floor, "I'm afraid you've all come expecting the wrong results." She frowned, taking a few steps towards the newest intruder to her home. Cold air followed her footsteps like an unseen veil, apprehensive silence demanding fear from any who would dare encroach upon her territory. And yet, he stood his ground.

"You are not like the others," she spoke, "you did not cower at the sight of me. Did not run despite knowing that I am not quite alive like you are."

"I heard talks of a spirit lingering behind in the Ling household," he told her, "although, one thing is for certain. You are not a vengeful one."

She seemed to relax at that statement.

"I'm here to find out what exactly happened. So, please, if you will tell me your story as well, I would be most grateful." he continued, seeing that she did not seem as hostile as before.

She hesitated for a moment, unsure of whether to trust the stranger or not, but eventually, she opened her mouth to speak. "Then you must know one thing," she started, "no matter what conclusion you draw, no matter what else you may discover or what may point you in a different direction, Wan has no part in it. My little sister is not to blame."

"Is that so?" he began, "I've heard rumours. They say that your sister stole your body for your health and murder—"

"I DID NOT DIE BECAUSE OF HER!" Zi yelled, cutting him off. She clenched her hand into a fist, trying to calm herself, "No. A deity came before me that night when she was suffering, and she offered me a chance to save Wan..."

She settled onto the floor, letting out a deep sigh.

"You chose to take her fate instead?" he realized, slowly piecing together the clues and hints that he had gathered. He took a seat next to her, dusting the floor a bit before sitting.

"It was my own choice to switch. I couldn't just stand by idly and watch her die." she continued, her voice trembling with a slight sorrow.

"Was there no other way?" he asked, wishing that he could do more to comfort her.

“No, it... It was her heart that nearly killed her that day. She was born much more frail than others, and it would have happened sooner or later, even if it wasn't that night. If we've swapped then... she can live without that burden now.” she replied, tears threatening to fall from her eyes.

He took a breath. It was his job to serve justice to those who had done harm to others, but it was just as much his job to prove those wrongfully accused innocent, and he had no intention of making any exceptions.

“I know your intentions are not malicious. You could show the rest too. Your words would be better than mine by far. You could answer everything, prove Wan's innocence once and for all.” he suggested, offering her a hand.

She smiled, but shook her head. “I'm afraid I'm unable to leave this house as a spirit, and they would not listen to me. They're scared of me.” she replied. “And,” she added, raising her left hand to the fading sunlight from outside, “I'm afraid I'm running out of time as well.” The light seamlessly phased through her near-translucent hand, almost as if it didn't even exist.

Pao thought hard about it. There must be something that they could do, some physical evidence that they could provide. Anything that could prove what he had heard today. He could not just simply leave things as they were now, knowing what he knew.

“Is there anything that you've left behind for Wan? Something that could serve as evidence, perhaps?” he turned to Zi, hoping that she would also have an answer for this question.

Zi opened her mouth as if to say something, but shut it again.

“I'm sorry,” she apologized, “I wrote a note for her before we swapped, but it... I lost it in the wind that night.” She closed her eyes, biting on her lip, “I didn't have the time to replace it.”

A lead. Evidence. Not all was hopeless, it seemed. Closure could still be given. What's lost could always be found again, and this note would be no different. Pao stood up with a new resolve, propelled by this discovery.

“Then, there is still hope. We can still save Wan,” he declared, “this, I will promise you.”

She looked up at him, her eyes welling up with heartened tears.

He stepped towards the doors, plans circling through his head on what actions he could take. This would be a bit hard to find, but with enough help, it would not be impossible. He had looked into more difficult cases than this one, so what was a little note in the face of everything else?

Pao pushed the door open, the cool night air rushing in to greet him. The sun had long since set already.

“Before you go, could I ask you a favour?” she called to him. He turned back. Moonlight glistened from her hair, giving it an otherworldly shine in the darkness.

“When you meet her, tell Wan that I will only move on when I know that she's safe and happy. Tell her that I will always be with her, that I'll be watching her from above, and not to blame herself for what happened. Tell her that I'll always love her.” she continued, speaking loud as if hoping that her voice could carry itself through the night to her sister.

“And then?” a child urged, hopping around impatiently.

“Yeah! And then what happened?” another joined in.

Wan snapped out of her thoughts, returning to the present moment. “And then Judge Pao found the note and proved to everyone that Zi's sister was innocent! The end!” she finished, clapping her hands to emphasize the ending, “How nice, right?”

The crowd fell into a hushed silence.

“Booo! Anticlimactic!” the children complained.

“You didn’t even explain what happened to Zi!” someone protested.

“Oh, she moved on to the afterlife after that, and was allowed to visit Wan 3 times a year.” Wan made up. She glanced at the setting sun in the distance.

“Alright, my dearest audience. I do believe it’s time for you and I to part ways now. It’s getting late, and you should get home before it gets dark.” she laughed, nudging the children on their way.

“But sister Wan, we’re older now! We can stay up later!” they whined.

“Ah, well, if you insist, you can always stay around and help me clean up the garden!” she teased, letting go of them for a moment.

“Ack! No way!” they retorted, suddenly in a hurry to get home.

She waved, watching them each reunite with their families and return to their homes. Finally, she saw the last child safely reach his home.

From her pocket, she carefully retrieved a yellowed and crinkled paper. A small rip still remained from the first gusts of wind that had entangled the note within the branches of a willow tree. Despite the years that have passed by, despite the people that have come and went, that same gentle handwriting still remained, and this is what it read:

“My dearest Wan,

I'm sorry I am not able to be here for you right now. You must be so confused. You might be hurt, you might even hate me for the decision I made. For this I am sorry, but I could not stand by and watch you suffer another moment like that. Please know that this was my choice and my choice only, and you are not to blame. Now, you can at least have a better chance at life with this newfound health. Live your dreams, and don't let me hold you back.

I love you,

– Your sister, Zi”

She thought about the ending to the story she had told the children. If only things were that great when it came to real life, right? It wasn’t a complete lie, though. Thanks to Judge Pao and the note that he had found, Wan had been able to move on in her life. She was found innocent and released, able to return to her home. But, well, there was still someone missing.

By the time Pao and Wan had managed to return to the Ling residence, Zi was nowhere to be found. Actually, Wan had never seen Zi a single time after that night where they had swapped.

They say time can heal all wounds, but despite the countless days that had passed, nothing could take away the memory of that night. She could still remember the pain in her chest that wouldn’t go away. She had tried to call for help, but not a sound would come from her mouth.

Despite the comforting words and reassurances from everyone she would come to know year by year, nothing could remove that sense of guilt that she felt when she realized that she had taken her sister’s life away, that heart sinking acknowledgement that it was her who was supposed to have died that day.

And worse, yet, was knowing that she never got to say a proper farewell. She had the chance to. Zi was still there, at their home, holding on for her sake, but even then, she had blown that chance.

There was nothing that could fix all that had been lost. Time could not be rewinded, after all. But life works in mysterious ways, doesn’t it? After everything that had happened, she was still standing here, able to live a mostly normal life. Perhaps, now, the only thing that there is to be done here is to look towards the future with new hope, leaving the past behind.

Wan walked through the calm town, humming a small tune to herself as she basked in the welcoming glow of dusk. She kept walking until she found herself upon a small tomb. She kneeled before it, taking a deep breath.

“Hello, sister,” she began, “I’m doing okay nowadays. When I have time, I tell stories to the children here. They’re so delightful to be around! I wish you could meet them.” She ran a finger through her hair, tucking a stray strand behind her ear. “I hope you’re doing well up there as well.” she continued.

She paused for a moment.

“You know, it’s all thanks to you and Judge Pao that I’m able to live comfortably like I am right now,” she said, “the land right here that was used to honour you was given to me by him as well.” She felt a teardrop roll down her cheek. “Really, I can’t thank you both enough.” she cried, using the sleeve of her robe to wipe the droplet away. She smiled at the grave, imagining her sister behind it, nodding along to her words. The thought comforted her a little.

Another day was beginning to end. The sun was barely visible in the distance now. Wan got up from her spot, dusting off her dress.

“I’ll get going now,” she told the imaginary Zi, “I’ll see you again. Someday.”

CREATIVE WRITING FICTION GROUP 4

Judge Pao and the Case of the Nine-Tailed Fox

Shanghai Community International School, Ng, Kai-Ying – 14

As she adjusted her freshly given royal-blue janitor's uniform, Delia reviewed the facts that she was given.

Fact number one: her school set all the grade twelves to find a job to work as a service for the community during the summer.

Fact number two: her aunt was the owner of a museum, and she needed employees on the weeknight cleaning shift.

Fact number three: there was a rumor that almost once a week, a janitor was found dead while on night duty. No one knew who the culprit was. No one wanted the night shift because they feared being found dead the next morning.

Since Delia needed a job and didn't scare easily, she and her aunt reached a deal that Delia work as a night janitor at her aunt's museum.

She walked out of the changing room to meet her aunt and another janitor who was just outside waiting for her. Her aunt, Ms. Reng, nodded in approval.

"This is Mr. Zhang," she announced, and she used her left hand to gesture to the man beside her. Mr. Zhang was an old man in his sixties, with streaks of silver in his well-groomed hair. He had an enormous key ring with dozens of dozens of keys strung upon it.

"He is one of longest working janitors in this museum. He shall give you a tour of our new exhibit, The Road of Time: The Silk Road. After the tour he shall assign you a spot to sweep for the night. Remember, I allow you to work here under light circumstances because your school required it. One false move and you will be fired. I hope we are clear."

After the brief orders, Delia's aunt left, and Mr. Zhang lead Delia around the museum. Mr. Zhang was a very pleasant person. They walked past rows of artifacts: rolls of faded silk, Yu bracelets from China, remains of glass, and even a statue of Kronos from Greece. When Delia had questions, Mr. Zhang pleasantly answered. Delia learned that Mr. Zhang was her aunt's most trusted janitor, and he wasn't afraid of a thing. He even had every key to every room in the museum.

Finally, Mr. Zhang stopped at their final exhibition. It was in a locked glass room. Inside was an exquisite golden robe with finely stitched dragons and clouds swimming along the sleeves. Around the neck was a layer of puffy white fur from some unknown animal. Next to the robe were papers with handwritten words in old Chinese characters. Mr. Zhang pointed at the robe.

"This is the star of the whole museum: Emperor Feng's kasuki tail robe. In the past, there was an evil, shapeshifting, female fox called a kasuki who had eight tails. She wanted to murder the emperor for his liver and power. When a kasuki eats more livers from humans, their powers grow stronger, and they will grow extra tails. Once a kasuki gets its ninth and last tail, they become unstoppable." Then he pointed at the papers.

"The emperor's best detective, Judge Pao, was able to track the kasuki. Those papers were letters to the emperor telling him about the dangers. The emperor read them and sent his nephew, Feng Rong, to hunt the kasuki down with the detective."

"Those were really the letters? How could they even survive that long?!" Delia exclaimed. Mr. Zhang slyly smiled and continued his presentation.

"Judge Pao is also known as the judge of the afterlife. He takes the souls of evil and banishes them back to hell. He gave Feng Rong a sword that could cut down evil and eliminate it from the world. Once they cornered the

kasuki, the kasuki was about to receive its ninth tail. Feng Rong, who knew this, acted quickly, and cut her last tail off. The kasuki fled. The tail was later presented to the emperor, who had it stitched onto his robe to protect himself from evil. Certainly, the emperor and the nephew must have died and reincarnated to who knows where, but even to this day, the kasuki hunts for her last tail and her revenge on the emperor, the nephew, and Judge Pao.”

Delia blinked and stared blankly while the information sank in.

“What about the sword? What happened to the sword?”

“Ah! The sword... After Feng Rong defeated the kasuki the sword disappeared into history, into the hands of time himself. Ok, you will go to the west wing, near the statue of Kronos. I will be at the east, near this emperor’s robe.” He stared straight at Delia’s eyes. “Also, whatever you do, don’t come to find me until ten fifty.”

After Mr. Zhang ushered Delia far away, he stood staring at the robe behind the glass.

“Come out now. I know you are there. I know what you want,” Mr. Zhang challenged, as a stranger appeared from the shadows.

“You’re certainly not an ordinary old man, are you?” The stranger hissed.

“I will keep it short. You won’t get what you want.”

“You are a nuisance. I plan on killing you anyway.”

At precisely ten fifty, Delia came to find Mr. Zhang. Her footsteps echoed through the long and empty halls. The lights were off. There was nobody around. Only the janitors’ flashlight lit her way. Shadows danced on walls as she moved.

“Mr. Zhang?” Delia echoed. There was a splash and a quick sound of footsteps fading away. Delia rushed forward. To her shock, she found Mr. Zhang near an over-turned bucket and mop, lying sprawled on the floor unconscious.

“MR. ZHANG!” Delia screamed. She rushed to help him up, only find the body limp. She put her fingers against his wrist and felt nothing. Not even a heartbeat. She grabbed her phone and called her aunt.

The next day, crowds of police and news reporters gathered left and right. Delia panicked as she reviewed the new facts.

Fact number one: last night before ten fifty, Mr. Zhang died. Doctors said they assumed the death was most likely from a heart attack because there were no cuts or injuries on the body.

Fact number two: the doctors said that Mr. Zhang’s heart attack couldn’t have possibly come from nowhere. Judging from the over-turned bucket and fallen mop, the police believed that something must have happened to him that shocked the life out of him. But when the police looked through the security camaras, they saw nothing.

Fact number three: when the police retrieved Mr. Zhang’s uniform for inspection, his keys were nowhere to be found.

As Delia was drowned by the endless possibilities of what might have killed Mr. Zhang, a disruption came from the other side of the room.

“What do you mean by *supernatural*? What are you even? Where did you graduate from, hmmm?” Ms. Reng glared at a stranger in a scarlet velvet suite.

The stranger in scarlet only smirked. “What is this? The third degree? Shouldn’t I be the person questioning you?”

“Well, off with you, we already have the police,” her aunt scoffed. Then she left the man on the spot with a glare. She turned to another person, and both walked toward Delia. The person was a tall woman. Tied around her waist was a large coat that reached to her ankles. She had a palm-sized bandage on the right side of her cheek and tiny scars on her arms and face, as if she had been wrestling her whole life.

“Delia, this is Ms. Kai, a security guard in our museum. She will take over to guard this spot in the east. You on the other hand will go west. Hopefully, there will be no further disturbances. We will end the job at seven today and leave exactly at seven. Report anything suspicious or out of place.” Ms. Reng sighed and returned to work with the police. Delia turned towards her new coworker. Ms. Kai seemed serious but friendly at the same time. She turned her head to look at Delia and gave a soft smile.

“It was hard for you to witness last night, wasn’t it?” She asked.

Delia nodded. “Mr. Zhang seemed so kind. When I heard of his ...departure...I,” she paused and turned away, and rubbing her eyes slightly.

“Anyway, no need to mop today.”

“Why?” Delia wondered.

“Ms. Reng said the water system broke down suddenly.” Ms. Kai sighed. “Oh well, see you. Rest a bit. You had a rough night,” Ms. Kai declared as she went away.

As Delia slowly paced to her cleaning spot, her attention and movement were suddenly stopped by a loud crash coming from the window. She turned to watch the same stranger in scarlet struggle to flip himself over the window ledge.

“Some woman Emperor Feng has reincarnated into. Humph! See if she could stop me from climbing through a window!” As the stranger landed with both of his feet, he spun and met the eyes of a shocked Delia.

“Ah! Little Feng! What are you doing, standing there doing nothing? Did your old man teach you wrong? Never mind, we have business to do. Get your sword and come on!”

Delia was just too shocked to do anything. She blinked hard and screamed, “Who the hell are you?! What do you want?!”

“Keep it down, Little Feng. I am your old friend! I am Judge Pao. Now get your sword! Evil doesn’t wait!”

“Hold up! You’re Judge Pao? From the stories? Also, I am not Little Feng! I am Delia Reng! And what sword? What evil? Are you sure you have the right person? I could report you for breaking and entering, Pao!”

Judge Pao sighed. “Listen here. First, I am *Judge* Pao, not Pao. Show some respect! Second, I came here to investigate how our beloved Mr. Zhang died. It is no ordinary case, so I need your help. Third, whoever you are now, you once were my spirit hunter apprentice: Feng Rong. I always called you ‘little Feng.’ But no matter who you are, you have a duty to do, which is to kill whichever spirit killed Mr. Zhang!”

As Delia let that information sink into her soul, an image of her hand gripping a jade sword and facing a purely terrifying monster flashed in her mind. She was stunned to silence.

Breaking the silence, Judge Pao said, “Spirits are like human beings. Some are good and some are evil. But unlike human beings, the evil spirits feast on humans. The more humans they execute, the more their magic strengthens. Like the spirit that killed Mr. Zhang—”

“How do you know a spirit killed him? Neither a leg nor an arm went missing from Mr. Zhang! There wasn’t even blood since there were no cuts on his—”

“His liver went missing. When the body was taken for inspection, they didn’t find his liver. The fact that no cuts or wounds were on him makes it even more mysterious—”

“WHAT?! Why go through all that trouble for a man’s liver?”

“Because humans are the only sources to make a spirit stronger. Each spirit is different and this one requires liver. Now show me to the crime scene if you please and I will continue to humor that low IQ of yours.”

Soon after, Delia found herself becoming more of a Watson than a janitor. When she led Pao to the scene, it was already dark outside. She had to use her flashlight. Still, the scene of crime was shadowy. She glanced at Pao who was on all fours, crawling about the floor like a bloodhound on a scent trail.

“Here!” he exclaimed. She shone some light on the spot he indicated. On the floor were some strange markings.

“Take six steps back.” He ordered. As she did, what came into view was a faint semi-circle with curious patterns inside it. The other half was washed away by the water that was spilt from the bucket.

“What does this tell you?” he questioned.

“In the myths, this is a hexing circle. Used to cast spells. Since this is the spot Mr. Zhang died, I suppose whoever made this used it to remove Mr. Zhang’s liver without a trace?”

“Yes, and?”

“Whoever made this is no human.”

“So, we need to slay it! Now get your sword and let’s find this foul thing!”

“But I don’t have the sword!”

“What! Don’t you have a key to it?”

“No! Mr. Zhang said the sword disappeared into history, in the hands of time. Plus, the police inspected his clothing. All the keys he had went missing.”

“All the keys?”

“Yes!”

Judge Pao looked back at the floor again and traced his fingers on it. Then he mumbled and looked at the bucket and mop. Then he stared back at the floor again.

“Do you have any water?” he asked.

“No. Ms. Kai told me that the water system shut down. She is working to fix it right now.”

“Then what are you standing around for?” He bellowed as he shot straight up.

“What?”

“Fetch her! We need some water!” he ordered. Delia scrambled to search for Ms. Kai. Soon enough, she found Ms. Kai in waterproof overalls with the same coat tied around her waist.

“Ms. Kai! We need you quickly!” Delia exclaimed. In a hurry, Delia explained to Ms. Kai about detective Pao and how he needed water.

“You’re quite a storyteller,” laughed Ms. Kai, shaking her head in disbelief.

“Come with me then!” Delia tugged Ms. Kai along to the crime scene.

Once both reached Judge Pao, they were greeted not with open arms but a splash of cold water. Judge Pao was holding a fire hose. Delia, who wasn’t in a waterproof suite, was drenched. Ms. Kai, however, seemed to have no reaction.

“It appears that the water systems haven’t been broken!” announced Pao. Delia turned to Ms. Kai in shock. “You lied. Why?”

“I should have shut that down earlier,” replied Ms. Kai. “Don’t block my way, Delia. Where is the key?”

“What key?”

“She doesn’t have it,” said Pao. “The night when Mr. Zhang died, one thing was missing: the keys to every door in the museum. Oh, and his liver. Clearly someone enjoys liver. There was also half a hexing circle burnt to the floor, the other washed away by water. The killer’s magic is weak to water. You, however lied about the water system so you could shut it down. It also gave you a chance to snoop around to look for a key. The key that you need to open the door to your last tail...” Just as the words left his mouth, Delia froze with the truth before her.

“You’re the kasuki?”

“Kasukis feed on liver. They usually shapeshift into young women. They hate water since it is their weakness. She attempted to shut the water system down because she feared water. The victim’s liver was gone because it was eaten. All the facts and evidence point to her.”

Ms. Kai hissed. “Prove it, Pao.”

“In your files it said you started working two months ago. The same time when the deaths started. You killed them all just to have Mr. Zhang, the last janitor, work the nightshift so you could get his keys...assuming the one you wanted was there. You had a battle with him, he poured water on your spell and on you. No wonder your face looks beaten up. If you were human, we would see your fight on the camera. Alas, you weren’t there because you are a spirit. They claim that you wear that jacket around your waist all day...to hide your tail, I bet. Go on, take it off to prove I am wrong,” he provoked.

Ms. Kai turned from Pao to Delia. When Delia glanced at her eyes, for the first time she noticed how similar they were to fire. So full of fury and lashing embers.

Ms. Kai chuckled. “The cat’s out of the bag.” She shifted. She now no longer resembled anything human, but a ten-foot furred beast with eight flaming tails.

“Catch!” Pao yelled as he tossed a key to Delia. Once Delia gripped the key, it morphed into a jade sword. Delia, blade in hand, spun to face a petrifying set of claws.

Before Delia became dinner, she swung her sword. Claws and sword clashed with the sound of thunder and metal gongs from the heavens. *CLANGK!* The fight was ferocious. It looked like six claws and three swords instead of a pair of claws and a sword. Delia charged. The kasuki leaped away. The kasuki swiped. Delia rolled over, avoiding the claws that were an inch above her head and stabbed it in the side. The kasuki howled, but Delia continued to push the blade in deeper until she saw the tip appear on the other side. The kasuki suddenly burst into flames and disintegrated in a hurl of smoke and ash.

“I suppose you earned that sword.” Nodded Pao approvingly.

“Where did you find it? Didn’t it get lost in the hands of time?”

“Not lost in the hands of time. Mr. Zhang said ‘in the hands of time *himself*.’ It appears that there was a statue of Kronos here...know what that means?”

“Of course! Kronos is the Titan of time. So, the key was in his hands?”

“Hm, you can almost be called clever. Now that I see you have your brain back...I will be leaving.”

“Wait, WHAT? Where are you going?!”

“Don’t be stupid.” A burst of flame surrounded him. His scarlet suite turned into a Chinese robe. “Since I am not a mortal, I can go where I choose. Because we had a connection in your previous life, I can find you when you are in the midst of danger. Live peacefully, Delia.”

With that, Delia caught a small smile on Judge Pao’s face as he disappeared in a puff of smoke.

FICTION GROUP 5

Judge Pao and the Modern Day

ESF Sha Tin College, Wang, Andy – 17

“Objection!”

She blurted out, cutting off the Prosecution. She quickly added, “Irrelevance, Your Honor.”

The prosecutor glanced over. Unmoving, she stared at the judge.

Judge Fernand peeked out over her spectacles. “I’m listening, Ms. Li.”

“Your Honor, this trial is about my client’s involvement in company embezzlement, not any extramarital affairs that he may have had previously.” Li rattled off, determined to end this line of questioning.

The prosecutor sighed and turned to face her. “His lack of faith clearly demonstrates his innate greed. This is extremely relevant to the case.”

“I disagree. “

“Don’t we all.”

“Enough.” The judge called. “Objection overruled. Carry on, Mr. Kain.”

“Thank you, your honor.” Li caught the faintest hint of a smirk on Prosecutor Kain’s face. *Dammit!* She thought as she eyed her client, sitting meekly in the defendant’s chair, nervously answering the questions. *He’s still hiding his life from me. How does he expect me to help him if he’s not letting me be prepared?!*

“Thank you, your Honor.” Kain stepped back to his corner and plopped down on the rickety wooden chair. “That’s all from me.”

Judge Fernand turned her attention on Li. “You may now begin cross-examination.”

Li drew a deep breath, focusing on the pressure, expunging her mind and clearing her thoughts. Slowly exhaling, she stepped over to her client, and began. “Mr. Clay...”

...

“Mr. Kain, Ms. Li, as we are out of time, the court will provide one more day of trial. The bailiff will notify you of the final date. Court is adjourned.”

Judge Pao sat on the soft woven mat, the wind flowing in through the open window and softly caressing his face. He toiled over the documents on his table, crossing out words with his ink brush and adding in corrections and addendums. The tea he brewed this morning laid untouched, its warmth long lost to the cool breeze outside. Judge Pao’s eyes furiously worked over his stack of parchment, determined to weed out any small errors and to present an irrefutable case. If he was unable to convince the Emperor this last time, he grimly thought, at least he’d already had his affairs in order.

For the past few months Judge Pao had been investigating a newly appointed official, charged with taxing the villages on the outskirts of the city. Pao had always been interested to hear the reasons for his promotion, as he does with every other official. However, this time, no one was able to give him an answer.

Which meant backroom deals, bribes, favors, and everything that looked upon Judge Pao’s morals and spat in its face. So, he started digging, especially when the official’s lifestyle became more extravagant, purchasing goods he had no business buying on an official’s salary. And so, his suspicions were confirmed. The villages were taxed incredibly hard, with every available coin and grain whisked away, leading the villagers to fend for themselves. This man is the absolute worst of all that Judge Pao despised, and although the Emperor may be running out of patience, he would do his duty in removing corruption, especially one that forsakes the people for his own gain.

The sun moved into the seventh Shi of the day. Judge Pao glanced up, swept all his documents into a pile, and hurriedly left his small hut. He dodged and weaved through the wagons and buffaloes, flowing through the throngs of people in the bustling street, reaching the entrance to the citadel. The guards, seeing his official robes, hurriedly pulled the gates open and accompanied him to the palace doors.

In front of the imposing doors he had grown so accustomed to, Judge Pao took a quick moment to compose himself. This was it. He would succeed. Failure was not an option. Taking a breath, he nodded at the guards, who bowed and pulled the doors open.

He crossed over the door threshold...

Thwack.

Judge Pao raised his head quickly, startled. Had he done something wrong? Was the Emperor not expecting him? Turning his head, he scanned the room. At first, he recognized nothing amiss.

Then, it all came crashing down.

The unfamiliar colors, the abnormally dressed officials, the Emperor's seat replaced by a table, occupied by an unfamiliar woman, her clothes black and silky, a miniature hammer in her hand. He stared at her, confused. Had he stumbled upon a funeral? Did he mistake the time of his meeting? Though before he could speak, arms grabbed him and pulled him roughly to the back, out through the doors again.

Pao found himself face to face with a stocky man, clad in tight fitting sky blue...robes? Whatever he was wearing, he was pointing and speaking in what Pao believed was Chinese, but with such an incredibly hard to understand accent. Unable to comprehend the man's actions, Pao just stood there, staring at him.

"Look, sir, if you want to attend the trial, you'll need to use the visitors entrance, not the main entrance to the room."

Bailiff Johnson explained exasperatedly to the man in traditional robes.

"Sir, you really need to move. We'll need to use the door soon."

No response.

Isn't that wonderful. Johnson thought. *Is he just doing this on purpose?*

"Last warning, sir. You need to move."

Still no response.

Right as he was about to grab the man's arm, the doors to the courtroom flew open with a bang. Startled, both men turned, with the robed man dropping the bundle he'd been holding in his hands. It rolled and unfurled across the lobby floor, its contents lines of indecipherable symbols.

As the courtroom emptied, most people who exited blew by without a single glance. The last person to exit, however, bent down and started helping the man collect the scrolls. Johnson moved in to intervene.

"Ma'am, you should let me. I'll de--"

"Thank you, Bailiff. But I'll be quite fine." Li smiled. "By the way, the judge was calling for you."

"O-Okay. Good day, ma'am."

"You too."

Walking back into the courtroom, Johnson moved over to the judge. Judge Fernand took her glasses off, sighed then rubbed her eyes.

"Still no news on that witness, Chen?"

Johnson shook his head.

With all the scrolls gathered and rolled, she handed them back to the man, who bowed in gratitude. On closer inspection, she realized this was no ordinary man. His composure, outfit, and even the words on his scrolls seemed to suggest he wasn't average. She thought he seemed familiar, but clearly no one she'd ever met was like him. Dusting off her suit, she was about to leave when a sudden thought struck her.

Traditional robes? Scrolls? The righteous aura?

Whipping out her phone, she tapped furiously on the screen, stealing glances at the man every now and then. Finally, she reached the page she was looking for.

[Bao Zheng – Wikipedia](#)

[Judge Pao \(TV Series\) IMDb](#)

[Watch Judge Pao online at onlineTV](#)

Impossible. She thought. *A cosplayer, maybe?*

She enlarged the photo of the man's face, and marched over.

"Hey, you. This is who you're dressing up as, right?"

The man stared at the phone like he'd never seen one before.

"You know, it's cool and all, but maybe just get a studio to roleplay in." She continued, "People have jobs to do here."

He remained silent. Then, opening his mouth,

"What is this you're showing me?"

Judge Pao surprised even himself as the words came out of his mouth. Come to think of it, this is the first time he's spoken in this new place. He had thought communication would be impossible, what with the accents of the people here. But it seems the woman in front of him could understand.

"It's you, isn't it? Or at least, who you're dressing up as." She pointed at the image on the small glowing...jade plate? Marble tablet? Whatever it was, Pao had never seen it before.

"I'm not quite sure what you're trying to say." He responded, surprising himself. Somehow, he could understand the language of this place, despite having trouble before.

"What I'm saying is, you're dressing up as Judge Pao."

His eyes lit up. "You know of my name! You must be here to guide me back to the Emperor then. Please send him my fullest apologies and lead the way."

She looked completely befuddled.

"...Is there a problem?"

Staring in his eyes, the woman started trembling. Then, she let out a hearty chuckle and slapped him on his arm.

"Of course you'd stay in character. Well, goodbye then."

As she turned to leave, he hurried to catch up with her.

"Please wait. You know my name, which must mean I'm still in the palace. Why else would you come find and assist me?"

She shrugged. "I was being nice."

"So please continue."

“Sorry, no can do. I’ve got cases and clients that I need to handle. If you ask the guard, they’ll give you directions.”

How could I when I don’t even understand them? Pao thought.

Pao didn’t realize they were leaving the building as they talked. Putting his thoughts aside, he glanced up.

HONK!

It was as if an army of geese had invaded his ears. Screeches and honks could be heard assaulting his senses, dropping him to his knees. Unintelligible chatter and speech clouded his mind. Otherworldly music played from impossible sources around him, barraging his head with the dissonant cacophony of noises. The ground proved no respite either. His reality crumbled around him, as he watched horseless carts race each other down black tracks designed seemingly specifically for them. He watched colors change in blinks of the eye, and large, shiny birds hover in the sky far above him. It was too much.

She had been checking her phone when she heard a thud next to her. As she glanced over, she noticed the man lying on the ground, eyes rolled up into his head. She rushed to support him and move him back into the lobby of the courthouse. *Stroke, maybe?*

As she looked for a guard to watch the man instead, she heard a small groan behind her. The man slowly opened his eyes and locked on to her eyes intensely.

“You collapsed back there.” She hurried over, handing him a bottle of water. “Here, drink this.”

He took the bottle, but appeared like he was unable to use it.

Doesn’t know how to open a bottle. She considered. *Fainted when he went outside.*

Just...just maybe.

She cautiously sat down next to him.

“When you say you’re Judge Pao...you mean you’re the real one?”

He scoffed at the question. “The real one? There are no other Judge Paos. Of course I’m him.”

“And just to confirm...what year is it today?”

“Why, today?” He tilted his head, considering. “Why, 1034, of course.”

“...”

She stared at his face, deadpan.

“Be serious, please. What’s the year currently?”

“I just told you. It’s 1034. How do you not know the year?”

She took her phone out and opened his Wikipedia page and asked him a series of questions. He answered them all correctly.

She put her phone back and took in a deep breath, then sighed.

“I can’t believe I’m doing this...” She muttered. “But I’ll do it anyways.”

Turning to face the judge directly, she started to explain the situation to him.

What the woman, no, Li, told him was incredible. To think he’d be in the future, to be able to witness China’s eventual prosperity, was incredibly humbling. Pao wished to read these futuristic laws they have in place now, and to meet the current Emperor. But it seems like it’d have to wait.

“So, to sum it all up, I’d like your expertise and assistance on my case.” Li finished, handing Pao a pile of papers.

“The problem I’m facing is that the star witness won’t testify. I believe it’s because of threats against his person, but I can’t prove that.”

Pao studied the pages in front of him. It seems like the defendant is charged with multiple acts of armed assault, but the only witness refuses to testify. He dropped the page and picked up another, studying the people the defendant was connected to.

...

Li was awoken from her slumber as Pao tapped her on the shoulder. She groggily sat up and noticed that the sun had set and it had been 4 hours since they sat down.

"I believe we may have our suspect." He handed her a piece of paper with ancient Chinese characters on it. She stared at the paper, dumbfounded.

"You'll have to explain it to me, I can't read that."

"Very well." Pao swept the other paper to one side. "It intrigued me that a witness, who by all accounts is an upstanding citizen, would refuse to testify. So I looked deeper."

Pao handed me two photos. One was a young man, the other a photo of a Police Lieutenant.

"The young man is the witness's son. Otherwise normal, he was caught defacing a wall. The one on the right was the arresting officer."

Li sat back, thinking about the connection between these two and the defendant. Then she realized.

"The Lieutenant! He's threatening the witness with his son!" She exclaimed, standing up.

"Correct." Pao wrinkled his nose. "The defendant is a friend of his, so he thought to protect him through threatening to charge the witness's son with charges that, while false, would place him in the system for a long time. Truly despicable."

She stood up and grabbed Pao's arm. "Let's go."

"Where to?" He asked, standing up and smoothing out his robes.

"To the precinct. We're going to have a chat with him."

Pao was still not used to the future. The cramped cabin of the horseless carriage left his stomach unsettled, though his desire and will to stamp out corruption left this feeling behind. He stared at the imposing building, which was supposed to symbolize justice and order, house a corrupt enforcer of the law. Following Li, they made it to the top floor, where the offices were situated. Pao spotted the balding Lieutenant from the drawings, and so he made for him, with Li following behind.

Lieutenant Brown tapped away at his keyboard, finishing up his logs for the day. He was just about to close his computer down when he heard footsteps, gradually growing louder, then shapes appearing outside his office, with his door being thrown open. He instinctively pushed back and placed his hand on his holster, before realizing he had left his gun in the armory. He could only watch as that lawyer walked in, with a...is that Judge Pao?

"Explain yourselves!" He roared, pushing his chair back and towering up to intimidate them. "Explain the meaning of this!"

"Sorry, Lieutenant, but we need to have a word with you." The lawyer explained. *Damn her*, he thought, *these meddling...*

The Judge Pao lookalike stepped up. He seemed unfazed by the Lieutenants attempts, appearing simply...disappointed?

Judge Pao looked at the Lieutenant with disdain and sadness.

"You, sir, are an officer of the law. You uphold justice and provide security for the people around you, do you not?" He asked the officer, feigning kindness.

The officer gulped and stammered “O—Of course, it’s what I pledged to do.”

“THEN WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, THREATENING AN INNOCENT MAN WITH HIS SON?”

The Lieutenant recoiled from the sudden outburst, moving to the corner of the office. The façade of understanding and kindness now reduced to anger and contempt.

“YOUR JOB IS TO ENFORCE THE LAW, AND TO UPHOLD IT.” Judge Pao continued, with his voice thundering across the small office. “NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW, NOT LEAST THOSE WHO ENFORCE IT.”

Pao looked at the officer huddled in the corner, and lowered his tone.

“But I believe you were misguided. There is a chance for you to make it right.”

The Lieutenant raised his head.

“Let the son be tried for his actions, nothing more, nothing less. But do not threaten the witness with false charges.”

The man nodded quickly.

Judge Pao stared down at the man, then sighed and offered his hand out.

“I trust you are an honorable man. You took this job for a reason, and I believe you’ll redeem yourself.”

The Lieutenant nodded again and clambered to his feet.

“Then it seems it’s settled. Good night, both of you.” With a sweep of his robes, Judge Pao disappeared.

Li glanced back at the Lieutenant, then hurried after the judge. But by the time she reached the street, he was already gone.

“In light of recent testimony, we, the jury, unanimously decide that the defendant...”

“is guilty of all charges upon him.”

After the trial, the witness thanked her profusely, though she didn’t have the heart to tell him it was her who managed to end the threats against him. She thought about the judge, and the short time they spent together.

“I wonder how he’s doing...”

“The Emperor will see you now.”

Judge Pao blinked and found himself back in the palace, outside of the audience chamber. He vaguely remembered something about the future and a corrupt lawman, though it seems more like a dream. Whatever it was, the important thing now was to convince the Emperor of his case, and to get the corrupt official removed.

The doors swung open, and there sat the Emperor.

Judge Pao bowed, and stepped into the room.

CREATIVE WRITING FICTION GROUP 5

The Legend of the Jinshimo

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Yu, Justin – 16

“Tao Chun, my son, you have to take this exam. It is far too important to miss.”

“But I want to stay home and help at the farm during harvest season!”

“You will become an official and bring glory and wealth to the Tao family! You are already twenty-two and have spent six years preparing for the Jinshi. You must seize this opportunity before your youthful years are behind you.”

“Twenty-two is also when I am physically fittest! I need to help at the farm!” Tao Chun is not swayed. A higher-pitched voice chimes in, “Father, why can’t I go instead?”

“Tao Mei, you know only men are accepted into the imperial service. Your duty belongs at home. We could use the help,” her father replied. “Tao Chun, we have prepared a donkey for you. You will leave tonight.”

“Why do you forbid her from going but insist I leave? I don’t understand!” In a fit of momentary rage, Tao Chun hastily grabs a scroll from the dinner table and rushes out the door. He dashes to the edge of town, where he finds his comfort place — a farming equipment store.

“Oi, kid!” a raspy, gruff voice hollers, “If you don’t plan on purchasing anything, get out of my shop! Or else!” The storekeeper has always been hostile towards Tao Chun, but he ignores the storekeeper and continues to examine the rows of scythes and shovels. Eventually, Tao Chun wishes to continue his family legacy of providing the town with rice. It is unfortunate his dreams will never see the light of day; for the next morning, neither will he.

It is a hot summer’s day without a single cloud in the sky. Yet, sunlight is completely blocked by a dense forest concealing the small town of Hunju from the rest of the world. A humble wooden carriage weaves through the narrow cracks and crevices in the endless mass of trees. Legend has it that a yaoguai by the name of Jinshimo resides in the forest, snatching aspirational young men from their rides. They are sent to the mirror dimension, where they spend the rest of eternity doing manual labour on a farm for the demon of agriculture. In the past century, not a single young man from Hunju has been offered a position in the imperial court. Perhaps, by pure coincidence, the top scorer from Hunju’s local school vanishes come exam season every year. In the carriage sits Judge Pao, stopping by Hunju on a nationwide inspection. His sole objective in this town? To solve the case of the Jinshimo.

The carriage halts at the town courthouse and Judge Pao exits. His robes are flawlessly ironed, reflecting his upright moral code. Even under a magnifying glass, one cannot imagine finding even the smallest of creases. The doors slide apart to reveal a spacious interior with rows of seats leading up to a podium aligned precisely in the centre of the room. Down the aisle are the Tao family, the local school’s sole teacher, a detective and his assistant. The teacher is a man known as Li Xiansheng, whose wrinkles resemble the rings on the stumps of millennia-old trees. Nobody knows his age for sure, but he looks as though he has been teaching since Pangu separated heaven and earth. On the front row sits a seasoned detective sporting a beard as white as snow to accompany his years of investigative experience. He can be recognised as none other than Zheng Que, a travelling detective whose shining reputation is so widespread his merit is even recognised in Bianjing, the country’s capital. Beside him is a fresh-faced young adult who can be seen sorting loose leaves of paper into a navy blue folder. Drops of sweat coagulate on his forehead

and subtle trembles run down his fingers. Perhaps, the nerves of his first case serving as Zheng's assistant are reaching him. As Judge Pao's foot steps onto the podium, the air freezes in silence and the courtroom springs up in unison.

"Sit," Judge Pao's deep, booming voice bellows. "Come," his eyes lock onto the Tao couple, as if staring directly into their souls, "State your grievances." Palms sweating and legs trembling, Mr Tao timidly walks up to the podium and begins to present his case,

"Ever since he attended school, my son has been top of the grade. He consistently obtains top scores and receives nothing but praise from his teacher, Li Xiansheng. For the past six years, he has been preparing for the Jinshi, which would finally grant him the opportunity to leave Hunju and reach his full potential in the imperial court. On his eighteenth birthday, my wife and I discussed with Li Xiansheng about possibly letting our son take the jinshi to become an official. He told us our son was not ready yet and to give it a couple more years. Over the next four years, Li Xiansheng has dedicated as much time and effort as possible to help our son prepare for the exams, even scheduling one-on-one sessions to ensure he is in perfect condition. Our son, however, had other thoughts.

"Our son was always keen on helping the family in whatever way he could. At this time of year, he would always offer to help cut the summer harvest or sow grains of rice for the autumn harvest. I tell him he should focus on his studies instead, but he is a stubborn soul and refuses to stand by and watch. After school, he tends to go to a farming equipment store bordering the forest. I suppose farming just intrigues him very much. When dinner was ready, my wife would run down to the shop to fetch him. Every time she did so, the storekeeper would shout at her for letting our son wander about. 'Keep him at home or at school! Shouldn't he be studying?' he would yell. 'If he's not going to be a customer, I don't want him here!' My wife would reluctantly apologise and drag our son back home. What does a mere merchant know? Who is he to tell me how to raise my son?

"Anyway, years passed and Li Xiansheng insisted our son needed to continue studying. However, at the age of twenty-two, my wife and I decided this was the prime age for him to sit the exams. If he waits any longer, we fear he would lose his edge to younger scholars and sabotage his chances of entering—"

Mr Tao stops. His knees weaken and drop to the ground. Orbs of water collect at the edge of his eyes. The orbs grow heavier and heavier until they run down Mr Tao's cheeks, leaving behind a silver streak of sorrow. Struggling, he continues,

"This leads to the conflict we had last night. Too tired to run after him, I sent my wife to look for him. She went down to his comfort spot, only to find complete darkness. No yelling could be heard, which could only mean the storekeeper had returned home for the day. In the darkness, our son was nowhere to be found. This could only be the doing of Jinshimo, the yaoguai that forbids our town's brightest children from leading a better life!"

Mr Tao's voice trembles, perhaps out of grief, perhaps out of fear. Half rising, he steps back from the stand and returns to his wife's side. Detective Zheng's assistant can be seen scribbling on notes while his superior pats Mr Tao on the back as consolation. The orotund, resonant voice bellows once more, "You, speak." Judge Pao glares at Li Xiansheng. Li supports himself on the walls on his way to the podium, clears his throat, then raises his voice,

"I am deeply saddened by the tragic news presented to me this morning. My deepest condolences go out to the Tao family. Tao Chun was one of my favourite students and it is a shame that he is no longer with

us and can never live up to his full potential as a high-achieving official in the imperial court. I shall provide my two cents to further this investigation in what ways I can.

“I, too, frequently visit the farming equipment store at the edge of town to converse with Tao Chun. He would share his aspirations to continue the family legacy of rice farming, and I would commend him for staying true to his family’s roots. He was aware of his filial duty and one can only imagine raising a son as righteous as the Taos. The storekeeper would comment in disapproval, telling Tao Chun continuing the family business is no way to make his family proud. A merchant’s business is not highly regarded, so it is no wonder he holds such a pessimistic point of view. Who knows what murky areas a merchant must tread to keep his business afloat. Of course, a father would also love a child who could bring wealth and glory to his rural town. I was raised in Hunju and have lived here my entire life. I would love to direct the spotlight to our often-neglected hamlet as well.

“I personally attempted to do so when I was in my youth, but to no avail. The jinshi is a tough nut to crack. Hence, I need to ensure my students are in perfect condition before they leave home to sit the exams. To further my studies, I am due up north in a few days on an annual trip to visit a teacher of mine who taught me all I know. Therefore, I was studying in my quarters and it is my deepest regret to say I was not at the scene to bear witness to the crime. Mayhap, the stories of a Jinshimo are true. We may never know. All I wish for is the best for Tao Chun, wherever he may be.”

Zheng’s assistant maintains a poker face. He vigorously scrawls lines upon lines of notes. The exhausted assistant, almost panting, slides his notes to Zheng. Without so much as glancing at the neatly bound pile before him, Zheng rises, making an appointment with Judge Pao to visit the farming equipment store at the edge of town at dusk.

As the sun sets on the quiet town of Hunju, the townspeople return home from a day of hard work, with the exception of two. Detective Zheng, aboard a maroon stallion, clip-clops down the street as his assistant follows on foot. The setting sun illuminates the horse’s mane, emitting a vibrant scarlet hue. A few minutes later, they arrive at the farming equipment store. The sun has completely set and the two men are surrounded only by darkness and silence. Zheng dismisses his assistant, claiming he has got it from here, and proceeds to wait for Judge Pao’s arrival.

Hours pass, and Judge Pao is still nowhere to be seen. Growing impatient, Zheng begins to examine the scene on his own. He pries the door to the store open and investigates its contents. He examines rows upon rows of hoes and ploughs and sickles, all of which can be perfect candidates for holding a young scholar hostage. What really caught his attention, however, was a hallway labelled “no entry”. Defying the instructions, Zheng treads carefully into the hallway to find barrels on top of each other, each large enough to store the entire town’s food supply over the winter, and definitely large enough to fit a person. Next to the barrels are bundles of rope tied tidily into large knots. Usually, such ropes would be used for securing ploughs to cows, but they are also perfect for keeping a person captive. Satisfied with his conclusion, Zheng brings one of each to his horse.

Grinning from ear to ear, Zheng exits the store with his head held high. , he hears a crumple beneath his feet as he treads onto the grassy terrain. Zheng puts down the barrel and rope to pick up a neatly folded parchment beneath his feet. On the upper surface of the folded parchment is a few specks of red, concentrated in the top right-hand corner of the parchment. Further confirming his suspicions, Zheng carefully slides the parchment into his robes and rides back into town.

The next morning, the town gathers in the courtroom to hear Judge Pao's verdict. Chitter and chatter fill the air. Booming with confidence, Zheng steps up to the podium and presents his case, "Your excellency, I have identified the culprit!"

"Quiet!" Judge Pao's mighty roar overpowers the audience. The room swiftly fades into silence.

"Very well," continues Zheng, "After years of legends and stories, I can confidently conclude the person behind the Jinshimo is..." The doors to the courtroom part to reveal the farming equipment shop's storekeeper in a cage. Bearing an uneasy expression, Zheng's assistant wheels the storekeeper into the room. Zheng triumphantly resumes his speech,

"This man right here has always been hostile to our town's brightest young men, howling unsolicited comments at them. Due to Hunju's small clientele, his family business is dying and he must use alternative methods to earn money. Obviously, he resorts to the simplest way he knows how — through unethical means!

"Exhibit A; see the barrel and rope? They are the perfect instruments to keep a fine young scholar captive. As a scholar, you can expect minimal resistance, so a standard strong knot like the one displayed here would do wonders to keep a young scholar in place.

"Exhibit B; here is some parchment I found outside the shop yesterday. On it is blood splattering. This could very well be our scholarly friend asking for our assistance! But— I have a few questions," Zheng turns around to face his audience, then points at the storekeeper, "How can money be your only concern? How dare you sacrifice your integrity and yield to your filthy merchant temptations? How dare you even show your face in this community!"

Nods of approval spread throughout the courtroom, and the towns folks begin to talk over each other once more. "Boo"s and "I knew it"s spontaneously flew across the room. The storekeeper's jaw drops, but no sound ever comes out of his mouth, perhaps in shock.

"Enough!" Judge Pao hollers, "Zheng, read the note on the parchment aloud."

Dear Li Xiansheng,

I am about to leave for Bianjing to sit the jinshi and would like to thank you for your guidance over the years you have taught me. I know you do not believe in my abilities yet, but I promise to make you proud.

Respectfully,

Tao Chun

Li falls to his knees and bursts into tears. The townspeople's eyes widen and jaws drop, for they never expected to see the village elder give in to his emotions. Judge Pao reaches into his robes to retrieve a navy blue book in which he has written his verdict. He addresses Li and reads:

"You were once an aspiring young scholar who ranked top of the school. You sat the jinshi but came home empty-handed. You mentioned having an annual appointment with a significant teacher to you up north, but no scholars here ever landed a job in the imperial court. As you were completely raised in Hunju, there is no one in the capital for you to meet. Your annual appointment is not about meeting a teacher, you retake the jinshi every year in hopes of finally landing a position.

“In the years you have taught in the Hunju local school, you have encountered some bright students, including Tao Chun. Coincidentally, for as long as you have been teaching, these students have mysteriously vanished as exam seasons approached. Mayhap, you cannot bear the thought of your students surpassing you to become the first person in the town to become a government official. This is why you keep discouraging them from taking the exam.

“Of course, the storekeeper could have kidnapped the scholars, but why? It is currently the summer harvest season, meaning farmers need farming equipment to harvest their crops. If anything, business should be booming. If the limited clientele was a problem at all, this business would not have lasted generations. The note Zheng found on the ground was neatly folded, not crumpled, so it is unlikely Tao Chun threw it in a struggle. Instead, he handed it to someone else willingly. Who else other than the recipient of the card?

“Every year, when your students leave to sit the Jinshi, you murder them out of jealousy. However, because you are the town’s “wisest”, nobody, not even an experienced detective, is willing to question you. You understand the number of suspects in such a small town will always be limited, so you encourage supernatural legends of the Jinshimo in hopes of taking the suspicion of the crime off the people. When we finally started investigating the case, you jumped ship and raised suspicion about the local merchant instead.

“What scholar would you be, if you do not back up your words with your actions? What scholar would you be, to undermine your students’ efforts for your own glory? What scholar would you be to diminish another man’s profession as the ‘top’ class of society? What do you have to say for yourself?”

Li’s face flushes crimson as he looks at the ground. He collapses on all fours. With tears of guilt in his eyes, he pleads and begs Judge Pao for mercy. But Judge Pao never yields. Li is dragged out of the courtroom, where his neck is placed on a guillotine. Judge Pao leaves his seat and walks toward Detective Zheng, handing him his verdict. The cover reads: Detective Agency Internship Logbook.

NON-FICTION GROUP 1

New Tales of Judge Pao

Marymount Primary School, Sin, Oi Man Angela – 8

One thousand years ago, corruption of government officials in Ancient China was common. If the offender corrupts the judge, the judge may behave unjustly and make decision with bias in favor of the offender. In addition, if the case involves the emperor, top government official or the judge's relatives, the judge may not be able to make decision fairly due to the bureaucracy and the legal system of Ancient China.

Judge Pao or Pao Zheng is a well-known official and judge in the Northern Song Dynasty. He gained the honorific title Justice Pao or Pao Qing Tian because he was renowned for his fairness and integrity.

One of Judge Pao's famous case is the case of executing Chen Shimei. Chen Shimei was a poor scholar and had a wife with two children. Shimei left his home and went to the capital for the [imperial examinations](#). It turned out that Shimei had [placed first in the examination](#). The emperor offered to marry his sister to Shimei. Although Shimei was already married, he kept his previous marriage a secret and married the princess. He even sent his servant to kill his family members in order to hide the secret. Although the imperial family intervened Judge Pao, he executed Shimei as Shimei lied to the emperor and committed murder which deserved capital punishment. The case of executing Chen Shimei demonstrates that Judge Pao is the symbol of justice. He used his tactic to bring the offender to court and he is fearless when he encounters the threat from the imperial family.

In the contemporary world, do we need another Judge Pao who can bring justice to us? Take a recent news reported by Fortune on 22 December 2022 as an example, WTO arbitrators concluded that the United States was out of line in requiring that [products from Hong Kong](#) be labeled as "Made in China". However, the United States replied it would ignore WTO's ruling. The behavior of the United States is not fair to Hong Kong.

If Judge Pao can step into this international trade issue, what should be the characteristics of the Judge Pao? Is it enough if Judge Pao is fearless of the threat from authority and putting justice as the priority? In my opinion, Judge Pao in the modern society should also be full of wisdom. Although different parties may have different point of views on an international trade issue, the modern Judge Pao should make all parties compromise and reach a win-win situation.

So should Judge Pao still play the role of "detective" as described in the [legend](#)? I believe that the modern Judge Pao should take a further step of "fighting crime" to "preventing crime and dispute". He should use his wisdom to teach us how to prevent crime and dispute. In that case, I believe the modern Judge Pao can bring us a better life and ideal future.

CREATIVE WRITING NON-FICTION GROUP 1

Judge Pao

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Kong, Chloe – 7

There was a famous judge in China history, and his name is Pao Zheng. He was born in poverty, the son of a peasant in Hefei, Anhui. He has a very black skin tone and a crescent moon on his forehead. Throughout his life, he had demonstrated honesty and upright well, so people also called him Judge Pao. When he was young, his parents had high hopes for him. When he was five years old, he started to learn reading. He did well in school. He was very fair. As a judge, he said, “To have cases with integrity, firmness in law enforcement and impartiality”. For example, he allowed people with little education to make complains orally without having to complete paperwork. In this way, they could avoid injustices exerted by some officials who would offer to represent them at high cost. His line of descent has been carefully recorded. When he was 29 years old, he passed the highest-level imperial examination and became qualified as Jinshi. He returned to the capital and was named investigating censor in 1044. In the next two years in that position, he submitted 13 memoranda to Emperor Rezhong of Song on military, taxation, the examination system, and governmental dishonesty and incompetence. In 1045, he sent to Liao dynasty as a messenger. He has 2 wives, they are Lady Zhang and Lady Dong. He has 1 son, called Pao Yi, he was born in 1033. Also, there are 2 daughters with Lady Dong. Judge Pao’s only son died in 1053. His son is 5 years old. At last, Judge pao died in the capital city of Kaifeng, recorded that left the following warning of his family. He said, “Any of my descendants who commits bribery as an official shall not be allowed back home nor buried in the family burial site. He who shares not my values is not my descendant.” He was buried in Daxingji in 1063. Lady Dong died in 1068 and was buried next to him.. This story is retold and preserved particularly in the form of performance arts such as Chinese opera and Pingshu.

NON-FICTION GROUP 2

The Legendary Judge Pao

St. Joseph's Primary School, Pua, Sun Long Cardison – 11

For almost a thousand years, Judge Pao, named Bao Zheng (A.D. 999–1062) has served as the living embodiment of justice in Chinese history due to his uncompromising dedication to upholding the law without fear nor favor. Apart from his intolerance of injustice and corruption, Judge Pao was famous for his filial piety, stern demeanor, righteousness, superior wit and selflessness.

Judge Pao was far more than an astute judge during the reign of Emperor Renzong in the Song Dynasty. During his service, he fought fiercely against corruption, solved many complicated cases and punished corrupt high-ranking government officials and abusive imperial families, regardless of their powerful positions or connections in pursuit of justice. His uprightness, probity, integrity, wisdom and impartial judgment profoundly impressed everyone in the regions he served, earning him not only wide respect from people across the nation, but also high reputation for being a honest and fair government official.

The legend of Judge Pao has been well kept in Chinese memories for centuries. Stories about Judge Pao and his court cases were passed on many times in various forms of performing arts and literature, which continued to enjoy sustained popularity. Judge Pao was not only a legendary character, but also the figure of inspiration and hope: his virtue and spirit continued to have lasting impacts on Chinese culture and tradition and were highly valued and desired by the people.

Virtue of Filial Piety

Born into a scholar family in Hefei, China, Judge Pao was well respected for his filial piety as he put such virtue before his own ambition. At the age of 29, the diligent scholar passed the highest-level imperial examination and obtained the prestigious title of “presented scholar,” which qualified him to be a high-ranking government official. However, he had sacrificed his leading position and 10 years of work in order to take care of his elderly and weak parents at home until he reached his late thirties after his parents’ deaths when he had faithfully fulfilled all his responsibilities and duties as a son.

Courageous Spirit in Pursuit of Righteousness

Inspired by the Confucian idea of benevolent governance, Judge Pao was highly regarded as an impartial judge upholding the rule of law without fear nor favor to superior power. His firmness in law enforcement, uncompromising stance against corruption and criminal offenses and courage to impose the rule of law even on the Emperor, who could have him instantly executed for the slightest lack of respect, were founded on his loyalty to the country, love of his people and selflessness to put public interests before his own.

Judge Pao insisted that anyone, including high-ranking government officials and imperial families, deserved punishment if found guilty of wrong doings. According to historical records, more than 30 leading officials were demoted or dismissed due to accusation of corruption, bribery, dereliction of duty, misprision, dishonesty or incompetence during his service.

Despite living in a culture in which thoughts expressed too directly and vigorously to people in power could cause disaster, Judge Pao always succeeded in convincing the Emperor without inviting misfortune. He continued to speak his mind and told the Emperor, “Justice and meritocracy were too important to set aside!”

Values of Probity and Incorruptibility

Judge Pao, being the most prominent representative of probity and incorruptibility in Chinese history, continued to lead a modest life like a commoner, despite his high-ranking position at a time when abuse of power and corruption were prevalent in court and government services.

He firmly believed that impartial judgement could only be made with integrity and uprightness, not having unnecessary relationship nor doing favor for personal interests. Therefore, he was determined to fight government corruption and punished those who took advantage of their privileged positions to satisfy their own desire and greed.

He was also very strict with his family by setting the following rule: “Any of my descendants who breaks the law or becomes corrupt shall not return to our hometown nor buried in the family cemetery. He who shares not my values is not my descendant.”

Reputation for Investigatory Wit and Justice for All

Judge Pao consistently demonstrated exceptional wisdom in settling complicated cases. He never allowed the innocent to be misjudged or the guilty to be discharged. All of his court cases were handled fairly and justly.

As an intelligent judge, he was distinct from other magistrates or government officials who relied on torture to force confessions, which resulted in many innocent people being wrongly convicted. Instead, he solved cases by means of sharp observation, thorough investigation, logical deduction, incomparable wit and extraordinary patience.

Cases which were considered trivial or difficult to find evidence in ancient times when the level of science and technology was primitive and which were ignored by others due to lack of significance or evidence would only be heard and tried by Judge Pao who would do justice to all victims.

Symbol of Benevolence

Raised among low working class, Judge Pao was sympathetic about commoners' hardships and sufferings. Therefore, he initiated several material reforms in legal procedures to better hear the grievances of his people, allowing those with little education to make complaints orally and directly to the prefect without having to complete the paperwork, thereby bypassing the clerks, who were widely believed to be bribed by powerful families to drop a lawsuit. This avoided injustice brought by corrupt officials who manipulated the facts in the paperwork. Public order was consequently restored.

The Bright Moon Hung High in the Sky

Today, Judge Pao is still honored as the symbol of justice in Chinese civilization and well remembered for his probity, sternness, incorruptibility, intelligence and benevolence. His virtues and inner qualities are regarded as the highest spiritual and social values of Chinese culture by people from both traditional and modern Chinese societies. Crowds of visitors flock to a temple in Kaifeng city, where they commemorate China's most famous upright official. Devoted to justice for all, Judge Pao continues to shine where there is darkness!

CREATIVE WRITING NON-FICTION GROUP 2

Judge Pao

Po Leung Kuk Hong Kong Taoist Association Yuen Yuen Primary School, Kwong, Pak Yuen Curtis – 11

“The emperor commits the same crime as the common people.” Have you ever heard of this sentence? This is the principle of Pao Zheng. Judge Pao represents the honor of the Chinese people. He was an official of the northern Song Dynasty. His image has long been well-known to everyone. He enforced the law impartially, was upright, has been praised from generation to generation and has won the admiration of the world.

Pao Zheng’s political achievements and characteristics can be summarized as strictly enforcing the law, selflessness, caring for the suffering of the people, asking advice from the people, striving for reform, eliminating malpractices, severely punishing corruption, and integrity. He tried to ease class contradictions and consolidated his rule by suppressing and relatively reducing exploitation. In addition, his claims and practices were of certain progressive significance at that time.

Pao Zheng was poor when he was young. But still, at the age of 28, he served as a magistrate, governor, and more. Most importantly, from December 1056 to June 1058, he became a judge in Chi Kaifeng Prefecture and he died when he was 64 years old. Pao’s descendants were proud of him. A year after Pao died, he was buried in Daxingji, the eastern suburbs of Hefei City. The tomb was rebuilt by Huaxi officials in 1199. During the Cultural Revolution. Qing officials were regarded as “worse than corrupt officials”, “more deceptive”, and “consolidation feudalism”. Therefore, Pao, the representative of the image of Qing officials, became the target of the public; all portraits of Pao were burned. In 1985, Pao Cemetery was rebuilt in the forest area of Paohe South River in Heifei City, retaining the bones and cultural relics of Pao’s old tombs. It was completed in 1987 and is closely connected to Pao Temple.

Pao Zheng achieved much and his excellent work benefited the country and the people. He successively served as the transshipment envoy of Shaanxi and Hebei, and the transshipment envoy was responsible for the financial, supervision and other administrative affairs for a period of time. In the local area, Pao placed great importance on being aware of the people’s situation and asked the court to let the people rest, recuperate, live and work. Two years later, Pao was recalled to Kaifeng and promoted to deputy envoy of the Ministry of households. During that period, he went to Hebei to solve the problem of military food and also went to Shaanxi to solve the salt industry problem in Yuncheng. He took back the horse farming field and returned it to localities and farmers. He reformed the salt tax law to facilitate the business of the salt industry.

The following case was one of the cases that he had come across. At that time, a transshipment envoy named Wang Kui complained to the emperor that the local official of Chenzhou (now Henan Province) was harsh on the peasants and charged more money and food. In people’s minds at that time, Ren Zhongshi was honest and Wang Kui was greedy. So, they decided to send someone to investigate. Many people were afraid of Wang Kui’s power and unwilling to go there. In order to find out the truth. Pao Zheng resolutely came to Chenzhou. After all the evidence, Pao Zheng returned to the capital and reported the real situation to the emperor. In fact, it was Wang Kui who asked farmers for money and food, causing farmers to be dissatisfied and unable to live. Pao Zheng asked Wang Kui to be dismissed and the extra money and grain be returned to the farmers.

Pao Zheng’s story and his legend have been circulating among the people since the Song and Yuan Dynasties of China, who formed such a colorful literary and artistic image nowadays. He is deeply admired and loved by the people.

NON-FICTION GROUP 3

Judge Pao, China's Ancient Detective

Chinese International School, Lent, Annabella – 12

For over multiple centuries and decades, Judge Pao was the pinnacle of justice in China and served as its foremost representation of fairness and equity. The epitome of integrity, if you will. Due to the plethora of TV shows, novels, plays, and films that have been based on his life, he is instantly recognized by people everywhere. Even an eight-ballad tale was written about him and the life he led. All of these come in many different languages and have multiple translations, so he is a globally recognizable figure. One example of a novel written about him is “The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants.” Judge Pao was a Chinese politician who performed twenty-five years of civil service and was a true hero.

Judge Pao was born on March 5th, 999, and his birth name was originally Bao Zheng. His family was middle class when he was a little child. His grandfather, Bao Shi Tong, was merely a commoner, and his father was a peasant. Judge Pao was motivated to alter his poor, struggling lifestyle situation that he was forced to live in, and therefore he became a qualified Jinshi at the young age of twenty-two. He successfully passed the most difficult imperial test. (A Jinshi was someone who had passed the highest level of imperial examinations.) Jinshi are also commonly known as Imperial Scholars. These exams were typically conducted in the palace, and becoming a Jinshi was very rare because usually only one or two percent of test takers became a Jinshi per year. It was very difficult to become one and very exclusive. Some may argue that it was because he went through many hardships and rough times when he was a young child that it shaped his career path of justice and fairness.

One case that Judge Pao solved was when a man claimed that the tongue of his ox had been severed. He was instructed to murder and sell the dead ox by Judge Pao. Soon after, a second man approached Judge Pao and charged the first man with animal cruelty and intentionally killing an ox for no reason. The second man was shouted at by Judge Pao, and Judge Pao charged him with intentionally framing the first man by chopping off the tongue of the ox. The offender's horror and state of shock forced him to confess his guilt. When it came to injustice, Judge Pao was an extremely rigorous and intolerant man.

He was known as the "iron faced judge," and people liked to joke that the Yellow River's clean water was as scarce as his smiles. (The Yellow River is so named because of its muddy, sandy appearance that gives it a dirty yellow and brown tint, and more than 80% of it is filthy and polluted) He hated deceit and fraud and he always stood up for what was right. Once, he was even brave and courageous enough to scold and reprimand the emperor. In the olden days, that could have easily gotten Pao immediately beheaded or hung. Yet he still stood up for what was right.

Another famous one of Judge Pao's cases was the case of the Chalk Circle. Hai Tang was a sixteen-year-old girl who was born into a poor family. They gave her up to a prostitution house. She became Ma Chun-Shing's second wife, but Ma Chun-Shing's first wife, Ah-Siu, got jealous of Hai Tang and Ma Chun-Shing being a happy couple together. When Hai Tang and Ma Chun-Shing had a son, Ah-Siu accused Hai Tang of adultery and Hai Tang got beaten. She was nearly hung to death when Judge Pao came to rescue her. Hai Tang's son Shoulang was placed into a circle drawn with chalk and whichever woman the child went to was deemed his mother. In the end, Judge Pao judged Hai Tang the true mother of the child and Ah-Siu was found guilty of falsely accusing Hai Tang.

He also executed Chen Shimei. Chen Shimei had a wife and two children. He then left his family for an imperial examination. When he passed, he lied and pretended to be single, successfully becoming the emperor's son in law. Chen's wife, Qin, and his two children later moved to the capital and found out what happened and how Chen became the emperor's son in law. Qin was desperate for him to come back and help her with their children, but he refused and ordered them all to be killed. However, the executor was actually on Qin's side and was against Chen, so he didn't kill them. Qin eventually decided to go to Judge Pao and beg for help, so Chen was tried and arrested. Finally, Judge Pao successfully managed to execute Chen Shimei.

The last example of Judge Pao's cases was when he was presented with the case of a mysterious death. A widow's husband had died, and when the autopsy was performed, there seemed to have been no direct injuries related to his

body and he originally seemed to have died of natural causes. However, the coroner's wife suggested that it might have been an injury related to the brain. Sure enough, after a little bit of research Judge Pao found out that a long nail had been pushed into the head of the husband, killing him. Since the widow also had a previous husband that had also died of "natural" causes, they dug him up and found yet another long nail embedded in his skull and in his brain. The widow was tried and found guilty of killing her husbands because she wanted to inherit money from their wills so she could finally be rich and live a wealthy, long life. She was executed for intentional murder.

As a result of all of these successful cases, Judge Pao was given the name of 'Justice Pao.' Shortly after this, he turned thirty-nine years old. He then composed a poem while being elevated to the position of Duanzhou prefect in 1040.

"The essence of governing is to have a cleansed heart,

The strategy of life is to follow upright ways.

An elegant stem will eventually turn into a pillar,

Refined steel cannot be bent into a hook.

Rats and sparrows overjoy when the granary is full,

Rabbits and foxes worry when the grassland dies.

History books contain teachings by those deceased:

Don't leave your descendants with only embarrassment!"

Lady Zhang and Lady Dong were Judge Pao's two wives. With Lady Dong, Pao had two daughters and one son, Bao Yi, born in 1033. Two years after marrying Lady Cui, his only son Bao Yi passed away in 1053 at a young age while serving as a government official.

Judge Pao also served as the fiscal commissioner of Hebei, an assistant in the academy of learned worthies, vice commissioner of the ministry of revenue, deputy director of the ministry of justice, minister of finance, and he was also the Bian magistrate in 1057. Throughout the years and throughout all of his positions, he demoted and fired thirty high-ranking officials in total.

He also has a fascinating link to Hong Kong. His family tree has been well documented, and the famed Sir Y.K. Pao family is related to him. The family hails from Hong Kong itself. Hong Kong, where his relatives currently reside, consistently has top honors in international rankings for having a top-notch legal system and one of the strongest corruption-fighting initiatives in the entire world.

Finally, he died during the year of 1062, in Kaifeng, Hainan. He was sixty-three years old, and his body was buried in 1063, a year after he died. Once his wife, Lady Dong, died during the year 1068, she was buried beside him. His tomb was officially fixed and rebuilt during the year 1066 by officials.

Judge Pao came to represent fairness and integrity, gaining acceptance and popularity while doing so. Nevertheless, despite his lofty position, he was a very modest and humble individual who normally preferred to live simply and enjoy everyday life like a commoner. He upheld justice and minimized corruption. There is a Chinese proverb that applies to him quite well: "One justice can overpower a hundred evils." Truly, he was a real-life Chinese Sherlock Holmes.

CREATIVE WRITING NON-FICTION GROUP 3

Judge Pao: A Profile

G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Zeng, Elyn – 13

Have you ever heard of Judge Pao? Have you ever seen him on television shows, or read about him in books? If you haven't, this passage about Judge Pao will definitely help you know more about this legendary figure!

Judge Pao was born in Shenxian on the 5th March, 999. In fact, his father was a scholar and an official working for the government. Although their family members could afford Pao to go to school, his mother had to climb up mountains to collect firewood just right before she gave birth to Pao! How impressive! As Pao grew up among the grassroot working class, he understood the hardships in people's lives, and understood the importance of justice among their country. So he was determined to be an unbiased judge when he grew up.

Pao passed the highest level of imperial examination when he was 29 years old and successfully qualified as a Jinshi. Through his life of justice, Pao solved some of the most mind-wrecking mysteries. Many citizens were impressed by Pao's intelligence. One of his most famous cases was "The Case of Two Nails". Pao investigated a husband's death whose cause had been ruled natural. However, Pao's coroner confirmed that there were no injuries on his body. At home, the coroner discussed the case with his wife, who mentioned that people could put long nails into others' brains, leaving no injuries or traces on the body. The next day, the coroner found a long nail indeed, and soon the wife of the victim was arrested for murdering her own husband. After all that fiasco, Pao went to question the coroner's wife, and found out the coroner was her second husband, while her first husband died. Pao ordered the guards to go to the cemetery and opened his coffin. Unsurprisingly, there was a long nail in his brain, too. Judge Pao successfully solved two cases.

Judge Pao was a very intelligent official, he died in 1062 in the capital city of Kaifeng. I am very impressed by his wit and his courage to solve mysteries and come face-to-face with those evil criminals lurking around on the streets. I do hope I can be as brave as him, maybe I can be the next Judge Pao in the future, who knows?

NON-FICTION GROUP 4

The Chinese Sherlock Holmes

Korean International School, Lam, Cheuk Ki – 14

INTRODUCTION

When asked who is the cleanest and most honest official in Chinese history, most of us will say it's Justice Pao (Bao Zheng 包拯). Bao Zheng is one of the most remembered officials in the long-established history of China and is honored as the cultural symbol of justice. His uprightness, selflessness, and impartial judgment earned him the nickname "Bao the Clear Sky" (Bao Qingtian 包青天). You can appreciate his popularity among locals by seeing the crowds flocking to Judge Bao's temple in the previous Song's capital Kaifeng, and the stories of him and his cases passing on for thousands of years through popular cultures, such as novels, stage dramas and TV shows.

ALL ABOUT JUDGE BAO

Judge Bao has become a legendary figure thanks to the myths fed by abundant folklore and detective stories. A distinct image is dedicated to him in most traditional plays and modern drama series. He is often portrayed with a black face and a white crescent-shaped birthmark on his forehead. According to the legend, Bao Zheng is upright and majestic. He needs to handle cases in the real world during the daytime and presides over the lawsuits in the underworld at night. The crescent mark on his forehead thus serves as a permit across the boundary. Apparently, our culture has over-deified Bao, so what does judge Bao actually like?

FILIAL PIETY FIRST

Bao Zheng, in reality, was neither black-faced nor had an extraordinary life experience; he was a Chinese politician in China's Song dynasty. Bao was born into a scholar family in Anhui, and his birth was a gift for the family since both of Bao's brothers died immaturely.

As the only son in the family, Bao Zheng studied diligently as a youth. Ultimately, he passed the imperial civil service examination at 29 and was soon offered a government job as a county magistrate. However, his aged parents were in poor health then, and Bao Zheng decided to put filial piety first. He resigned from the prestigious position and cared for his parents for nearly a decade until they both passed away; he was thus highly appreciated by later scholars, including Sima Guang, for this virtue.

CLEAN AND HONEST

Bao Zheng returned to the government and was promoted to the prefect of Duanzhou. Duanzhou is famous for high-quality inkstones, which were presented annually to the imperial court. Bao found that local officials demanded inkstones dozens more than the required tribute to bribe influential ministers. Bao thought this had invisibly increased the burden on local people and broke this unspoken rule by ordering the manufacturers to fill the required quota only. This incident caused an uproar in the local area. After the expiry of Bao's three years official period, he really returned without an inkstone. The words "clean and honest" have been with Bao Zheng all his life ever since.

TROUBLE MAKER – IMPERIAL CENSOR

This incident impressed the Emperor, who appointed Bao as an imperial censor in the capital, responsible for supervising all officials; this undoubtedly gave Bao Zheng a platform to criticize domestic and foreign affairs. During his duty in the Central government, Bao wrote scores of memorandums to the Emperor, criticizing his mistakes and impeaching more than 60 officials for incompetence and corruption, some of whom had ties to the imperial family. Bao is renowned for the impeachment of Zhang Yaozuo. Zhang was the uncle of the Emperor's beloved concubine; despite his mediocrity and incompetence, he was promoted to the commissioner of palace attendant, and Bao impeached him. The Emperor, however, insisted on promoting Zhang, which aroused public anger, and seven ministers, including Bao Zheng, even confronted the Emperor face to face. When Bao stated his reasons for opposing, his voice was so loud and agitated that spit splattered the Emperor's face. Forced by the power of his ministers, the Emperor had to give up and agreed that relatives of the empress and concubines should not serve in the government. This rule played a significant role in avoiding the recurrence of historical tragedies similar to the dictatorship of foreign relatives in the Han and Tang Dynasties and the chaos of the government. Bao was never demoted or otherwise punished for offering the Emperor his opinion too candidly, which was rare in the ancient Chinese political culture, as the Emperor knew he was a "loyal minister".

THE RISE OF JUSTICE BAO

In 1056, Bao was appointed the magistrate of Kaifeng. Despite his less than two years of duty there, he finally stepped into the stage, where his familiar demigod image and legendary stories in popular culture were based. However, neither a skilled bodyguard Zhan Zhao (展昭) and four righteous and incorruptible enforcers, nor an intelligent advisor Gongsun Ce (公孙策), accompanies him to solve convoluted murder plots and palace intrigues. Those legendary sets of guillotines, given to him by the Emperor to execute criminals, were even far from visible.

PIONEER OF POLITICAL REFORM

If you have to find some "fame" for him in Kaifeng, there are mainly two remarkable things. Once, the Huimin River of Kaifeng flooded repeatedly; Bao's investigation revealed that the cause stemmed from the numerous gardens and pavilions illegally built over the river by powerful families that blocked the water from flowing freely. Bao ordered that they be demolished, and once he eliminated the "human trouble", the flood receded. Apart from this, Bao also turned Kaifeng into an orderly place by implementing several reforms. Traditionally, a plaintiff had to prepare a written claim; Bao allowed people to directly make oral complaints to the court. In this way, poorly educated people could avoid injustices by officials manipulating the facts in the paperwork. This new approach ensured any severe complaint would be dealt with fairly and impartially by Judge Bao and won the reputation of "Iron-faced Judge".

THE MODEST OFFICIAL

Bao Zheng's main political achievements were not in Kaifeng Mansion nor his wise judgments but in his promotion to the minister of finance one year later. Through economic and financial reforms, Bao Zheng has done an excellent thing for the country's people – changing the tax system and effectively reducing the burden on the people. Bao Zheng died of illness in 1062. The people in the capital were all sad. Despite his high rank in the government, Bao led a modest life like a commoner. When the Emperor went to Bao's house to express condolences, he couldn't help crying when he saw that Bao's house was bare and his clothes, utensils, and food were still the same as when he was not an official.

WHY IS BAO ZHENG JUSTICE INCARNATE?

While Bao was a politician and reformer during the Song Dynasty, which is at most as significant as other famous Chinese politicians in Chinese history, why are only his stories fantastically embellished? Why only is he worshiped as God by many locals?

Firstly, the Confucian school of thought was revived and highly valued during the Song Dynasty. The emperors favored the concept of "ruling the state with local scholars", especially in the Renzong era when Bao Zheng worked for the government. It turns out that it is only during this period when the spirit of scholar-bureaucrats is highly appreciated that the system could contain the "trouble-making" Bao. Bao has been promoted 26 times during his 27 years of official life. Under the practice of promotion every three years in the Chinese government system, Bao is a miracle. History then chose Bao Zheng, an official with humanism, fame and popularity. After his death, some excellent deeds of many other officials were credited to him, and Bao's name became synonymous with the idealized "honest and upright official" (Qingquan).

Secondly, operas and story-based novels have become very popular in the Song Dynasty. Judge Bao's adventures became the first storytelling choice, with more and more fabricated and fictional elements pumped in, and formed part of a popular genre of Chinese detective fiction that preceded Sherlock Holmes by several centuries. After the fall of the Song Dynasty, operas of the Yuan Dynasty and novels of the Ming and Qing Dynasties all needed creative materials like Judge Bao. The old Bao Zheng was then constantly innovating. A literary Bao Zheng became increasingly familiar, while a historical Bao Zheng became increasingly diluted.

Thirdly, since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, folk literature has given rise to the "culture of Qingquan". The commoners, especially the lower class, desperately wanted their grievances settled. Bao's stern appearance, hatred of bureaucrats' corruption and waste, and willingness to challenge the powerful and champion the poor fit the cultural archetype of the "ging Quan", making the Chinese cling to the mode of thought that Judge Bao will save the world. "Everyone has Baoqingtiang in their mind" (人人頭上有青天) has become the desire and motto of Chinese people.

No one cares about who Bao Zheng is, but it is the justice and fairness he symbolizes that matters to everyone.

MY FAVORITE STORY OF JUDGE BAO

As our most-liked Judge Bao was gaining popularity since the Song dynasty, he has inevitably become the first and the most famous protagonist in various Chinese literary and dramatic mediums. His stories and cases, almost all made up, were retold and preserved in performance arts, such as Chinese opera in the Yuan Dynasty and vernacular fiction in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

One of the most well-known is "Chen Shi Mei's Beheading Case". Chen Shi Mei was a poor scholar and was married to Qin, who cared for him, his parents and two children. Chen left them behind in his hometown for the imperial examination in the capital. After placing first, he lied about his marriage and became the Emperor's new brother-in-law. Years later, famine forced Qin and her children to look for Chen in the capital, where they learned what had happened to him. Aware that his position was in danger and that he had lied to the Emperor to marry the princess, Chen not only claimed not to know Qin and their children but secretly ordered his bodyguard to murder them. But the bodyguard helped the family escape and committed suicide. Desperate, Qin brought her case to Bao Zheng, who convicted Chen of attempted murder and for lying to the Emperor, the punishment for which was death. The imperial family intervened with threats and issued an edict pardoning Chen. Bao executed Chen nonetheless despite the penalty for defying an imperial order was also death.

So impressive! In the story, Bao simultaneously serves as a detective, prosecutor, judge, and jury. He even risks his life to do justice and handle grievances for commoners. It would not be possible to find someone like Bao in the world nowadays, even in democratic countries, not to say China, a socialist country, in which individual rights or legal due process is still far from making the requests to Judge Bao obsolete.

THE EVERLASTING JUDGE BAO

The lasting impact of Judge Bao can even be seen in 21st-century modern China. In the 1990s, several TV drama series about his sleuthing exploits became wildly popular in mainland China, Hong Kong, and the South East Asia countries. It set off a wave of the "Bao Qingtian craze" in 1993 that the two Hong Kong TV stations broadcast the Judge Bao drama simultaneously and competing for ratings, making significant repercussions that year. Interestingly, this craze coincided with when political corruption was of grave concern since China's economic reform in 1978. Its popularity had only waned after a far-reaching anti-corruption campaign began in 2012. During that era, you could find people stuffing allegations of corruption into the donation box in front of the Bao Judge's status in the Kaifeng Bao Temple. They knew Bao had died a thousand years ago, but they sent the letters anyway out of desperation. Some citizens who were not satisfied with local officials might even take their cases all the way to the capital, Beijing, and live for decades in Beijing's "petitioners' village", searching for an impartial Judge Bao-like figure who would hear their cases.

It's therefore surprising to find that a man who lived a thousand years ago with most of his stories based on literary versions could have such an impact and serve as surveillance in the modern Chinese political system.

Although real Judge Bao is not as legendary as he has appeared in the storytelling, novels and TV shows, he is undoubtedly one of the most disciplined, upright and impartial officials in China's history. He once set a family rule: "Among my children who serve in government, if any breaks the law or becomes corrupt, he shall not return to our hometown, nor shall he be buried in the family cemetery. I will disown those who do not heed these words." His virtue is highly appreciated among the Chinese, which is why he is commemorated in Chinese history and has become a model of "Qingquan" in China.

When I was young, the grown-ups often told me many intriguing stories about Judge Bao. I thought he was terrific, even better than the superheroes in the Marvel stories. Besides investing in cases and arresting bad people, he could also judge them and sentence convicted criminals. As I grow older, realizing most of the stories are made up, I admire him in another way. Bao is the heir to the school of thought of traditional Chinese populism, 'minben sixiang 民本思想', which held that, as Bao wrote in a memorandum, "the people are the roots of the state." It also held that rulers shouldn't constrict people's livelihoods or persecute them for speaking their minds. His thought was very advanced in the traditional Chinese monarchy society. I appreciated his willingness to advocate for the poor and weak. When people are oppressed and not fairly treated, Judge Bao, who upholds justice, is the last straw people can grasp, helping them to struggle through hardship.

I always like the Chinese proverb "舉頭三尺有神明" meaning the Gods are watching from above. It's a motto warning us not to do something bad. But what if we get lost or seduced? So we need Justice Bao, who serves as a role model to remind us anywhere, anytime, whether it's from screens or bedtime stories.

Maybe we long for a clean, fair society so much; maybe we always have a fantasy of someone who can stand by us when we face something unfair, which makes Judge Bao, like Batman in the West, irreplaceable in our hearts. I hope, one day, people can visit Judge Bao temple in Kaifeng out of simple respect rather than making a desperate plea for help.

CREATIVE WRITING NON-FICTION GROUP 4

Judge Pao

Shanghai High School International Division, Zhao, Dakuan – 16

Judge Pao, also known as Bao Zheng, was known fictionally for being the judge in the Song Dynasty. He was selfless, worked with integrity, and dared to appeal grievances for the common people, so he got the name "Bao Qingtian"(which means judge Bao the heavenly arbiter) and "Justice Bao" among the people. There are many legends and plays about judge Bao in the folk, such the one called "Yellow Cabbage Leaves" and "Three Heroes and Five Gallants", which praise judge Bao for his fortitude and justice as the representative of the people. However, in reality, Judge Pao was not only a judge but also the highest leader of the national defense and the highest magistrate of the capital. Despite the difference in position, both the fictional Judge Bao and the real Judge Bao were granted high names. Bao Zheng successively served as a local official in many places. He worked cleanly and honestly, took many measures to reduce the burden on the masses, and did many things conducive to the protection and development of the local economy, which was widely praised not only by the people that benefited from his decisions but also by the litterateurs who admire him.

I summarize these compliments into eight aspects, which I called, "Eight praise Judge Bao".

First praise Judge Bao for his official integrity by not being afraid of the bigwigs in the royal court, putting everyone equally in front of the tribunal, and being incorruptible in front of entices.

When Bao Zheng was governor of Duanzhou (now Zhaoqing City of Guangdong Province), Duanzhou was rich in producing inkstones. The governor of the city before judge Bao takes the advantage of the tribute as an opportunity to peculate wealth by extorting nearly 10 times the amount of inkstone needed for the tribune and pocketing most of them to use these pocketed inkstones for bribery. On the other hand, however, Judge Bao only collected inkstones according to the required amount of tribute and never used this opportunity to seek his own benefits. What is particularly admirable is that Bao Zheng did not take even one inkstone home after his term of office expired, which shows how strict he was to himself and how clean he was as an official.

When Bao Gong was an official in various places, he used to and is not afraid to severely punish the bigwigs who brought harm to the nation. For example, Wang Kui had a close relationship with the Chancellor of the dynasty at that time and was favored by the emperor Zhao Heng. However, these titles didn't shock Judge Bao and he still impeached Wang Kui without any hesitation. Judge Bao also directly impeached Chancellor Song Lu, Prince Shu's son-in-law, the imperial concubine's uncle, and so on.

These dignitaries are very powerful and their private relationships with other powerful officials are very intertwined. Displeasing these people is very likely to directly end Judge Bao's career as an official or even cost his life. Thus it can be seen that Bao Zheng's upright quality is how admirable.

Second, praise Judge Bao's judge with great justice and not consider private affairs when judging.

During the tenure of Lord Bao in Luzhou, his relatives and old friends took advantage of his influence to do some illegal things, which made it very difficult for the county and town officials to handle. Once, the uncle of Bao violated the law and occupied the land of the villagers illegally. Because the county and township were not able to deal with this case, the people complained directly to Judge Bao in Luzhou. Judge Bao felt that this was not an isolated case, nor was it an illegal act committed by his uncle alone, so he had to deal with it seriously and act by the law, so he directly sent his uncle to the court for interrogation. After his uncle was convicted to be guilty, Judge Bao gave his uncle a beating according to the law, ordered him to return the property, and made an apology. The crowd applauded and praised Judge Bao for staying impartial even though Judge Bao have the power to cover up his uncle's crime. They also beat drums and gongs and sent a large plaque with the words "Luyang Righteousness" to the official government.

Judge Bao's action convinced people that he will remain justice all the time no matter what happened.

Three praises Judge Bao for daring to rectify the official style and reform the unreasonable rules and regulations.

When Bao Zheng was governor of Kaifeng Prefecture, he opened the main door of the government office, so that the complainants could directly enter the court to submit their pleadings, to avoid the government officials' malpractice, and the trial was as fair and reasonable as possible. He also furthermore reforms the government's retirement system so that anyone above 70 will have to retire to prevent the monopolization of power in the royal court. This also solved the problem of the huge useless bureaucracy of the civil servants. Before, Judge Bao's reformation, the condition of the government was described as having nine shepherds look after ten sheep. After the reformation, this condition was greatly improved.

Forth praise Judge Bao for appointing people and promoting people based on their merits instead of their birth.

Independent of partisan struggles, Bao played an instrumental role in recommending competent people with different political views for important posts. He also denies using those who have good birth but bad morals. Judge Bao pointed out in his book that the officials with good morals and integrity are the true representative of the people and those who are corrupt were only the thieves among the people.

Fifth Praise Judge Bao for his will to strengthen the nation.

Khitan was once the enemy of the Song dynasty, and it is a very big threat to the Song. Furthermore, it is a nomadic tribe and constantly invade the Song dynasty. The emperor of the Song Dynasty decided to pay money to ease the conflict with Khitan. And from that time, every year, Song needs to pay a large amount of money to the Khitan to maintain peace. Some officials, or even most of the officials in the court at that time think that maintaining peace just by paying money was great and there was no reason to change it. However, Judge Bao was different. He proposed that paying money is merely a kind of compromise and the Khitan will become more greedy over time. The best method to maintain peace is not by paying money but to build a strong army to guard the border. This view is very provident and is very rare at his time.

Six Praise Judge Bao for his wise decisions in the tribunal and his sharp sense as a detective.

When Bao Zheng was governor of Tian Chang prefecture, a farmer came to the court one day and filed a lawsuit against a scoundrel for cutting off the tongue of his farm cow and asking for the arrest of the criminal. There was no clear clue other than

the cow's tongue's been cut off about who the criminal suspect was. When other people feel puzzlement and have no idea what to do, Judge Bao proposed his idea after the analysis: cutting off the cow's tongue is not profitable because the tongue of the cow is worthless on its own. This must be an act of revenge against the victim. Therefore, Judge Bao ordered the victim to kill the cow and sell its meat to lure the criminal (because the Song Dynasty made it illegal to kill cows). Sure enough, the tongue cutter saw the owner of the cow killing the cow and thought it was a chance to revenge. So he went to court to report the owner of the cow killing the cow which exposed himself and revealed the fact that he cut the cow's tongue, which caused him to end up in jail. The suspect was solved. Many stories in the case of Judge Bao, which are widely spread among the people, all reflect that Judge Bao was rigorous in thinking, witty and sensitive when he settled the case.

Seven praises Bao Zheng for helping average people to solve their problems.

When Bao Zheng was in charge of Jingdong transport, he visited all the prefectures, visiting the impoverished iron governance households, and exempting their debt

to help increase iron productivity. At the same time, he encourages those who can open the furnace iron governance, to facilitate the development of production.

When Bao Zheng was governor of Kaifeng Prefecture, the Huimin River in Kaifeng was always flooding, which brought many difficulties to the poor farmers on both sides of the river. Bao Zheng ordered all the terraces, gardens, and water pavilions built across the river to be demolished to leave space for more riparian work. The measure, of course, deeply offended the dignitaries of the day. Bao withstands all kinds of pressure that these people gave him and after careful field measurement and verification, he exposed the fraudulent activities of these bigwigs and demanded severe punishment. After unremitting efforts, he finally dredged the Huimin River, so that residents on both sides can live and work happily.

Eight praise Bao Zheng for his long-term unremitting efforts to study diligently.

At the age of 28, Bao Zheng was able to pass the highest imperial examinations, which was the result of his diligent study. The reason why he can be a good official in governing a country is that he has studied and thought diligently for a long time so he has learned many pieces of knowledge that others don't have.

POETRY GROUP 1

Bright Moon in the Dark

Kowloon Rheinisch School, Yick, Chun Ka Kayley – 8

Once in the Song Dynasty,
There was a famous judge
Known by his uprightness
And capability of dispensing justice.

More than an official,
he cared as a parent.
More than a detective,
he made unbiased judgment.

Not shielding his own uncle,
He helped the poor.
Not afraid of the powerful,
He made things fair.

Loved by the people,
Feared by the evil,
He was Judge Pao,
With an honorific title Justice Pao.

Like the bright moon in the dark,
He has left a reputation appreciated by generations.
Like the unstained lotus out of the dirt,
He has inspired those who fight corruption.

Now it's our turn
To maintain a clear and fair society together.
Like shining stars in the Milky Way,
Everyone has a role to play.

CREATIVE WRITING POETRY GROUP 1

Justice Pao

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Lau, Tung Ching Holly – 9

“I have a dark complexion,
I am against injustice and corruption.”

Honourable, humble, helpful.

Fabulous, faithful, fearless.

Scolding the Emperor,

Unafraid of power.

Clever, calm, confident.

When solving cases, very observant.

“I hear your grievances, people

I understand your hardships.

I will help you, with my leadership.”

I am Justice Pao.

POETRY GROUP 2

The Ghost of Bao Zheng's Son

ESF Quarry Bay School, Wong, Angie – 9

(or Seeing Memory)

In Kaifeng my father was employed to judge
an offender to the town. As my father walked,
the people bowed, acquiescent:
splitting apart as if anticipating my father's path
closing behind him in awe – but not fast enough
to shut me out. I slipped through them
like the whispers filling the crowd –
the hushed voices quiet as spirits'.

I stood at the back,
as quiet as the still air,
glaring at my father,
wearing his hat;
I waved at him violently,
but he did not wave back.

Thump! Thump!
My father banged his fist,
on the shining Throne of Judgment,
scowling at the criminal;
fear caught in the people's throats:

silence.

I wanted to say something to my father,
but my tongue too was locked in terror.

Guards marched forward,
dragging the criminal:
their wary sickles,
pointing at his back,
waiting for their sign – “Execute.”

They jabbed the sickles
with sudden aggression:
inscribing small warnings,
on the prisoner's back.
Blood running like ink.

The criminal screamed in pain,
bowing low, seeing what fate will take him,
into a forest of the unknown.

And I wondered – had I lived –
Could I have been that man?
What makes him *he* and me *me*?
Could it be that I was lucky?

Once when I was newly dead
I slipped through a person
by accident; I heard his thoughts,
his fears, his wants.
The criminal bowed his head.
What if I could become him?
As I did the man by my grave.

I began to drift –

over the criminal's back:
lettered with gashes—the language
of pain, of punishment,
sinking my ghostly form,
through those ill-gotten words.
Inhabiting his body,
as if it were my own.

As if the lashes on his back
were mine to carry
I felt the weight of his life
hanging heavy.

I saw his childhood house
his mother too; him skipping,
around the meadow.
But then a dark cloud came
and I knew – with him –
that this was his father.

His father:

his eyebrows sagging in disappointment,
and the sad twisting of his beard.
His righteous eyes cutting through you –
the angry squeeze of his fists:

the bared teeth.

His father – my father:
the storm of his rage,
broke over us as a tidal wave.
Raining anger as the spittle,
hitting our face.

I took a deep breath in –
and out –
propelling me backwards
back, into myself – into the world.
Into the crowd waiting
with jaws gaping open:
watching Judge Pao,
like children do their teacher.

Shock flushed through the people,
consuming them with terror
the criminal staring at the ground
accepting his fate,
as my father's mouth widened
to give his verdict.

My father breathing in –
as I slipped into his throat.

CREATIVE WRITING POETRY GROUP 2

Judge Pao

Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Wong, Tsz Wai – 11

Chinese politician, Judge Pao,
Everyone has loved him up to now.
He was upright and unafraid of authority,
Cracking crime with his mental agility.

Judge Pao was respectable and well-known.
That was why people called him Pao Gong.
He could communicate with people
As well as the mysterious infernal.

He worked in the Song Dynasty,
Serving the commoners with loyalty.
Sinners he punished countless,
Even the husband of a princess.

Chen Shi Mei, a poor scholar,
Lived with a wife and toddlers.
With all the money of his dame,
He set off for an imperial exam.

He came first, to his amazement.
He was overwhelmed with excitement.
The emperor let him marry a princess.
He didn't hesitate or think and said, "Yes!"

His wife searched for him in the rain and snow,
But he denied their relations and said he didn't know.
She asked Judge Pao to punish the ungrateful and mean.
The unfaithful man was eventually sent to the guillotine.

Judge Pao is justice, a symbol;

He is integrity, a role model.

He is a person we should honour;

His qualities are what we should master.

POETRY GROUP 3

The Man with the Bread

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Mok, Hei Tong Hayley – 14

Trudging through the streets
Of gloomy shanghai
His clothes tattered and torn
And his feet bare and bloodied
His face worn and scrubby
His eyes shone like the red moon at twilight
And his shadow loomed over the brick walls
Like a spider who crawled on these streets
Staining the sidewalks as he passed
With black spots and smudges
The empty streets greeted him
With a strained howl
The wind slapping and penetrating his skin
Whilst the moonlight shreds his clothes with vigour

He staggered without purpose
Furiously glancing around
Searching and searching for something
But what?
There, that red house!
It was quite a luxurious house
The walls decorated with golden tints and silver
Dragons and phoenixes engraved and enslaved to the bricks
Pupils dilating as they ogled the man
Curiously.

He kept staggering, into the dark depths of the hallway
His uneven footsteps echoing
An uneven rhythm without music
His long fingernails scratched the walls

And kept him stable and going.
He walked and walked until he reached a room
The candle in the middle shimmered and flickered softly
Embracing his silhouette as he stepped
Slowly
Into the room.
He stretched his arms out
Slowly
And reached the tiny teeny piece of bread
That was lying on the table.

Boom! Clash! A man appeared
With grace and courtesy
Mystical yet plain
His futon hat adorned his head nicely
A crescent moon carved and engraved on his forehead
So familiar, yet, distinct
He reached for the man's hand
“ Your time has come.”
Time? What time?
All that was left for the man was starvation.
The judge beamed, and took out a fine loaf of bread
“Come with me, and I'll show you the way.
Do not be afraid, for I am just the man with the bread.”

Slowly, hesitantly
The man reached for his calloused hands
Show me the way, he rasped.
Beaming, the judge grasped his tightly
As they both ventured into the depths of the unknown
To where?
A question unanswered by the living and the dead.

CREATIVE WRITING POETRY GROUP 3

Judge' Pao's History and Character

G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Leung, Christie - 14

Judge Pao— one of the greatest to ever exist,
Judge Pao— a fierce bringer of justice,
Judge Pao— with discipline and impartiality as his norm,
Judge Pao— let me tell you all about this angel in human form.

In short, he is outlined with multiple qualities:

Always of fairness,
The symbol of holy justice and rightfulness
Nobody escapes his eagle-like sight,
Under his eyes of the law.

Intelligent and virtuous,
Postponing his ambitions,
Assisting his parents till their decease,
Following the calling that appealed him to become who he is.

Although starting his career late,
He rose quick in ranks,
Flying high as if a hawk,
Forever carving a mark in history.

Ever heard of the Emperor's son?
Who denied and murdered his family,
Inhumane but situated high above all,
With a status only below the Emperor overall.

When discovered he claimed he'd be so safe,
Yet our judge, with his guillotine, threw that thought off his face.
As the blade swung to complete his beheading,
We understand that no one is excluded from the law by escaping.

These stories may be completely fictitious
But they highlight the truth of his character.
Truly a fearless and honest man.
Honoured to know his history of courageous actions.

Also, his infamous refusals of immorality.
Under injustices, unfairnesses or discrimination,
Despite the possible dangerous consequences of opposition,
Deciding to uphold egalitarianism instead.

A challenge of being an egalitarian is favouritism,
With letting one's family off easy the most common.
However Judge Pao never regarded his family exclusive from laws,
Looking upon them strictly and demanding utter equity.

Sometimes my mind flies back in time,
When my family gifted me a story,
Of one day when the judge was strolling,
He learnt of painful news.

Of a poor farmer's land was taken viciously,
Tricked through his lack of knowledge and education,
Losing his source of income and pillar of life,
His future never to be brightened again.

Yet, Judge Pao granted him oral presentation of his verdict,
The process and severity of his unreasonable downfall.
Never had him write a single alphabet,
Helping him win back his land, his future and his life.

'Don't leave your descendants with only embarrassment.'
Was what he had written when his incumbency concluded.
Making his descendants proud as ever,
Building modern ships in Hong Kong,
Achieving fame equivalent to him trialling cases.

Appearing in novels, television and the arts,
Performed widely spreading his good deeds.
Passing on stories through generations in homes,
Now no one doesn't know the Chinese Sherlock Holmes.

Judge Pao—the most magical judge of China,
Judge Pao— the upholder of all right and truth,
Judge Pao— the angel all demons fear,
Judge Pao— whose heroic acts everyone hears.

POETRY GROUP 4

Timeless Gratitude

Carmel School – Elsa High School, Rebibo, Liora – 14

This poem is from Judge Bao saying thank you to Lui Yun for influencing and mentoring him.

Lui Yun, you influenced the worthy me.

Like a zhà měng full of nobility and wisdom.

As I once said when I received the Duan inkstone:

"Those who are incorruptible are worthy of the people;

those who are greedy are the thieves of the people".

You are my interpretation of "incorruptible".

Who I am today is thanks to the choices I made yesterday.

The birth of my life journey started the first yesterday you guided me.

Piloting me into a reality which opened my eyes to the corruptible.

One case reminded me of your mentoring:

A businessman was wicked on the strength of bribery.

Immense pressure I was under; yet, I held the truth throughout.

An image of fearlessness and righteousness flashed,

It was always part of me but you helped me embrace it.

I accompanied my parents when I returned to Luzhou.

Filial piety for long, all along, but you were still there as magistrate.

I was present until the last breath arrived for my teacher.

But you mentored me even then, I profoundly thought 'How?',

How to become a hard-working official and serve the court?

So I ought to Thank You,

Not only for influencing the experienced and superior me.

For guiding me to be the best zhà měng there is, like I know you are.

Whether in terms of knowledge or morality,

I extend my thoughts to reach the point of kindness.

The kindness of friendship that you have shown me.

CREATIVE WRITING POETRY GROUP 4

The Peacock Broach: Ruminations of a Judge

Shanghai High School International Division, Huang, Mia – 16

There are days my stagnant gaze,
fixates on the ragged contour of the Linden tree out my windowsill.
Asymmetrical heart-shaped leaves flutter off in silence,
its absence unnoticed, leaving the foliage unchanged.

My palms clench the sword of justice,
while a pumping heart panics in my human flesh.
Expectations of righteousness push against my ceramic mortal skin,
like steel marbles bouncing off a sheet of glass on the brink of crumbling.

I live with my camouflaged cries, existing more as a symbol,
hiding away from all human emotions like an unspoken oath,
shepherded by a lifelong commitment I never recalled having pledged.
I desperately conceal the flaws and vulnerabilities that once made me human.

They say love is a bias, an infesting weakness,
so I estranged my body from the people I once loved,
deserting my all, in exchange for fair integrity.
All was done without a second thought.

Public scrutiny and their viral voices send me through spirals.
I watch myself aching, failing to subsist with grace and dignity.
The golden pin behind the turquoise peacock brooch stabs into my fingertips,
tainting the gold tips with beads of scarlet ichor.

Looking out the window, a little girl waves at me.
She tugs on the hem of her mother's floral dress, trying to raise her attention.
I hide my vacant body behind the dusty umber curtains.

But there are cries for righteousness,
the gavel hammers them onto the back of my mind,
awakening me from the existential dread.
Stories of corruption, hot-stamped onto the sheer surface of my sizzling skin,
leaving behind the agonizing pain and charcoal-like scent of burnt skin.

When I close my eyes, I hear the young child's cloaked cry
in the dark alleyway, when the clock makes its twelfth strike.
She watches her girlhood stripped away, with her face
vigorously pressed against the blemished brick wall.
The masked man scavenges through her inanimate body,
his rummaging fingers, trampling the last trace of bliss and ignorance in her.
She wonders how the hometown that once
tingled her skin with delirium at its every mention,

could leave every inch of her body marinated in a gut-wrenching numbness.

When the man leaves, the young girl stabs a fractured piece of a beer bottle into her thighs, hoping to simply feel something aside from the daunting vacancy.

Her hands shiver, as she watches her parents' blood gushing out of her body.

She sends her prayers, hoping the surging blood would wash away the shame and guilt.

The brick wall stands in the alleyway, every night when the clock makes its last strike,
a fresh lip print on the muddy brick marks a new defeated soul,
with no crystal glass slipper left behind.

At home, the girl violently rubs the lavender loofah sponge against her unvarnished skin,
hoping to cleanse out all evidence of his existence,

while her mother picks out snapped branches of the Linden tree from her hair.

The mother holds the girl, while the rest of the world fights

for the unborn life in her body, which she is yet made aware of.

She does not know that in that dark alleyway,

she too, has made an unspoken promise to the world,

marking her liable for fostering the remains of the crime he has left behind.

She does not know that one day,

she will be telling this unborn life the story of Leda and the Swan.

When I push my body out of the apartment door,

I am made aware of the things I stand for, the things we all stand for,

but my unveiled skin can only display so many narratives.

With bodies next to bodies, we should stand,

displaying the collection of stories we piece together.

Piece by *peace*.

POETRY GROUP 5

The Scales

ESF Sha Tin College, Ho, Athena – 17

Under that clear sky
Justice delivered by water –
A thief's oiled fingers,
copper coins,
a peasant boy,

Impersonal is the sentence, yet so precious are the bonds

Those in pursuit of true justice must know
surely,
Of whether they are content to have
the loneliest job in the world?
Or if the toll of a scales' brass weight
is a token of loss' favour,

Made rigid like an exclamation
The purer the heavier, a coveted jadestone
Every groundbreaking story closed
Only aims to form another
For who but precious History?

Which I imagine then
if the Crescent Moon could ever learn leniency from law?
Alas, the concubine of a principle promised to fairness

Voice of the commons, authority so solemn
A heart like an atrium housing a phoenix –
To condemn is to ask distance of its warmth.

POETRY GROUP 6

Dear Judge Pao

Korean International School Springboard, Wong, Jing Yuk Euan – 12

Dear Judge Pao

Judge

Understands the case

Defends the law

Gathers

Evidence

Prosecutes

Accused and

Offenders

POETRY GROUP 7

The Judge

Korean International School Springboard, Yeo, Yeu Jeon Darren – 14

Judge Bao

Upright and brave man

Distinguished by the moon on his head

Good judge

Everybody loves him