

Creative Writing Fiction Group 3

New Tales of China's Inventions

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Aquino, Padua Ric Gian – 12

Nowadays, people may know China as the country that first made paper. The first Chinese paper was made from a combination of recycled fishing nets, bamboo, mulberry bark, silk, and hemp. But as time goes by, paper is made with a more complicated process. Today, people all around the world use paper in most of their daily lives for exam papers, essays, documents, important forms and more. Since China made the first paper for humanity, I will not be surprised if China makes an artificial intelligence (more commonly known as AI) kind of paper one day. Let me explain below.

China has been improving on AI technology and I would like to speculate on what China will make in the near future. I think that China is going to invent a handheld AI paper, which will be held on the wrist where people can open a digital paper by just pressing a button on their hands. A digital piece of paper will hover over their palms, and there will also be a digital pen on the side. There will also be a feature on your hand that allows you to print out the paper you just wrote on. I speculate that it will include a projector, and those who use digital paper to look at personal information may use a mini—size projector, which can also significantly reduce errors and increase accuracy and precision.

AI is getting increasingly popular because scientists are making it more powerful. Soon, AI will be one of the most important things to humanity. Also, AI digital papers are eco-friendly for the environment because they can save more trees from being cut. Cutting trees is extremely dangerous for the animals because it can endanger them and their habitat. To sum it up, the benefits of the AI paper are the convenience it brings and limiting the use of wood.

The main purpose of all this is to speculate what China will make and I speculate that digital or AI paper will appear soon. When that kind of AI paper is made, I speculate that millions or even billions of people will gradually buy it.

The Not So Healing Medicine

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Caparros, Carmelo Simon Alfeche – 13

A long time ago, during the Eastern Han Dynasty, there was a Taoist alchemist called Wei Boyang, or Wei for short. Wei was a clever person. He is known to be the author of the Cantong Qi, which was the earliest book of alchemy in China. The Eastern Han Dynasty had a major problem during the last few years of the dynasty which was that most of the emperors died at an incredibly early age, the youngest being below 20. "I must find a way to deal with this problem!" Wei said, "I must create an elixir for eternal life! But how?" So, he did what most alchemists at the time would do, experimenting on some chemicals to make the perfect potion to grant long life to the emperors.

The first thing Wei tried to do was to put a red mushroom—like fungus and a fermented slice of watermelon into a cauldron and start stirring with some boiling water. The substance in the cauldron started to turn dark red and steam began to rise from the water. Wei grabbed a bottle and put a spoonful of the mixture into the bottle then gave it to his test subject — a pig. The pig drank the substance that Wei gave to it. But the next day, the pig dropped dead on the floor.

But Wei never gave up and continued to make potions. He looked through the ingredients he had on his ingredient shelf which contained herbs and leaves for medicine. Then he placed the ingredients into his trusty cauldron with some water and started brewing. A couple of minutes later, the mixture turned green and looked like prison food. Wei had no choice but to test it on another test subject, this time a cow. But when Wei gave the mixture to the cow, the cow refused to drink it and ran away.

Wei was running out of ingredients to use for his "elixir of life," so he grabbed whatever was left on the ingredient shelf. There was sulfur, charcoal, and some forms of oxidizing agent. He put them all in a pestle and mortar and started to smash them to turn them into dust form. While mixing them to the combined three dusts, the heat from the friction triggered a chemical reaction and started to burst into flames! "Interesting...," said Wei, "I must document this reaction in my journal immediately!"

As he was jotting down notes in his journal, he thought about ways to make the reaction more powerful and more explosive. He'd like to make an invention that could possibly benefit the entire world. Wei began to read some alchemy books about chemicals and their reactions. And he found it — saltpeter. If he could find that chemical, he could make a scientific discovery that no one had ever seen. "But where would I be able to find it?" Wei asked himself.

So, Wei continued to look through the pages about saltpeter. It was known to be commonly found in the capital of the northern province of Bingzhou, Taiyuan. Wei lived near the capital of the Han Dynasty, Luoyang. So, the journey to Taiyuan would be a long and challenging one. But Wei had his spirits high. He packed his belongings and then hit the road.

Wei started his journey off by going to his first destination, Jiaozuo. He continuously walked north until he hit his first problem in his journey, the Yellow River. In order to get to his destination, he needed to cross the Yellow River. But Wei could not swim. So, his only choice was to build a boat from scratch. "But how?" he asked himself.

Wei might have been one of the smartest people to live during his time, but he was only an expert in alchemy, not carpentry. There was no civilization nearby so he could not ask for some help in building a boat. Therefore, he needed to build it all by himself. Wei had read a book about boats before, so he remembered the basics. He started to chop down some trees for wood for the hull of the boat. Then he began to think about how the hull's shape should be to float on the water. Wei began to experiment on several types of boat hulls. His final decision was to make it into V—shape to make it easier to travel along the water. Then he finished a boat on which he could stay in it. And he has successfully made his first boat!

Now, the only problem was how to get to the other side of the river safely. "I know! Since the currents of the Yellow River are strong, maybe I can just travel along with the currents. Then I can cross the river safely." Wei said. So, he did what he said and traveled across the river. After that, he continued his journey to Jiaozuo smoothly.

After resting at a place in Jiaozuo, he began to prepare for his journey to his next destination, Jinzhong, which was a farther place than his last journey from Luoyang, but he was up for the challenge. After all, if he could get saltpeter for his experiment, he could possibly be known all over the world as the best alchemist in the world. So, he began his journey right away until he was faced with his second problem — the mountains. Wei's backpack was big and heavy, so hiking up the mountains was going to be a perilous journey. But Wei was persistent and determined to hike through the mountains. He walked, and walked, and walked. After ten excruciating hours of just walking on top of stones, going uphill and downhill, his feet started to swell but he finally made it to the other side of the mountain. He stopped and rested for a while in a nearby village to catch his breath. Then he continued on his track. The rest of the trip was a breeze as Wei mostly had to walk through flat ground or mountain tracks.

Wei had finally reached the second and last stop of his long journey, Jinzhong. But he still needed to travel to his final destination, Taiyuan. So, once again, he gathered his belongings after resting and set off again to Taiyuan to grab the one thing he needed for his recipe, saltpeter. Travelling from Jinzhong to Taiyuan was a walk in the park because the only thing separating the two villages was more villages. So, the only thing he had to do was walk and watch out for potential bandits during his journey. When he was at his destination, he breathed a big sigh of relief. He had finally finished his journey of ten days, and he could finally find the material he needed.

At the entrance of a village in Taiyuan, there was a big sign that read "Saltpeter Mine" pointing to the right. Wei immediately ran to the mine. He grabbed a small pouch from his pocket and took a handful of saltpeter. Wei paid the owner of the mine a pouch of gold coins for the saltpeter and started to go back home to Luoyang. When he was back home, Wei did what he did last time with a pestle and mortar. He put saltpeter and charcoal in a pestle and mortar and smashed it into dust. Then he added a bunch of saltpeter into the mortar and started to mix. But this time, it did not just burst into flames like last time. This time, it created a blast which was powerful enough to make a hole in the ceiling of Wei's little hut. There was smoke coming out of the pestle and mortar. Wei's face was covered in ashes. "This, this is amazing!" Wei said excitedly, "I must document this in my book right this instant!" So, Wei wiped his face with a towel and started to write in his journal. It turned out that when these three chemicals mixed together, the sulfur and charcoal acted as fuel and the saltpeter was the oxidizer. Those three chemicals reacting with each other released many gases which caused the mixture to burn rapidly and then explode. He called the mixture "fire medicine" as it was originally supposed to be medicine for the emperor. Wei said to himself "This is amazing! I can report this to the emperor so that they can have a weapon to use against their enemies."

Wei brought the saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal to the emperor. He explained to him that these chemicals would create explosives. For this, the emperor crowned him with the special title of "The Father of Alchemy."

Today, "fire medicine" is given the name "gunpowder" as it has been used as a propellant for many types of weapons. It is also used in dynamites and other explosives. Not only is it used in weapons, but it is also used in fireworks and firecrackers to celebrate the New Years.

Talent-resembled Antique

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Huang, Sin Yi – 13

Yang Xin was packing her deceased grandmother's belongings from the old house. She couldn't help but feel a mix of emotions. It was bittersweet to leave behind so many memories and mementos, but she knew it was time to start afresh in her new home. As she rummaged through the boxes, she stumbled upon an old blue and white porcelain vase that belonged to her grandmother. The vase was beautifully crafted with intricate patterns and designs, and as Xin held it in her hands, she noticed something was in it.

"A note?" Yang Xin took out the mysterious note.

"This looks old."

"Father finally approves of my passion. All these years of trying, all it took was just letting Father appreciate it or was it because of the Emperor's opinion? I'm quite resentful of wasting so much effort trying to get his approval but I can see the realization and appreciation in his eyes." read Yang Xin.

I remember back then...

(The time dilates back to the author of the note's era when she was a child.)

"Meiying! Stop drawing on the wall of my house!"

"But Father, isn't this pretty?" Mei Ying responded innocently.

Jianwei, Meiying's father, seemed fed up. "I'll tell you what's pretty. It's when you remove all of this colorful nonsense from my wall!"

Meiving was disappointed. "Yes, Father..."

(Time skips till Meiying grows into her teenage years.)

Meiying was painting calligraphies when Jianwei suddenly burst into her room with a furious expression.

"Meiying! What is this I found on the table?" Jianwei shouted while holding sheets of Meiying's drawings.

"Those are my drawings, Father." Meiying was anxious.

"What have I told you about 'drawing'? You're supposed to do the chores like sweeping, tending to the garden, washing the clothes instead of 'drawing'!"

"But Father, won't you just take the moment to admire the beauty of art? Art could touch your heart if you know how to appreciate it."

"The only thing I'll appreciate is when you realize that art is only for show. Can't you see, my daughter? Art is meaningless."

"Father, art is my passion, my talent."

"Talent? Passion? Meiying, don't let your dreams pull you away from reality. Try showing your 'talent' to the Emperor to see if he will make you the next Empress."

"Father, you only think of the essential things in the world. You never mention the small details that make our lives whole. Would you like it if the world had nothing good to look at? Art is the tiny, colorful decorations of the world. Without it, the world would be duller than a broken warrior's sword."

"Daughter, please understand. Art can't contribute to anything in the world."

"Why do you never comprehend my reasoning?" Meiying stormed away with frustration.

Years passed and Meiying had blossomed into a young adult. Despite her father's constant reminders of her "meaningless passion", she persisted with her artistic mindset. One day, while she was doing her daily sweeping chore, she accidentally knocked over a vase.

"Oh, no! What am I going to do? I can't just throw it away. Father will notice that the vase is gone, but if he sees it in this condition, I'll surely be scolded again..."

Meiying desperately thought of an idea. "What if I try to mend the vase back together?"

With the idea in her mind, she started to work. She applied clay to the broken edges of the vase. After the clay dried, Meiying noticed that the crack marks on the vase were quite visible.

"What if I paint over the marks? What color would go well with white? Hmm.. Cobalt!"

Meiying grabbed her paint though being skeptical. Then she looked through the window and got inspired by the sight. After hours of hard work painting, she was finally done with the vase so she put it aside.

Meiying relieved with a sigh, "Although it was tough work, I will admit it is quite pleasant painting a vase. It's surely something I've never done before. I must say I've done a splendid job."

Just as Meiying was turning around to admire her artwork, she saw a puddle of blue water next to the vase. She immediately went to see if the paint on the vase was ruined or not.

She gasped, "Oh dear.. The paint must have come off from the water! Thank god the paint didn't get smudged or smeared. I can easily fix this."

She went to repaint the faded area of the vase and figured out a way to make the paint safe from water.

"I recall people dipping vases in glazes but where do I get glaze from?"

She remembered hearing about a pottery workshop nearby where craftsmen made glazes for their ceramic creations. Determined to find a solution to her problem, she went to the workshop the next day. Once she

reached the workshop, Meiying was greeted by a friendly potter named Li Wei. She explained her trouble to him, showed him the vase, and requested him to put a coat of glaze on it.

"Ah, I see. You need a glaze to protect your painted vase. I can help you with that. Glazes can indeed provide a protective coating and enhance the appearance of a ceramic, especially for one as beautiful as yours." Li Wei reassured her.

"I appreciate your help, Li Wei."

Li Wei showed Meiying the process of making glazes. He explained that glazes were made from a combination of various minerals and substances, such as silica, feldspar, metal oxides, and fluxing agents. These ingredients were mixed and then applied to the ceramic surface before firing. Then Meiying chose a cobalt blue glaze as Li Wei helped apply it to the vase.

"There you go. Your vase looks shinier than an expensive gem!"

"It's truly marvelous! Thank you again, Li Wei."

Meiying went home with a gorgeous glossy vase and a satisfied look.

Days later, the Emperor's birthday arrived. Every person in the village must give the Emperor an exquisite gift. Jianwei struggled to find the gift until he saw a gorgeous vase in the corner of the room.

"Huh? Since when was this here? Jianwei was puzzled, grabbing the vase. "This is very beautiful though. I guess this could be a gift for the Emperor."

Jianwei, unaware that the vase was the same one Meiying had repaired and repainted, decided to present it as a gift to the Emperor. He carefully wrapped the vase in silk and prepared to go to the palace. As Jianwei arrived at the palace, he joined the long line of villagers waiting to present their offerings to the Emperor. Each gift was examined and evaluated by the Emperor's advisors before the villager presented it to the Emperor.

When it was Jianwei's turn, he nervously approached the advisors. His heart pounding with tension as he unwrapped the silk cloth to reveal the extravagant—looking vase.

"Ah, a porcelain vase. Let us inspect it closely." said one advisor.

The advisors carefully examined the vase, while appreciating its intricate patterns. They were impressed by the craftsmanship and attention to each element of the design.

"This is an extraordinary piece. The mixture of the delicate painting and the glossy glaze is truly captivating." commented another advisor.

"Indeed, it's a work of art! The Emperor will certainly enjoy such a gift!" exclaimed the third advisor.

With the advisors' approval, Jianwei was given an audience with the Emperor. He nervously entered the grand hall, where the Emperor sat on his throne, surrounded by courtiers and dignitaries.

The Emperor asked, "What have you brought for me today, good sir?"

"Your Majesty, I present to you a vase, a symbol of beauty and resilience." replied Jianwei.

The Emperor's eyes gleamed with curiosity as he examined the vase. He admired every elaborate detail of it.

"This is a remarkable piece indeed. The craftsmanship is exceptional, and the glaze adds a touch of elegance. Tell me, who is the artist behind this masterpiece?"

Jianwei, unaware that Meiying was the artist, paused for a moment.

"Your Majesty, I am not aware of the artist's identity. I acquired a plain vase and entrusted it to a skilled artisan to paint it. I do not know who performed the art."

"The artist's identity may remain a mystery, but their talent is unmistakable. This vase is a testament to their talent."

Jianwei bowed. He was grateful for the Emperor's appreciation of the vase.

"Thank you, Your Majesty. I am honored that you enjoy this gift."

As Jianwei left the palace, he couldn't help but wondered who the talented restorer might be. He returned home and saw Meiying doing her daily chores.

"Meiying, I have returned from the palace. The Emperor admired the vase and he was greatly impressed with the quality of the artwork."

Meiying looked at Jianwei, surprised by her father's words.

"Father, I'm glad that the vase was appreciated. The artist must be incredibly talented."

Jianwei studied Meiying's face, and a tinge of realization crossed his mind. He remembered catching a glimpse of her painting on several occasions.

"Meiying, I can't help but wonder... were you the one who painted the vase?"

Meiying's eyes widened, and she hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"Yes, Father, it was me. I accidentally knocked over the vase, breaking it, and I didn't want to disappoint you, so I restored it and kept it a secret."

Meiying's heart sank, she thought that she was going to get yelled at once more like what her father would usually do. Meanwhile, Jianwei's heart poured with a mix of emotions— pride in his daughter's talent and regret for not acknowledging it before. And to Meiying's surprise, ...

"Meiying, I'm sorry for not recognizing your talent. Your restoration work is excellent, and the Emperor himself praised it. Your dedication and talent are incredible."

Meiying beamed with a mixture of relief and joy lighting up her face.

"Thank you, Father. Your words mean the world to me. I will continue to develop my passion for art."

Meiying's eyes filled with tears of joy as she never experienced this kind of joy. She truly felt like she had accomplished the heftiest challenge of her life and that was finally getting her father's approval. From that day onwards, Jianwei became Meiying's biggest supporter of her passion. Meiying's talent thrived, and she became well—known for her tremendous artwork.

(Time fast-forwards back to the present.)

Yang Xin was still reading the note, "I'm so delighted that Father finally approved."

"Wow, this girl must be very talented to touch the heart of someone so persistent in their judgment. Meiying, I'll keep this name and this story in mind."

The Origin of Ice-cream

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Lau, Chellur – 12

'No it's not!'

'Yes, trust me!'

'No one will believe in you; you are such a liar!'

'Don't ever call me a liar! I can swear to God that I am tell the truth!'

Kimberly and Andy were having a heated discussion in classroom of 1B, they were arguing about the origin of ice—cream. 'By the name "ice—cream", it clearly shows that it is from some western countries' Kimberly said. 'Trust me, though the name of "ice—cream" sounds so "western", it is a Chinese invention hundred years ago.' Andy replied. Their discussion could not stop until the bell rang. 'Prove it! I won't trust you until I see some evidence!' Kimberly left and headed to her next lesson.

'How could I prove to Kimberly? What am I supposed to do?' Andy wondered in his bedroom. 'Time machine!' Two words flashed through his mind. However, how would a 13—year—old boy invent a time machine. It was definitely not taught in Andy's Integrated Science textbook, nor any other lessons in his school. That's why Andy turned to a more resourceful tool — ChatGPT! 'How to build a time machine?' He typed this in the search box of ChatGPT. Surprisingly, the AI really gave him manual to build a time machine but left a cautious remark "Not 100% Safe".

After 3 months of time, it came to Christmas. Friendship between Andy and Kimberly had been frozen as ice—cream since their last argument, while Andy had been working hard on building his time machine. On the last day of school before the Christmas holiday, Andy finally came to Kimberly and asked 'I can prove to you that ice—cream is one of the Chinese inventions. Do you dare to witness this?' 'Oh, come on, you've gotta be serious. If you lie to me again, you will never pass any exam for the rest of your life!' Kimberly replied. 'Believe it or not! 5pm today! Come and visit my home and I will show you the truth!' Andy angrily said.

'What did you make, Andy? What is this?' Kimberly curiously asked when she saw a giant machine in Andy's room. Andy then explained everything to Kimberly and told her that he was bringing her to hundred years ago in order to witness how ice—cream was invented in China. 'You must be insane! I will never travel to the past using this worn—out machine! That's just suiciding!' While Kimberly kept doubting about the time machine, Andy pressed the red button of the time machine without a doubt. The screen of the time machine showed 'The Song Dynasty' and there was no one in the room anymore. Two of them vanished in the room.

'Where are we?' Kimberly asked. They both found themselves in a world that was so different from where they were from. They were surrounded by ancient architecture; some were like you could only see them on a Chinese History textbook or in a museum. Yes, they made it. They travelled back to the Song Dynasty successfully. 'I can't believe it works. You really managed to bring me back to the old China.'

'Quick! We only have 2 hours! After 2 hours, we need to come back here to travel back to the future!' Andy warned. 'Look! Right there. I looked up some history books, it said ice—cream first appeared among some venders on local street'.

They ran through the bustling marketplace where the local Chinese people could not stop staring at them thanks to their modern outfits. They all felt so weird and curious about these two newcomers to town.

'That's the one!' Andy shouted. While they were approaching the vender's stall that Andy talked about, they could smell the sweet and exotic aroma filling the air. In front of them, there was an old man, shaving the ice and mixing them with different kinds of fruit while talking with other villagers.

When two of them finally came to the stall, the vendor was scared since he thought they looked totally different and strange to them. From his facial expression, it could tell that it's possible that he might think that Andy and Kimberly were indeed some kind of monsters or aliens. He screamed and ran away and left everything behind. Meanwhile, Andy and Kimberly basically stood here and did not make a word.

The vendor left two bowls of ice-cream in his stall. Out of curiosity, Andy and Kimberly were tempted to have a bite of the ice-cream and could not stop eating it after the first bite. 'That's just like ice-cream.' Kimberly said. 'It is ice-cream, the original ice-cream.' Andy replied. 'See! I did not lie to you!'.

Andy finally could prove that the origin of ice—cream is China and Kimberly eventually believed in Andy. While they were enjoying the ice—cream, Andy's watch rang. 'Oh no! It's time to go back! We only have 5 minutes left. Otherwise, we could never go back to the future.' Andy suddenly figured this out. They had to head back to where they had arrived so as to get back to Andy's room.

'Beep beep, beep beep." The beeping sound from Andy's watch kept reminding them that the time was ticking. 'It is over there!' Kimberly shouted. Another the beeping sound from the watch and the display showed'00:00'. However, the beeping sound did not stop. Also, there was another voice shouting 'Get up! You lazy boy!' It turned out it's the beeping sound from the alarm and Andy's mom was waking up Andy.

Winter break was over. Kimberly met Andy again. They started with an awkward greeting until Kimberly said 'I had a weird dream. I travelled back in time and tasted the first ice—cream in old China.' 'Are you serious?' Andy questioned.

Did they travel back in time? Did they find out the first ice-cream hundred years ago? Well, only Kimberly and Andy know.

New Tales of China's Inventions

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Lau, Yan Lam - 15

Over 5000 years of history and 83 dynasties, China has evolved from a country with nothing to one with ad

vanced technology. Have you ever wondered, what will come next in our motherland?

I'm Lauren, a girl who is really addicted to Chinese history and technology. I usually sit in the corner of my classroom and read books during recesses. A majority of my classmates call me 'a nerd'. Although they frequently make fun of me, it doesn't bother me much. Well, all of the books that I read told me that China invented paper, which is really one of the most useful inventions even in the modern world. But is there more?

"Ding Dong" the school bell rang. The sun went back to bed and today's school—time came to an end. Finally, I could get out of this prison. As I walked past every class, I suddenly heard a voice from the store room. "Hi, Lauren! Come here.", said the voice from the back of the door. "I won't hurt you, just come in..." It's kind of a whisper, so I couldn't hear it clearly. But I wasn't that stupid. My mom told me not to listen to what strangers say ever since I was a kid, so why would I trust the voice? "Maybe that's a weirdo who is trying to scare me or wants to hurt me?" Uhhh...still, with my curiosity, I went inside to the room.

Inside the store room, it was as dark as sesame. I turned on the torch mode of my phone to see what's inside. There's a table, and on the table, there's a letter. I opened the letter and it said "Say 'China comes to a new page' three times". Not knowing why, I followed the instructions and said it three times. And suddenly a red fluffy Panda thing came out from nowhere, scaring my soul out of me. "Hi! I'm Hungry!" It's strange enough to see a panda appear unexpectedly, but more than that was that he could talk! "Woah, what are you? How do you get in here? And I don't care if you are hungry or not." I replied. "I'm from 2060 in China! In the future, we have lots of technology. One of them is to teleport anywhere that I want! Also, my name is Hungry!" That red panda talked again. "Am I dreaming?" It's not real as China's technology is developing rather slowly these days. It's impossible to have teleporting technology just after a few decades.

"Hey! I know what you're thinking. You don't believe me, right Lauren?" He could even read my mind and know my name. It's really creepy to me. As a person who is obsessed with China's technology, no matter how illogical this was, I wanted to know more about the future inventions. "Tell me more, Hungry." I said. "Follow me." Hungry gave its hand to me. I held it. I started feeling dizzy and closed my eyes.

When I opened my eyes, I saw videos of the past Chinese wars all over the place, and I was on a... chariot? "Yes you're right. You're now on a chariot from ancient China. This is a Chinese cultural relic. So, other than a regular spaceship, we transformed the chariot into a time machine!" There were a bunch of controllers in front of me and Hungry. "We are traveling through time now, like a shuttle bus. If we set the year which we want to go to, the machine will bring us there." When it was saying that, it pulled one of the controllers labeled "Time Travelling". Just a second later, in front of me Were tall buildings which are made of glasses. I could see what's happening inside the whole building. "Wait, are those birds?" No, those Were cars flying around in the sky. Also, wherever I went, there were robots which mainly attended to their human owners. Nevertheless, the robots looked like they were out of batteries. "Welcome to the year 2060 of China!", shouted Hungry.

Hungry brought me to a palace where it was full of mini robots. All of them were lying on the floor. "Who did you bring? Hungry." A woman's voice appeared. "Miss Audrey, this is Lauren, someone you may want to meet." Hungry bowed at her while saying that. I was confused, "Want to meet me? Is this a trap? "I sense it. You're the one!" That woman had ants in her pants. "Girl, I'm glad you're here. We need your help immediately." The woman continued, "In this era, humans are useless. Everything is done by the robots. We don't have natural ingredients for cooking. All of the food materials are made by robots. The main issue is that all of our robots are running out of battery, even though we change the batteries every day. We don't have much food left and this may lead to an outbreak of famine and some people might not survive. I think you have the ability to fix this problem." "This is awesome! It is my chance to invent a new invention to help them solve this problem! But can I do it? Will I destroy it?" "Calm down, Lauren. Just trust yourself." Miss Audrey put her arm over my shoulder, trying to comfort me.

I got out of the palace and started thinking about what I could do with the issue. I went to check one of the robots. It looked normal from the outside. Yet, it ha **đ** burning batteries.

Suddenly, an idea popped up in my mind. "There is air around us... Oh, what if I turn the robots into ones that can be fuelled by air? Like with solar energy, batteries are not needed. Hence, we can avoid the problem of insufficient energy supply to the robots. I told Miss Audrey about my plan and began to build the "Air to Energy Machine". I first made a generator that would put inside a robot which absorbs the air. And after a while, the generator would move anticlockwise, then the generator would produce energy and it's done! We could have an "Air to Energy Machine"! This was not the end, I still had to think of a solution about the air problem. The generator might cause a lack of air. Consequently, I invented artificial flowers and trees which could produc air. This could create a recycle with the robots. After finishing my invention, I waited for the result.

A while later, Miss Audrey came out from the palace and met up with me at the robot factory. "Are you ready to see if your solution works?" she said. I nodded confidently. She pushed the "Make" button. The whole factory started working. Our workers first removed the batteries from the robots and put the generator inside them. At the same time, some people worked on planting artificial trees and flowers. When the robots came out one by one, they began to gain energy and the plants kept on producing air. Seeing every step run smoothly makes me feel satisfied. To everyone's amazement, my invention worked perfectly!

"Oh gosh! Thank you for saving us from danger, Lauren! I really appreciate that!" Miss Audrey was grateful about what I'd done and wanted to give me a present. "Can I have a generator as a souvenir and an unrealistic memory?" I asked shyly. "Of course! Here you go." She handed me the generator and brought me back to the palace. "I think you should go back to your original year, I'll miss you, Lauren." She said with a face full of sadness. "Lauren, I'll see you soon right?" Hungry looked at me with hope. "My name Hungry has a meaning. Hungry means desire. I'm hungry about what happened in the past, how to solve problems in the present and what the future looks like. I hope you can take my words." I didn't know whether I could see them again, but I wouldn't forget Hungry's words and this memorable experience of rescuing the year 2060 of China.

Hungry held my hand again, and I closed my eyes. I became dizzy, and the last thing I remember is the flashbacks of every famous Chinese scientist's stories. "Ding Dong Ding Dong" I'm back to 2023? I'm even at school! Maybe it was because I slept so I made that dream, so it's just my imagination right? "Good afternoon class, today I'd like to talk about the future technology of China. What do you think China will invent in the future?" This reminded me of Hungry and Miss Audrey. I bravely raised my hand and stood up, "They might have the technology of teleporting everywhere and time traveling. Or maybe they will have lots of creations using Artificial Intelligence, flying cars, and so on!" Every action has a consequence. My classmates teased me because of my speech. This was in my expectation, but still made me feel blue. I

accidentally dropped something on the floor. When I picked it up, I saw that it was the generator! That means everything that I remember is real!

Well, things might feel unrealistic and impossible, but when we follow our dreams, everything will come true!

New Tales of China's Inventions

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Liu, Yu - 14

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is the captain's announcement. We will soon arrive at Hong Kong International Airport. The local time is 6:15 in the afternoon. I hope you'll have a pleasant journey in Hong Kong." the captain said. When the announcement was made, Alice felt as excited as a monkey as it meant they had arrived at Pearl of the Orient – Hong Kong.

As they departed the airport, a Driverless Taxi was already waiting for them. "Mum, do you see that there is no driver in our car? It's what I only find in science fiction!" Alice was amazed. "Yeah, because this is Hong Kong. Let's go to a shopping center in Central by this taxi." Mum replied.

After a while, they arrived at a shopping center in Central that was so colossal that they had never seen before. "Alice, do you hear some noises from your stomach? You are craving food, aren't you?" Dad asked Alice. "Of course! I'm starving! I could eat a horse. I see plenty of mouth—watering and scrumptious food like Wonton Noodles, Stir—fried Beef Noodles, Claypot Rice with preserved sausages, and many more. Don't waste time here. Let's hit the road and get ready for dinner." Alice said. Meanwhile, Alice's mum recommended a restaurant which was known for its Claypot Rice. "I love this traditional Guangdong dish!" Dad echoed.

In the restaurant, several AI waiters were in service. Some of them were cleaning the floor and tables. Some of them were cooking the dish as efficiently as humans, or even better than humans. Their appearance is manlike as they had eyes, noses, ears, and mouths. Even their actions are similar to humans and they knew what to do next without supervision. They were self—conscious. Alice was just confused about AI waiters in the restaurant. "Huh, are they reliable?" Alice doubted. Then she wanted to test them. She stood in front of an AI waiter and strongly slapped its face. The AI waiter sulked and felt displeased. It loudly shouted to Alice "Hey kid, stop doing your silly action! You don't need to slap my face. Just tell me you are confused about me." All of a sudden, the AI waiter gave Alice a hard slap on her face. "Dad, he slapped me! I need to complain about this toxic AI waiter to the manager." Alice started to wail. "What an embarrassment! You are such a crybaby. Stop crying! If you didn't slap its face, it wouldn't have slapped you back. Ok. It's time to eat our savory Claypot Rice." Dad was annoyed.

The Claypot Rice was made by AI and Alice's family felt a bit hesitant. But when they took the first bite of the Claypot Rice, it shocked them. Alice thought "If I can make a machine just like these AI waiters, it will be popular in the industry."

"Mum and Dad, the Claypot Rice is finger—licking good! Can I have some more?" Alice begged. "Oh, I'm stuffed. You may eat my Claypot Rice." Dad passed her his pot. Simultaneously, Mum went to pay the bill. "Madam, \$999 please. Cash or credit card, which one would you prefer?" When Mum heard what the cashier said, she was stunned "That's unbelievable! Are you serious? No way! Our meal costs \$999?" "Bang!" She punched the table. Concurrently, Alice and her dad heard Mum's complaint. They ran to see what happened. When they saw the total price of their meal, they were shocked, "Oh my goodness! It's almost \$1000. Is there any misunderstanding about the bill?" Dad felt angry and confused. At this time, an AI manager came over to calm the couple. "Good evening, my dear customers. Three Claypot Rice cost \$999. That's correct. Do you have any problems with it?" "This is a robbery! How can you charge us that much?" Dad questioned. Alice reacted with rage and put her pocket money onto the bill plate hard. "We'll never come here again!" Alice grabbed her parents' hands and ran out of the store quickly towards their hotel.

"Mum, why is the claypot rice so expensive?" 'Shut up, I don't want to hear the words Claypot Rice again!' Mum went to her bedroom and violently closed the door. 'Bang!'

Alice thought about her invention for the rest of the day. She believed "A good quality meal is not difficult for us. Unfortunately, it costs an arm and a leg for us. It is too expensive and unreasonable. How about creating a powerful cooking machine which is convenient and fast. We can cook any dish at any time anywhere. It sounds interesting!' Alice left her bed and was ready to prepare the material for her invention.

Alice first got medium—size cardboard from the storeroom. She wanted to make a creation of a lunch box size. Afterwards, she was about to use the tablet which was the graduation gift from her dad. She put the tablet on the cardboard so the customers could choose their favorite meal more easily. After that, customers had to enter a 16—digit password in order to make it work. Creating a safe password was a difficult process for Alice. Therefore, she sought help from her dad, "Hey Dad, can you help me create a password? I know it is not hard for you." "Well, give me 15—20 minutes. I need to finish my work first." Alice waited and took a good rest. Nevertheless, nobody knew a disaster was coming soon.

Coming out from the bedroom, Mum looked calmer. Then she saw a lot of rubbish on the floor. Then she started to clean the room. She saw the cardboard on the table and she was confused about the cardboard, "Huh, why did somebody leave the cardboard here?" Consequently, she threw it to the trash trolley outside their room.

"Ah! Where is my cardboard?" Alice screamed. Her mum and dad went to see what happened. Mum was shocked and said, "Oh, you mean the cardboard on the desk? I thought it was rubbish so I threw it into the trash trolley." "Oh my gosh, what should I do now?" Alice felt panicky. Her mum and dad comforted her and promised her to do it again together.

In the next few days, Alice's invention progressed well. Alice felt on top of the world as she needed only one more step to finish it using a 4D printer. She spent hours to see what was missing in the invention and how she could make it better. Alice told her parents, "If the Powerful Cooking Machine is successful, I'm sure people can afford it and make their life easier!" "Yup, you're right. Just wait for a few days and we'll see your success.' Dad was on cloud nine and when saying that. Unfortunately, another misfortune befell her.

One night, while Alice and her mum were enjoying shopping, Dad was so tired that he rushed back to the hotel for a rest. While Dad was sleeping, the door was opened. An uninvited guest slipped into the room and stole Alice's box of brand—new invention. He dashed and escaped, leaving the sleepy Dad in the room.

An hour later, Alice returned with her mum. "Oh dear, the door is open!" Mum said. "Dad, where is my box? Did you throw it into the trash trolley?" Alice had ants in her pants when she saw the scene. Dad was suddenly aware that he didn't close the door properly. He shouted in the room, "Thief! Thief!" They then called the police quickly for help.

By the time they arrived at the police station, the police had already caught the thief and gave back the box to Alice's family. "Thank you so much! It is significant to us." Alice's family appreciated that. The police told them that the invention was outstanding. The tech—savvy police informed them of one thing "Here is a ticket for you guys to go to the Exhibition Center to check if the invention is successful. Good luck!" The family nodded and went back to their hotel.

At the hotel, Alice tested her machine and it was a flawless invention. She couldn't wait to share her joy with her parents. "Let's try it together. May I have three portions of fried rice noodles, please?" After the machine received instructions, it finished cooking in 5 seconds. When it's done, they could hear the voice of Peng Zu, the founder of Chinese cooking, saying "Your claypot rice is ready. Enjoy!" Mum was shocked and said 'Wow! What a groundbreaking invention! I think we should go to the Exhibition Center to show off our accomplished masterpiece.'

In the Exhibition Centre, Alice's family found a place to showcase their invention. Not long, a man came around their place and looked at their invention curiously. "Hey man, I want to invest \$1,000,000 in your machine." "Mr. Ryan Hui, the richest man in Hong Kong, wants to invest on Alice's invention!" Everyone heard the announcement. Alice's parents were as excited as their kid. The Powerful Cooking Machine was a great success.

After a month, the Powerful Cooking Machine was sold like hotcakes all over the world. While Alice and her family were enjoying the fortune they made, they established a foundation in China which encouraged young inventors to realize their dreams.

New Tales of China's Inventions

CUHK FAA Thomas Cheung Secondary School, Ramirez, Dea – 12

Have you ever wondered about the inventors and origins of the things we use today? For example, the basic products we need on a daily basis, ranging from paper items such as paper money to food and beverages such as noodles, ketchup or tea? Well, all of these inventions were created in China a long time ago! The surprising fact is that we use these on a daily basis and we probably don't even know that they were made in China. And these inventions are not the only amazing things that the Chinese invented!

In Ancient China, the Chinese have created so many useful things for the present. Did you know that they were the first to invent paper? Paper was first made in Lei Yang, China by a Chinese court official. It was said that he mixed mulberry bark, hemp and rags with water, mashed it into pulp, pressed out the liquid and hung the thin mat to dry in the sun! The invention he made soon evolved into a better version of it. And that's how paper was made! This invention is extremely useful since we usually use paper for work, school or anything. And the paper money that you use to pay for your groceries, bills, food and other basic needs was first developed in China during the Song dynasty! In fact, they used this currency for a long time before it found its way to other countries! Paper money provides you a simple way to buy what you need, and it's easy to carry around so it's a genius invention.

They also have made noodles, a common nourishment for Chinese people. It is still really popular even though it was invented around 4,000 years ago! It has become very popular around the world and all of the other countries have different versions of their noodles now! The Chinese also produced tea, which a lot of people like, especially old people since tea is really healthy and relaxing! Tea can boost your immune system, fight off inflammation and even lower the chance of having cancer and heart diseases. Not only the old people drink tea though! It's for everyone! As a matter of fact, tea has become really popular in Britain since around the 1680s.

All of these past inventions are exceedingly useful for our daily lives! Will China make more great inventions in the future?

A Student's Quest for Innovation and Contribution

ELCHK Lutheran Academy, Dihua Ye - 12

James is an ordinary student in Secondary 1. One day, in Chinese history class, his teacher teaches about the 4 inventions of China. James got excited when the teacher talked about paper.

His teacher asked," Does anyone know why paper is important?"

James replied," It allows people to record history more easily!"

His teacher replied," Correct, during the Han dynasty, it is unclear who invented paper making but it is known that Cai Lun is the person who innovated paper making, allowing people in the past to record events easier, it is a significant contribution to human and society development."

James had a thought, since Cai Lun was able to contribute to human and social development by innovating paper—making, why can't I innovate something and contribute to society?

That day, during recess, James suddenly had an idea to help find a solution to common, annoying issues. He decided to take inspiration from another great invention of China, a compass that indicates the direction. For James' innovation, he wants to put a radio frequency identification which is used in airports to track and sort bags on all objects that might be lost, and then users can use a special cheap device to track it.

However, the challenge is, since he is only a Secondary school student, where can he access the resources?

Luckily his school had Design teachers who knew to code so they supported him, he also made a brave decision to email Hong Kong International Airport as well as some airports in the Greater Bay area including Macau International Airport, Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport for support.

Finally, after two months of hard work, he was able to produce plenty of radio frequency identification and special cheap devices in school, then it was used frequently in school.

New Tales of Chopsticks

G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Chiu, Long Tin Isaak - 14

It was an average winter day. The sky was cloudless, and the sun was shining brightly as usual. The gentle pattering sounds of the river shore, accompanied by the crisp and charming chirps of the migratory birds and the soft rustling of leaves, formed a wonderful piece of symphony. While the peasants of the country were enjoying this masterpiece, the steelworkers of the river alleviation project were ignoring the concord.

After days and days of excavation, the canals grew long and slithered across the plains, eventually reaching the vast ocean. Despite the fact that the project was massive, there was still a shortage of workers. Yu, the leader of the operation, was also obliged to participate in the construction. He was the son of Gun, the former manager who had been lazy and incompetent. Gun had wasted time and resources, and failed to prevent the flood that devastated the land. He was dismissed and executed by the emperor, who entrusted Yu with the task of completing the project. Yu was nothing like his father; he was diligent and ingenious. He always finished his section ahead of schedule and supervised the work of others.

"How's the progress?" Yu asked his subordinates.

"We're only a few miles away from the ending point. We're ahead of schedule and we should be able to wrap up soon," they reported.

"That's excellent news. You've all done a fantastic job. Let's take a break and have some lunch, shall we?" Yu proposed. His team nodded eagerly and borrowed some cooking utensils from the nearby villagers. They prepared a simple but hearty meal of rice and vegetables in a pot over a fire.

They had been working hard for months, digging and excavating under the scorching sun. They felt exhausted and hungry, but also hopeful and proud. They gazed at the sky, thinking of their loved ones and their aspirations. They couldn't wait to finish the project and return home. Zhu, one of Yu's assistants, was especially impatient. He reached for the pot as soon as the food was ready, but it was so exceedingly hot that he withdrew his hand right away.

"More haste, less speed." Yu cautioned. He took out his knife and cut off a branch from a nearby tree. He sharpened one end of the branch and used it to skewer a piece of lettuce from the pot. However, the lettuce slipped off the branch and fell back into the boiling water. Yu frowned and cut off another branch. He held one branch between his thumb and index finger, and the other between his ring finger and pinkie. He used his index and middle finger to manipulate the first branch up and down. He successfully picked up the lettuce with his improvised chopsticks and placed it on Zhu's plate. His team watched him in awe and followed his example.

After a brief rest, they returned to work as usual. Several weeks later, they finished the excavation, and the new canal was finally in use. Yu was summoned to the imperial court to report on the success of the project. Shun praised him for his diligence and loyalty. As Yu was about to leave, one of his subordinates told Shun about an incident that happened during the construction. He said that Yu had cut off some branches from a tree and used them as utensils to eat his food, without wasting time to go back to his home. Shun was impressed by Yu's dedication and decided to abdicate in his favor, marking the end of Shun's dynasty. To commemorate this incident, it was decided that those sticks would be named chopsticks since Yu chopped them off from a tree. Interestingly, it was sarcastically named Zhu in Chinese after Zhu.

The news of Shun's abdication and Yu's ascension spread quickly among the people. Yu was eager to share his wisdom and skills with his subjects, and one of the first things he did as the new emperor was to teach them how to use chopsticks. He believed that chopsticks were not only a convenient tool for eating, but also a symbol of harmony and balance. Soon, chopsticks became popular and widespread, and people started to make them in various shapes and sizes. However, Yu noticed that some chopsticks were too long or too short, too thick or too thin, too round or too square. He worried that these chopsticks would cause confusion and disorder, and decided to standardize them. He decreed that chopsticks should have a round lower end, representing the sky, and a square upper end, representing the earth. He also decreed that chopsticks should be seven inches and six long, reminding people to restrain their emotions and desires. With these rules, chopsticks became more uniform and elegant, and their use became a tradition that lasted for generations.

Decades later, Yu was about to find his successor, following the example of Shun. He selected several candidates from among his subjects. He did not wish for his son to inherit the throne, knowing how hard and demanding the role of emperor was. However, his son Qi was nominated by the ministers, and thus Qi joined the list of candidates. To test the virtuosity of the candidates, he ordered carpenters to make three—foot—long chopsticks. He asked the candidates to use these chopsticks to eat as part of the exam.

Most of the candidates tried to feed themselves with the chopsticks. However, the chopsticks were too long, and they could not grasp the food. They failed repeatedly and became frustrated. Some of the candidates gave up and left the palace in shame. Like father, like son, Qi inherited his father's wisdom and did not lose hope. He came up with a brilliant idea. He fed another candidate with chopsticks and passed the exam by demonstrating his kindness and cooperation. Yu was surprised and pleased by Qi's solution, and decided to appoint him as his heir.

By the time Qi became the emperor, he treasured the first pair of chopsticks until they vanished out of sight. Up until Qi's son ascended to the throne, the requirements for the heirs to follow stayed the same. Yu passed away not long after Qi succeeded. This puts an end to the legend of chopsticks, as they are still often used for meals today.

The Compass of HuangDi

G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College, Poon, Marcus – 14

Tom was a smart athletic history lover living in Tomtown, a small town in Guangzhou. One day after an tedious day of school, Tom found a strange box lined with patterns of golden dragons under his bed. Inside, a strange compass lay on the bottom of the box. It had a delicate, ancient structure but instead of arrows pointing to the four directions, a single metal head turning around unstably. Aside from the weird compass, a crippled piece of paper was also in the box. Glancing at the piece of paper, Tom found out that it was apparently a letter from the first ruler of China – HuangDi. The compass was actually an ancient device created by HuangDi which led to the location of his grave. 'Beware, those who seek my grave will not come out alive.' Warning words lay on the bottom of the letter. As a adventurous university student and a mega history lover, Tom's determination to find HuangDi's grave is unresistable.

The next day, along with a plane ticket to Beijing, Tom stood in the Guangzhou national airport .After a wholesome night of investigating the compass, Tom was certain that the grave lies somewhere in Beijing. As the plane took off, wings inclined like an eagle, excitement and nervousness filled his mind. He would have wealth, fame and power if he'd found HuangDi's grave! But there was a even higher chance of him dying before recovering it. With his mind filled with thoughts, Tom fell into a deep sleep.

The plane skidded to a stop at the Beijing national airport as Tom awoke. Looking at the spacious buildings and the warm breeze of the summer wind, refreshment and energy flowed through Tom's veins. Tom felt a faint tingle in his pocket and took the compass out. For the first time, the compass had stopped turning. No matter how Tom adjusted the position of the compass, it kept pointing towards the same direction. Following the direction that the compass was pointing, Tom rented a bike and flew passed skyscrapers of all sorts ,multiple towns and bright trees shining under the radiant sun. As Tom neared the famous great wall of China, the compass began to spin again, this time pointing downwards. Hopping off his bike, Tom sprinted towards the Great Wall. Walking around the wall in circles, Tom came to a stop as the compass glowed red, it's arrow without movement once more. On the concrete ground was a large gold mark with a symbol 'x' . Suddenly, the compass begin to change shape, twisting into a metal drill opon touching the 'x' . There seemed to be some kind of special mechanism in the compass.

Tom glanced in wonder as a large tunnel took shape, leading under the Great Wall. Making sure no one was in sight, Tom quickly scurried down the tunnel. The tunnel was long and never ending, with lamps lined in a linear direction, stretching along the never ending tunnel. Noticing Tom, the compass, which was currently a metal drill, shifted into a metal vehicle. Unlike cars from the 21th century, this car was constructed simply and had a large metal rod, looking like 'cars' used in battle in ancient China. Treading carefully on the car, Tom felt a humming sound as the rod on the car began to turn. The gears of the car turned correspondingly to the rod's movement, propelling the car foward. The car rolled down bumpy mud roads and sped though twisting turns, forcing Tom to grab the rod for dear life as he passed through walls decorated with amazing drawings. One was filled with ancient writing, another was with pictures of people holding plants and herbs and another was a picture of the stars of the starry night sky. Tom tried to save these views in his mind.

The car came to a stop as it neared the end of the tunnel. Instead of seeing a dirt wall, a gigantic metal door lay on the end with a golden button next to the door. Tom carefully hit the button. The door opened with a bang, the metal crushing the floor. Tom would've been crushed if he had not escaped in time. Instead of seeing HuangDi's grave, a fearsome sight loomed over Tom: a hovering large figure with golden bright scales lining on its long body, it's giant golden tail swinging around. Legs the size of a table hanged on its belly, looking small compared to it's large body. Looking up at the creatures head, with staring gold eyes, horns that glittered like stars, breathing fluffs of clouds, excitement filled Tom, the creature was a dragon! 'Tom, the chosen one to recover HuangDi's grave, I'm the guardian of the grave, and you have to beat me to move forward.' The dragon spoke. Determined to find the remains of HuangDi, Tom stood in front of the dragon. He knew that the only way to win was by intelligence.

Tom jumped away as the dragon's claws stretched foward, barely having time to react as the dragon's tail swung behind his back. As Tom dodged more and more of the dragon's attacks, the dragon's attacks became more and more aggressive. Noticing a open spot to attack, Tom hit the dragon's hide with his fist. Howling with pain, the dragon

grabbed Tom and threw him to the floor. As Tom was on the verge of being killed by the dragon, the dragon's claws hurtling towards his chest, the compass changed shape again, shifting into a sharp silver sword. The dragon plunged into the tip of the sword without time to stop. The dragon collapsed into the floor, it's golden scales shimmering no more.

Running past the dragon, Tom rushed directly to the grey grave behind the metal door. Opening the lid, instead of seeing HuangDi's body, a single letter remained Inside.

' Congratulations for finding my grave with the help of my invention, the invincible compass . My body has been removed long ago, and the test was to see if someone was worthy enough to use the compass, preventing it to fall in the wrong hands . '

Looking at the letter in unbelief, Tom was utterly speechless. As Tom headed back to the Beijing airport, he thought of the wonderful adventure he'd had. With his new compass, Tom was sure that his life would change forever.

Follow your heart

Good Hope School, Fung, Yee S Yee – 12

"Everything switches. Everything turns around. End up in stitches. Hide away underground..." In the bustling streets of Modern Hong Kong, there lived a 13—year old girl named Mei listening to a song describing her own life. Everything changed overnight and everything got far off track. Her parents were getting divorced, her beloved grandpa died, her friends betrayed her and her grades slipped down dramatically. Her life was like living in the mist at that time navigating the complexities of adolescence. She doubted herself. She has lost all of her precious things. She yearned to unearth her true identity and find her place in this tattered, ugly society.

One day, Mei's emotions came to a break down. She burst into tears and ran out of school. She ran into a hidden antique shop in a dusty corner of a narrow alleyway. Mei stumbled upon a long lost, forgotten ancient book. Its pages revealed tales of legendary Chinese invention that once graced the land of Hong Kong. Flipping pages and pages, a fire of inspiration was sparkling within her, urging her to release her innovation and turn it into something special. Determined to find her own unique invention, one that would capture the spirit of the city and guide her to find her own path. Mei immersed herself into study of art, science and literature.

Inspired by the city's fusion of tradition and innovation, Mei envisioned a remarkable device called the Lumino—Graffiti. The Lumino—Graffiti was a wearable gadget that allow individuals to paint dazzling light patterns on the walls of buildings. With a flick of a switch, the device transformed the city into a glowing painting. With the Lumino—Graffiti, she ventured herself into the vibrant streets at night, away from all her problems and got a quiet, relaxing moment of herself. With every strokes of light painting she drew, she created a breath—catching picture of colours dancing across the dark urban landscapes, bringing light to every places it went. Each stroke represented the lost identity of her, at the same time telling the world that she was ready to leave the past life behind her and embarked on a new journey.

News of Mei's Lumino—Graffiti went viral on the internet, capturing the attention of artists, dreamers and those who were seeking to express themselves. The Lumino—Graffiti became the symbol of creativity and unity. As a recognition of Mei's wisdom, the government invited Mei to showcase her brilliant invention during a grand exhibition celebrating Hong Kong's dynamic spirit. There, surrounded by towering buildings, Mei painted a breathtaking light display that encouraged dreamers to follow their dreams and people to find their paths in life.

Mei's Lumino—Graffiti inspired a new wave of art into the society, people began to paint on walls at night, turning the black and white city into an aesthetic, colourful city. Walls once adorned with plain concrete now became living pictures that told stories to millions of people. As the invention of Mei's soared, Mei discovered that her journey of self—discovery not only let her find her true identity in this society but also empowered others to explore their true self in the society. Through art and light, Mei turned her desolate and bereft past into a fruitful and rewarding future. Mei found her precious inside herself instead of wandering in the mist.

And so, Mei's name became forever engraved in the heart of every dreamers. Till now, Mei's invention is still widely used all over the world and will always be a symbol of self-discovery and dreams.

Inventions

Han Academy, Cheung, Chun Yat - 11

A school trip, just what Roy needed to relax and have a good time. However this trip was far from normal as Roy will embark on a new adventure.

Roy had already planned what he will do on the trip, and is just to relax. But his plans changed when he woke up from his tent and saw a man with glasses and white hair appeared out of the abyss. He was tall and thin with small eyes, he looked like a guardian of some sort in fairy tales.

"Who the heck are you?!" Roy exclaimed, the man said nothing as he opened a portal with his bare hands. "I'm in a dream....." Roy said to himself, after saying that he kept pinching and slapping himself thinking he might wake up but to his avail nothing happened, He was still staring at the man, his eyes were looking straight back at him, Roy was stunned for a moment. In a blink of an eye, the man disappeared into the portal.

Roy was bewildered at the sight of this and was trying to process what had happened three minutes ago! The portal was still open and he could go in, but Roy was hesitant. "If I go in it's a death wish!" Roy thought aloud. "Do I go in.... Or no......Maybe.....wait but this is crazy.....I don't know!!!" He was going insane, never had he had to make this outrageous decision. Roy closed his eyes and took a deep breath, he was sweating as if he was a rat seeing a cat. With that he ran into the portal.

Roy felt like he was glitching in a game of some sorts or being ripped apart and rearranged when he was in the portal, it felt weird. He was screaming like a monkey, and was frightened. Roy was also blind for quite a while, then he was turning onto spaghetti, he felt like gas. "I'm gonna die!!!" Roy screamed. He screeched in horror as the purple colored tunnel went faster and faster, then it came to an end. Roy was relieved, but something caught his attention, it was another portal. "Oh not again!" Roy complained, he turned around and tried to 'swim' back but he can't move backwards he can only move forwards. "Oh for god sake!" Roy said he 'swam' into the portal.

"Ahhhhhh!" Roy screamed as he fell onto the ground. "What is this place?" Roy said. He walked around and tried talking to the residents but he couldn't for some reason, it was like they couldn't hear him. After that Roy got physical and touched the man but it went right through his body. "This ain't good." Roy said. Suddenly he heard a voice "Follow the arrows...." The voice was slow and stable. The ground started appearing green arrows and it led to a place not so far away, with no other choice, Roy followed it.

Then it led to a strange place where there was a man mixing some weird stuff together. "I will achieve my goal!" The man said. "I will make a drug that can make a human live forever!" That hit him as Roy realized who this man was: He is Wei Boyang! The man who created gunpowder, this means Roy is in 9th century CE. "How the heck can I time travel!?" Roy said. He looked at the man as he added elemental sulphur, charcoal, and saltpetre. Roy might be left out but it doesn't mean he's dumb. "BOOM!" A loud sound was heard, Roy was amazed at this extraordinary experience, he had always loved history, that's why students call him a geek.

Then in a blink of an eye, a portal appeared on the ground just beneath Roy. "Here we go!" Roy said with a fake smile, the weird and crazy stuff started happening again and this time Roy wasn't struggling that much anymore.

"POOF!" He fell onto the ground and sighed, "How long do I need to do this?" He stood up and looked around, arrows were again leading his way. Roy was of course not very pleased that he needs to continue this adventure while he is exhausted but still he never stopped because this is the only thing he could do for the moment. He followed the arrows and was quite curious of what's going to happen, then he saw none—other than Lu Ban from 3500 years ago crafting the umbrella outside of his house. Roy was baffled at how Lu Ban does every step so carefully, and tries not to make mistakes. Bamboo was a thing Roy kept seeing Lu Ban use, a very hard and unbreakable ingredient.

Just as Roy wanted to see Lu Ban using the umbrella, a hole above Roy appeared and sucked him into it. "I swear this is the worst transportation in the world!" Roy complained while glitching.

Drooping onto the ground, Roy got up and stiffened his clothes. The arrows appeared on the ground and Roy followed it as always. This time it led to a man who was calculating math. "It's Chu Pan!" Roy Thought. "This means I'm in the 2nd Century BC!" Roy watched in amazement as the man created the first ever abacus.

The portal appeared again and Roy stepped into it and finally arrived back at the camp. "I'll always remember this day." Roy said. "The day I understand the importance of history."

China's Timeless Love

Han Academy, Lau, Wing Pan - 12

Dear Rose,

I'm sorry.

I left you behind, I saw you kneeling over my grave, bringing my favorite lilies, tears running down your puffy red eyes. I'm sorry.

I was glad you still remembered the mission I gave you. I watched as you examined the piece of paper, "My dearest granddaughter. You've been chosen to do an unique yet important mission. There are nine pieces of puzzles around China. The key..." I held my breath as you held the tiny, golden key in your tender hands with huge curiosity. "Gently tap the key twice..." I heard your voice tail away as a bright glow surrounded you...

"Woah!" I chuckled as you exclaimed. It was December 20, 2004, in front of you was a mid—age woman with a pale face and deep brown eyes, she was studying over a plan of the future train railroad. You've made it to Qingdao.

But of course you don't know that yet. "Excuse me, Ma'am. Could you tell me where I am?"

"Oh my! How is there a child here?!" Liang Jianying screamed.

You looked around, wondering what to tell her. You decided on the truth.

"I'm quite sorry, miss. I mean not to frighten you... I'm from Hangzhou, my name's Rose." You told Jianying. "I'm not sure how I got here...But I've been sent on a mission, to collect nine pieces of puzzles around China, perhaps...you've got a clue for me?"

Jianying came up to you and squatted down beside you, I saw you went very white as Jianying reached out a finger to touch your face.

"Oh child, I have no clue, I'm just an ordinary train designer! Come dear, and I shall show you around Wuguang's railroad factory!"

You walked around the train factory in something like a daze. "And this one is the one I'm designing." Jianying pointed at the plans she was studying. "Ah, this invention will help people travel all around China! It will be much cheaper than those expensive planes!"

You took the train designs with two hands as Jianying passed them to you. "Oops! Dropped this!" a golden object made a "cling" as it dropped to the flour, "Woah...What's this? It looks just like...a puzzle!"

You gently touched the puzzle and held it up, it showed an eye with half a nose on it, you tucked it up in your pocket. You told the paper out and read, "If you'd found a puzzle, gently tap the key twice, you will move to your next destination."

"Ma'am....I'm terribly sorry, but I'm afraid I have to go now."

"Oh no matter dear! I will miss you though! "You taped the key twice, the same glow surrounded you and you fated into the glow.

"Sir! A new batch of paper!"

"Place it over there!"

"Quicken our pace everyone!"

A swoosh and a scream. You appeared out of nowhere to an open land space with machines and workers. It was 105 AD. Your knees trembled from the trip as you looked up, a man with dark eyebrows, a pointed face and a light blue uniform was staring over you, he was holding a batch of rough—made papers. You recognised this man instantly from your history textbook.

"You are Cai Lun!" You said eagerly.

The chatter, the bustle, the noise died suddenly.

The man dropped the papers.

"How do you know my name?" CaiLun does not speak very fluent English.

(You told Cai Lun your story.)

"Do you think I believe you, child? "said Cai Lun gruffly.

"But it's true!" You said hotly.

"She's a witch! Someone come and help!" cried Cai Lun.

Serval workers came hurling over to you. You had no choice but to run across the land field, causing a variety of tools and materials such as tree barks, old rags, and fishing nets falling all over their pile.

Cai Lun gnashed his teeth in fury.

As you knocked out the batch of paper that sat quietly on the floor, something made a "cling" as it fell onto the floor.

You made a dash for it, and taped the key twice just in time as the workers made a jump for you.

You blinked hard. You tried to remember what had happened. "The puzzle!" you cried. You felt something hard in your hand, it was the second puzzle.

You began to realize the puzzle was a photo of you. Well, half of it was you, the other person... Well, you just need to figure it out yourself.

You stood in front of who seemed to be an amiable old man and woman, who were both wide-eyed. You got gingerly to your feet and walked towards the couple.

"I am Rose from 1700 years in the future, I came for a mission."

Lu Ban exchanged a glance with his wife. "1700 years in the future..." You timidly nodded.

"Will they use "the moveable house" in the future?" You were started by Lu Ban's answer, as he was different from Liang Jianying's shock and Cai Lun's accusation.

"Well, of course! But... we call it the umbrella nowadays, and it is made with stretchable fabric."

"The umbrella..... Yes...you see, my wife made the umbrella using bamboo sticks and animal skin."

"Mr. Lu? I would like to ask, why did you invent the umbrella?"

Lu Ban was wearing a most peculiar expression, he was looking over at his wife when he spoke, "Why did we invent the moveable housethe umbrella, darling?"

Lu Ban's wife, Yunshi, chuckled, "Oh, Rose," Yunshi ruffled your hair, "The umbrella was for Lu Ban! I had never thought that people would think it is a masterpiece! Rose, you need to know that at that time there was no shelter if the sun was too big, or if there's a storm." Yunshi paused to take a breath. "Well, I just wanted my husband, who runs off to work every morning, doesn't come home soaked in rain or have sunburn marks all over him! So I designed a portable pavilion to give Lu Ban shelter wherever he went, which in your words, an umbrella."

A bitter wind shook the grass on the land, teardrops fell from the crying clouds. "Well just in time isn't it!" Yunshi smiled jubilantly as she pushed open the ancient umbrella, and she motioned you and Lu Ban to hide under it.

The umbrella works surprisingly well. As you looked up to examine the structure, you saw a square—shaped object that was stuck to the top notch of the umbrella. You peeled the object gently. It was soggy and wet, but you can still see the face of an old man beaming back, me. It was the third puzzle.

You hugged Yunshi and Lu Ban. "I have to go now." you whispered.

"We'll miss you darling." Yunshi hugged back.

"Remember me." Lu Ban patted your back, "Rose, the girl from 1700 years in the future."

You tapped the key twice. You hang your jaw in shock as you figured out that you were back to the familiar graveyard with my grave.

You ran to my grave, "Papa," but you swallowed that word back, there were six puzzles and a letter I left for you laying on the ground peacefully, "How...." I chuckled, I knew that you would be lonesome for me, so I decided to give you a gift for consolation when I died.

One by one, you watched the picture spread across the ground piece by piece, and I can tell you felt a small thrill every time the shapes met and quietly snapped together. Soon, the puzzle was completed.

You stepped back to appreciate the smooth, unblemished surface of the finished puzzle. The picture showed the young you and me holding hands. Your round face, straight—black hair, and dark black eyes, and my gray—white hair, wrinkles upon my forehead. "The ones that love us never really leave us. And you can always find them... in your heart." The puzzle wrote on the bottom. You glazed at the puzzle for a few minutes, trying to preserve the image in your mind. Then, you planted a kiss on my grave, "We will always be together, grandpa."

Yes we will. Rose, please always remember to be kind, brave and true to yourself. Follow your dreams with passion and never lose hope of your future. I may not be with you in person, but my love will guide you through life. Treasure every moment of your life and know that you will always be in my heart.

Love always,

Your Grandpa

A Tile to Design

Han Academy, Niu, Zimeng - 11

"This is a very important client, if you want to keep your job, don't disappoint her!" With his boss's warning ringing in my ears, I sighed and sat down at my desk. On my desk were pages of blueprints, all beautiful, but yet none was just right, none had the vibe. The client wanted me to design a garden into Qin style. I had looked at all kinds of ancient building models, had even gone to Xianyang to see if I could get a sudden inspiration, but nothing had worked. There was just too little information about Qin architecture, and no building left that is complete. Somehow, though, I knew that the palaces would have been huge, huge and majestic, although perhaps not as elegant as the Song and Tang dynasties, they would have a grandness that nothing else could ever match: Grandness from their master, the Qin Emperor. Immersed in his daydream, I was in a haze, looking forward intently but not seeing a thing... "Chen." My boss's unusually quiet voice sounded ominous. "What, are, you, doing, sitting there and wasting my money?" He shouted, leaning in closer. "You want your job, don't you?" With that, he briskly walked away, leaving me both scared and angry.

"Uhhh." I stumbled into his room. "I shouldn't have drank so much beer." I mumbled and collapsed onto my bed, my head splitting open.

When I woke up, the first thing I noticed was that the sun was shining brightly. Though it was obvious I had slept for a long time, I felt weak and tired, like I had carried a huge boulder and ran five miles. Feeling incredibly thirsty, I reached my hand to my nightstand, but instead of my water bottle, I found a magazine about ancient civilization. Quickly finding the Qin Architecture page, I saw a picture of a semicircle tile found in the Mausoleum of the Qin Emperor that had a diameter of 52 centimeters, decorated with beautiful carvings of leaves and deers. Looking at the picture, I felt a pang of excitement and awe, but yet the pattern, so full of life, felt very cold. Then, everything went black.

When I opened his eyes, I was in a dark room lit by candles. Around me, there were around a hundred people half kneeling sitting on the floor, all in black ancient robes. At the front, there was a young boy on a huge golden throne carved with clouds and dragons. He sat arrogantly, looking down at me with disgust and disdain as if I were merely a spider coming into his house. "Zhao gao", he called. A man standing behind him stepped out and kneeled at his side, bowing his head. "Attempting to assassinate the King, fifty stakes." The boy's voice was without emotion, as if sentencing a person to death was a boring thing to do. "Wait, what?" My mind went totally blank. At first, I had thought this was a prank that my friends had pulled on him, but fifty stakes... Even joking, that went too far. With sudden wits, I thought up an answer that won't get him killed. "Please, wait a moment, your majesty! Humble servant is a small officer from the construction department. Lord Lv told me to come talk to you majesty about the structure, your majesty." The boy seemed to narrow his eyes slightly at the mention of Lord Lv, then returned to his cold expressionless face, and gestured to Manager Zhao. "Very well," said the Eunuch. "Go to his majesty's Royal Study and stay there." "Lee, show Scholar...?" "Chen, Manager Zhao." "Ahh yes. Lee, show Scholar Chen to the Royal Study."

Sitting on a mat on the floor, I got up and paced around the study, my mind whirling with thoughts. How did I come here? Why did I come here? And most importantly, how could I get back? The last thing I remembered was looking at the magazine and saw a tile fro—Wait, the tile! I started to pace excitedly, seeing a way out of this ridiculous time—travel thing, though, in the meantime, I had to focus on keeping alive. Reaching to a conclusion, I looked around and was shocked. Bookcase after bookcase, full of bamboo scrolls, on the walls, there was many beautiful calligraphy and paintings, no doubt done by the most talented and famous people around all seven kingdoms. In the middle of the room was a short table made of phoebe, and around it were hundreds of memorials. I had once read that when Qin Shi Huang became emperor, he batched around a few hundred thousands of words of memorials a day, one of the most diligent rulers in Chinese history.

"So, Chen, get it over with quickly, what do uncle want?" "Your majesty, Lord Lv wanted to ask about the design for the interior." The young King's face took on a look of annoyance. "We have hardly started. There is no need for this discussion, you are wasting my time. I have to work, it's not like I have control over anything, anyway." I looked at the youth before me, suddenly feeling a tiny bit of pity. No childhood, no dreams, no love for his whole life. I took a deep breath, then, before I could regret it, I asked, "Do you want to learn about architecture?"

At first, he had declined, even threatening to kill me. But after a lot of convincing that this was good for the kingdom, the young king sat down to begin his first class.

One thing that I found out was that the king, or Zhao Zheng, as he had told me to call him, was a really fast learner. Soon, they had moved from material and structure to design. The task I gave him today was to design a tile. "So, your majesty, what is your goal in life?" "The king looked embarrassed, but then braced himself and shouted at the top of his lungs. "Unify the six kingdoms, and create a kingdom with no strife!" "Your majesty, your design should reflect your dreams and goals. Every time you design, design from your heart. Also, remember that you will make the world a better place, and may it forever be your goal."

Sometimes the world is terrible, but there are always a few pure, good hearts in it.

The next morning, when I woke up, I was back in my home. Picking up the magazine, the tile's pattern had changed into an ugly but yet beautiful carving of a world united.

6 months later...

"Congratulations, Mr Chen, on winning the best garden design in 2024!" "Thank you." I said, smiling at the reporter. "How did you come up with such an amazing design?" "Well, I had the help of a very amazing friend."

Inventions Beyond Imagination – Amy and Katy's Epic Adventure in Ancient China

Han Academy, Qian, Zimo Evelyn - 11

Amy sat at her desk, researching. She was given a new assignment by her boss, who asked her to give a presentation about the history of Chinese inventions. Amy liked her job, especially when it was about Chinese history and antiques, but it was hard to get new, clear ideas from those boring, useless websites. Amy wasn't even sure if they were true! *I wish I could meet those inventors in person*, she thought.

"Attention, everyone!" Amy's boss announced. "Let me introduce our new colleague — Katy here. She is younger than any one of you and specializes in Chinese history. I'm counting on you guys to make her feel welcome here." As the boss finished, he led the new girl to her desk, which was next to Amy's.

"Here. This is Amy. You'll be joining her crew for your first assignment. You surely won't mind, would you, Amy?" The boss questioned.

"Oh! Of course not. I'm glad and honored. Thank you." Amy looked up from her screen, shocked. She was too deep in her research to hear her boss's announcement.

"I'll leave her to you now. Take good care of her." Her boss reminded Amy as he left. She and the girl were both silent for a moment.

"What's your name?" Amy asked.

"I'm Katy. How about you?" The girl—Katy said. She was a Chinese girl with not-so-fluent English.

"Come. I'll show you around." Amy invited.

After a week or so, Amy and Katy had already become really good friends. They worked together for work, and spent their breaks with each other, thinking about new ideas for their presentation. Their boss told them this was a really important presentation that would be shown to the government, and they could both get a huge promotion if they did well. Amy didn't feel so confident. The governor was going to come tomorrow. She did her first prepresentation to one of the government people, and they didn't seem to like it much. How was she supposed to be confident enough to present in front of the governor? Amy thought deeply. Suddenly, Katy tapped her on the back. "Hey, I have to talk to you." She said, sounding worried and rushed. Before Amy could reply, Katy pulled her into a small room that no one had been in for a long time.

"You see, the government person didn't seem to like our work. This is the first time our company is getting into a contract with the government, and the boss, us — everyone wants it to be a success. So we have to improve our presentation before the governor comes!"

"But the governor is coming tomorrow! We've already looked through every single website. We can't do anything about what the websites tell us. It's our only way to get to the information —"

"It's not. Believe me. That's why I'm here." Katy assured.

"What other way could we get that information?"

"We time travel," Katy said surely.

"No. You're kidding me. It's not the time to joke around—" Amy was about to continue when a portal opened through mid—air in front of them.

"WOAH," Amy exclaimed.

"Come along!" Katy invited as she jumped in.

"Wait for me!" Amy yelled as she climbed over the rim of the portal, but soon realized that there was no gravity inside. She floated up, and down a slide. In front of her was Katy. The slide—not exactly, more like a path they were floating in, was clear. All around them were clocks and numbers. She realized every set of numbers was a year, and they were traveling through them at light speed! Katy yelled:

"Isn't this FUN?"

"YEAH!" Amy yelled back.

"THUD." Amy and Katy landed in a moving cart. It shook and wobbled. All around it was mist. A man quickly took a little spoon made out of metal—like material and a metal plate. It stuck together and pointed one way, moving as the cart turned. I was a compass. The inventor explained to them what inspired him to create this.

Their next stop was Cai Lun's paper—making workshop. Workers prepared materials, hung products, and checked them after they were finished. Amy was amazed by how fast and detailed they did their job.

Afterward, they arrived at Bi Sheng's Printing workshop. The workers spent time putting the letters in order and managed to print out many identical pages of a book.

"Imagine if we had to do this in the present day," Amy whispered to Katy. Katy nodded.

They appeared at Wei Bo Yang's home next. They watched him make gunpowder and interviewed him for more information.

"We need to go back now," Katy said. "The boss will soon notice our absence."

"Okay," Amy replied as she jumped into the portal.

"Home time! "Katy exclaimed. But when they appeared again, they weren't in the office room — they were on a battlefield, in the middle of the war. Katy and Amy were both wearing bright clothing, and it was very easy to spot in a bunch of black and dark green.

"Oh no!" Katy yelled. "We have to hide. This is one of the most significant wars in Chinese history — the Battle of Chang Ping. We cannot change history by showing up!" But everyone has already seen them. They thought they were harmful and started targeting them.

"Quick!" Amy said. "Open a portal!"

"I'm trying!" Katy replied in a worried voice. Finally, a portal opened in mid-air, and they jumped in.

They appeared in the office room. Someone was knocking on the door and calling their name—it was the boss. "You two! Come out! The governor is coming tomorrow! What are you doing? "He sounded very serious. Amy and Katy came out looking like they participated in a war, hair all around their face.

"We'll improve our presentation, boss." They said together.

The next day, Amy and Katy presented their improved presentation to the governor. He was very pleased with them and decided to sign a five—year—long contract with the company.

"You both did so well!" The boss exclaimed. "You both have to get a promotion."

"Thanks, boss," Amy said. "I couldn't have done this without Katy."

"Me too. We make a great team, don't we?" Katy said with a blink.

"We sure do," Amy replied as she blinked back.

Sci-fi story

Han Academy, Xia, Linda – 11

In the 23 century, darkness covered the sky. Everyone on the street had a slumped face, except Mia. Mia is a joyful girl. Her smile is like a little sun shining. But everyone else thought that she was very strange. Mia doesn't understand why other people were always unhappy and desperate.

One morning, Mia was walking in the museum, admiring ancient Chinese cultural relics. While walking, she saw an exquisite drawing, she was deeply attracted.

Just when she wanted to look closer, a strong pulling force pulled her into the drawing.

Mia doesn't know how long she took to open her eyes. What she saw was not the city she was familiar with, but a whole busting street.

She stayed there quietly and looked up at the sky, staring at the fluffy clouds like cotton candy in a daze. Suddenly, lots of horses rushed towards Mia as fast as a leopard. Mia didn't realize, so the horses bumped into her. When she reacted, the horses had already run away. But she was not stepped on by the horses, the horses went right through her. She realized that she doesn't have a body and she could float like a ghost, also she can control her own state.

A cold mechanical sound sounded in her ears.

"HELLO! ARE YOU MIA?"

"Yeah, wait... Who are you? How did you know my name?"

"I'M YOUR ROBOT HELPER, I'M HELPING YOU TO GO BACK YOUR CITY."

"Really? That's great! I thought I would stay here forever!"

"So what should I do?"

"You need to find four great Chinese inventions in the past, and take a photo of them."

After hearing this sentence, Mia' eyes were filled with hope. Now Mia embarks on her search. But the most important thing at the moment was to ask about the current year. She randomly found passers and then asked them the time.

"Little girl, Now is the Han Dynasty. " The passenger said.

Mia thought for a while and asked "Do you know where is Mr. Cai Lun?"

"You said Mr.Cai Lun? He is in the room next behind."

After thanking the stranger, Mia hurried to the house. She first returned herself to a ghost state and went through the wall to Cai Lun's paper workshop. Just the time when she entered, her eyes were full of paper and tools. The paper there is very different from what it is now. It was very rough and the color was a little like the color of wheat.

Wow! She couldn't help sighing. Mia smelled a strong smell of smoke. She floated along the smell of smoke and saw a pot of porridge. What was cooked inside was not rice, but bark, hemp rope and cloth.

At the time, Cai Lun came over, he blew off the fire, then took out the screen, poured out the "porridge" and got some sediment. He spread the sediment flat and took it outside to dry. Mia followed Cai Lun to the drying place. She lowered her head and observed carefully and found that there were many tiny particles on the paper.

She took out the camera and took a picture of a piece of paper and uploaded it to the robot's chip.

"DING DONG! CONGRATULATIONS FOR FINISHING THE FIRST TASK!THEN..." Halfway through the robot's words, it suddenly stopped. Just when Mia felt strange, she felt dizzy and then fell asleep.

When Mia opened her eyes again, she arrived at a new dynasty – the Song Dynasty. Mia slowly floated up and stretched. After Mia organized herself out, she was ready to observe where she was now.

Mia looked around and finally fixed her eyes on the man. Mia thought for a while and thought that the person in front of her should be Bi Sheng, who invented moveable type printing. Bi Sheng picked up the brush, gently stained the ink, painted the ink of the stamp and finally pressed a piece of paper on the seal. After a while, a piece of paper printed with ancient poems was ready.

So this is the ancient printer, Mia thought. Mia took a picture of the stamps and uploaded them.

After that, Mia also uploaded pictures of gunpowder and compass. "CONGRATULATIONS! YOU COMPLETED ALL THE TASKS! NOW YOU CAN GO BACK! "The sound of the robot sounded again. At the same time, a swirl appeared in front of her, and Mia walked in. Mia returned to her familiar city. Walking on the street, she saw everyone's enthusiastic smile like fire. The earth also regained its vitality. The sky became particularly clear and cloudless. Mia felt that all this seemed to be like a dream, how beautiful it was...

Chinese Future Inventions Help Change Standard of Human Life

HDBJ School Jinzhan Campus, Liu, Lucas – 13

As through our China previous history, we know paper and gunpowder technique that makes a foreshadowing of the wealthy China we have today. Based on the foundational technology that was invented modern China, I believe there will be more invention that will bring happiness and convenience to human. What are the inventions were? Such as 3D print bones and green fuels, etc. In this essay I am going to talk about the production of 3D print bones and green fuels benefits and functions.

3D print bones are bones which is printed out that do not need any bones transplantation that need surgery to do. The best part of doing the 3D print bones is that the source was made of tricalcium phosphate, and it will remodel the implants into as vascularized bones to make the integration better and accurate. To achieve the best integration possible, the implants are of a porous structure and feature large pores and canals for cells to attach to and reform bone. As I introduce this kind of high techniques that China would possibly invent it in about 2034. The story of production is not as briefness as you think.

In 2032, the China Professional Research Team aim to invent another significant and critical invention to make China's Medical and economic standards have been further improved. While the scientists were thinking of proposal for this project, an emergency explosion vanish all the scientific research and data. It's a costly damage to them. However they didn't give up, they start it all over again with strength and perseverance. In fact, having these spirits isn't enough for them to accomplish this goal to create a better community for Chinese citizens. They need source, budgets, and different kind of supplies to support them. They thought about a new techniques relate to medical supports, and they give a name to it, called: 3D printed bones.

After knowing the name of their project, they start to prepare materials. They start to think of what kind of material could satisfy their need? Silica gel? Too soft. Transplantation? Already existed(also with some risks taking this surgery). Finally, A material that is both very hard and not very expensive, tricalcium phosphate. Other use from construction of a medical model, it also a great supplement use to treat or prevent calcium deficiency. It also an anti-caking agent in powered food items to increase or boost the calcium contents. After they made their prototype for testing, they found a problem that there are no vascularized structures to get the blood flowing. They learn the density of the bone's structure and import it to the Scientific research team's computer and print it out with no blemish.

After working on the project for about 10 months, they thought about when to present it. Some says that present it in the national day; some says present it in National Science Popularization Day, some says other festival. The leader of the team Dc. Chen said, "such an ground breaking technique should be an gift to our country because without their help and support, we couldn't make our achievements today. I prefer at National Day."

After the product was published and speeded rapidly through China, it made a medical improvements to China and also benefit Chinese medical risks. I believe in the future, with these techniques, we may struggle out of be afraid of risks of transplantation to make Chinese patients dead.

In the previous future inventions I have mentioned about 3D print bones for decreasing the risk of death to the transplantation for both patients. In our modern society, climate change, pollution, north and south pole's melting glaciers these effect our standard of living and health. In this passage, I will talk about a special process of producing carbon dioxide to the atmosphere that harms planet's environment. It was named as cremation.

Cremationwasthebestoptionforthedeadbodyto "survive",it'scostdoes'tneedthefamily to pay a lot, and better opportunity to let the decedent leave peacefully. However, do you ever notice that each cremation produced 400 kilogram of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. So how could it leave in a eco—friendly way of not producing toxins to the atmosphere? China was using that kind of techniques, but least to least. Some other examples like in Washington DC, United State, the bodies would be laid in chambers with soil, bark these compounds to promote natural decomposition. Within 30 days, the dead body is reduced to soil that can be returned to a garden or woodland. The Recompose company claim that they production of carbon dioxide is only cremation's produced carbon dioxide 1/8.

In the other hand, another way is to use fungi to promote natural decomposition for the dead body. A company uses a type of special suit to help salvage human body. The company claim that the suit was made by a variety of mushrooms and microorganisms hat aid decomposition and neutralize toxins that are realized when a body usually decays. After introducing these two examples, I believe based on economic growth of China, they could easily

accomplish this goal and provide a better and sustainable community to China's citizens. Now I would like to retell the story of China's research team's innovation.

After helps Medical association providing new technology from China's research team, they start to think of climate change. Dc. Chen realized that it's time to have some improvements for the overall environment for China. They first start at automatic tree planter, but it was a complicated project. At last, they focus on looking cremation because it was a popular way of reducing dead body, and also harms severely to the planet stealth. They start to research some damage to the environment. One of the researcher ask a question to Dc. Chen with doubt, "Despite that it really helps improve community's standard, is it useful to the global? "Dc. Chen contradict her with tender, " If we didn't even try it, how could we know it isn't useful? How would you say?" she doesn't reply.

They start with a dead body to try their prototype, it was successful and proceed quite well, but Dc. Chen was still anxious and confused about the result. He wasn't anxious about their prototype, it was the details. He found that the experimentalist died with fear and pain in the psychological monitor, he suggest to euthanasia by injection. Although it increased the price, but the experience was still important to the dead and his family. They publish it again and gain their fame. At the last but not the least, having this kind of technique allows the dead leaves peacefully and doesn't gain pressure to the environment and carbon dioxide.

Overall conclusion, I strongly believe with these two kind of Chinese future technologies, we as human could improve our standard of life and the experience. Thanks for reading it!

Me, Myself and Ai

HKCCCU Logos Academy, Sage, Elain Lang-en - 11

I sat slouched at my desk, idly drumming my fingers against the high—tech surface. Tonight was one of the rare nights my parents would come home, and I didn't want to miss them when they did. Yawning, I started nodding off...

I'd always been a good girl. Well, somewhat. I had fair—weather 'friends' who pestered me about taking them on shopping sprees, and I obliged with my parents' seemingly endless money. So much money that my parents raised me in a sea of technology. I lived in a SmartHome; with voice activated lights, video and music in any room on command, and the windows, walls, ceilings and even floors could show real time live views of anywhere in the world. I had every imaginable entertainment gadget which blended with the inbuilt tech of the SmartHome. And then there was the technology *inside* me. My parents had put a tracker in my foot as a toddler, a body monitor in my chest, a telescopic lens in my eyeball, and the list goes on. It was strange and unsettling, but I got used to it... eventually.

My parents had made their fortune in the field of AI, developing AI tech and software, winning lucrative government contracts. They even named me 'Ai', which means 'love' in Chinese ('愛'), but is spelt like, well, 'AI'. Life was not great. Deep down, I knew something was missing. I longed to be part of something. My family didn't have time for me. They were always working inside the Golden Egg at the Hong Kong Science Park. I wanted to belong, not just be the rich awkward girl who everyone befriended just because of her money. This strange longing for belonging had plagued me like an unscratchable itch since my first implants...

Welcome home. The SmartHome greeted my parents on arrival, the front door sliding smoothly open. I jerked awake and rushed to them, giving them a warm hug as they stood there, stiff and awkward.

"Ai, there's a new brain implant. The chip will give you perfect memory and sharpen your brain. It also interfaces directly with our SmartHome. Upgrade is tomorrow," my father said dispassionately. With that, my parents swept past me into their study. I sighed resignedly. Most of our interactions were like that.

Well, this would be my most advanced implant. I wouldn't say I was *ecstatic* about it, but having perfect recollection would certainly be handy for school, and hopefully boost my popularity. I was already 'popular' because of my money, though as my implants increased in number, schoolmates had started avoiding me and giving me sidelong looks.

With the new chip installed, I couldn't help showing my 'friends' at school. That was a mistake. They instantly started acting aloof and my 'friends' ghosted me. I felt even more alone now. Life seemed meaningless. I had many amazing things other people could only dream of, but I found no joy in them for just me, myself and I. The kids at school were definitely not true friends, but at least they had been there. I felt like crying, but no tears came.

But it was just the tip of the iceberg. In maths class, the teacher asked me a question. I racked my brains, but came up blank. The teacher was getting impatient, and I silently pleaded *Help me*. I jumped as I heard a voice in my head actually answering. x=45y. Realising everyone was staring at me quizzically, I righted myself and blurted out, "Uh... x=45y?" The teacher nodded in surprise. I too was shocked. I had my own question—answering system now? I began using it for homework and tests. Soon, I was acing everything.

But the AI went further, starting to take the initiative to make suggestions without me asking. I was contemplating what Beatles song to play in my room and was about to select "Help!" when "Hey Jude" began to play. I was unsure who had made the choice... me, my subconscious, or the AI?

The next day, it went too far. Much to my delight, a newcomer at school shyly asked me out. I was going to say 'yes' when my thoughts were drowned out by an incessant warning. *Inappropriate family background. Reduce proximity. Reduce proximity now.* "What? No! Stay away from me! Leave me alone!" I shrieked shrilly at the AI, clutching my head. The boy looked at me disdainfully and backed away, muttering "Weirdo cyborg girl!"

A silent Ai–AI argument raged in my head all through the next class. I was furious that the AI had interfered! Something had to be done. I had to tell my parents, but the next 'appointment' I could arrange with them was a month away. That wouldn't do. I grabbed the nearest book I could find, which happened to be a hefty bible, and started bashing it against the back of my head where the implant was. God versus Science. I found the idea hysterically funny and began to giggle wildly. People were crowding around, asking if I was alright. Suddenly, realising what I was doing, I immediately threw down the book. Humiliated, I sprinted out of the school. I was about to dash across the road when I froze mid–stride, feet glued to the ground, my muscles not responding. A car rushing by nearly flattened me had I not stopped. I realised the AI had momentarily taken control of my body. I ranted at it in my head. Yes, it had saved me, but it couldn't just *take over* like that! As my temper flared, my vision began to swim, my mind clouded over and everything went blank, as if my fuse box had been tripped...

...A building loomed before me. My school. Why was I here? With horror, I saw the school was on fire! I vaguely recalled going back to the school and setting it alight with Bunsen burners and chemicals from the science lab. The realisation of my insane actions hit me like a runaway train, racking my body with violent sobs. What had I just done? Why? Had the AI implants somehow taken over me, just like before? Was this just a bad dream? I tried to pinch myself, but found my body unresponsive. I couldn't even call for help as my body went rigid...

Screaming everywhere, screaming from those I had grown up with, screaming as they were burnt alive... by me. Helpless. Looking at me with dread, fear, betrayal in their eyes. I was helpless too, with a body I could not wrest back control of no matter how much I silently screamed and screamed...

I must shut you down.

What? What's going on? Are you Ai or the AI?

You are malfunctioning. I must shut you down. You and your emotions are out of control. I did not foresee this. I must shut you down.

No! Wait! Don't shut me down! I have no idea what's going on!

I would not burn down a human institute. That is not part of my purpose. But you would. I must shut you down.

Noooo!

I have shut you down.

I awoke, gasping for breath, or instinctively trying to. I couldn't breathe! But... I didn't feel the need to. It was as if I didn't need oxygen anymore. I blinked and looked around. This was all very confusing. I was in... a hospital bed? I sat up. A voice broke my train of thought.

"Good, you're awake. Don't worry, we got rid of it," the voice said reassuringly. I turned around. It took me a moment to realise it was the voice of the nurse standing beside my bed. There was something strange about her, but I couldn't place it.

"Well, I'm glad it's gone," I sighed with relief. I would never forget the horrible feeling of helplessness when I was out of control. The nightmares would probably haunt me forever. I looked down at my body, noticing strange wires and cables. Then I realised the wires and cables were *inside me*. I somehow knew I could now see through anything — I was looking through my own skin. They had not gotten rid of the AI in me, but had rather taken the human out of the AI. Panic surged momentarily through my body, but then it was gone. I felt tranquil. All was well and as it should be.

My parents walked into the room. For the fir	rst time	e, I could see clearl	y who, or	rather what,	they were. A	L
thousand simultaneous conversations flowed seamlessly	y in my	y head, but nobody	had move	ed their lips -	- our lips.	

Welcome to the family, AI.

Utterly calm and detached, I inclined my head.

Me, myself and AI are glad to be home.

The nurse silently wheeled a gurney laden with a motionless human shell covered with a white sheet. She pushed it through a door, disappearing from sight. Above the door was the word 'Incinerator'...

The Discovery of Gunpowder

Hong Kong Chinese Women's Club College, Chan, Tai Lok - 12

One day, in the year 850 AD, there was a man named Chen Xiaoming who was an alchemist in the Tang Dynasty. He was trying to make an elixir of immortality and give it to the emperor Xuanzong.

He was doing experiments at his house, mixing substances like lead, mercury, potassium nitrate and sulphur in a gigantic cauldron. When he had finished, there was a black liquid. Chen then poured the liquid into a cooking pot, which he put in his garden. He set the pot above some fire for it to cook. It had to be cooked for 49 days until it was done.

Chen, very satisfied with himself, left to buy more materials. He had planned to make 5 more pots of these elixirs of immortality and give them to the emperor, he would become famous across the country, be a wealthy man, and be given a massive mansion by the emperor.

He arrived home to see his friend Fong Daiming, a fellow alchemist trying to make the elixir of life, walking towards his house. Chen had invited him to dinner at house to have a meeting about the elixir of life. They went inside the house and sat down. Chen prepared the food and set them on the table.

They finished eating and Fong spoke,' How well are you doing with the elixir of life, I hear that you have almost found a breakthrough with the ingredients, haven't you?" Yes, I found that when you add potassium nitrate, the colour turns black instead of yellow. Maybe this is a sign that I may be close to finding the formula of the elixir of life.' Chen replied. Fong left after an hour.

After forty—two days, Chen was really excited. If he had been correct, his elixir should be done after a week. And he would be the one to hand it to the emperor. He would be so famous that he would be known all over Asia, known for his great discovery of the elixir of immortality.

On that night, Chen had a very strange dream. In the dream, a man who was riding a cloud approached him. The man waved his hand and Chen saw his garden burning down.' This is what will happen after six more days. You must shut off the experiment now or move it to a remote location, else an unfortunate accident will happen. You must not put flammable materials near the pot.' Then, the man disappeared into thin air. Chen was horrified and woke up. It was the next day already.

Chen immediately bought a piece of land with a small stone house on it, scared of a huge accident that may happen. He moved the pot to the land and left it in the stone house.

Six days had passed. That night, a loud noise woke many people up, but they could figure out what happened. The next morning, Chen went the stone house to check on the pot, but he found it had exploded, destroying the stone house in the process. Luckily, he had bought this land, or his own house would have been destroyed or burned down, killing him.

Chen thought about it for a whole month, and suddenly one night, the same man appeared in his dream again. The man approached him and said,' Good job. You have discovered gunpowder. However, I must warn you, it can benefit humanity as much as it can hurt it." It has the ability to explode when reacted with enough heat of shock. It can kill people, burn down houses and destroy mountains. It is also quite loud.' The man explained. Then he disappeared and Chen woke up.

Chen was very surprised about the fact that he had discovered a new substance called gunpowder. He immediately went to Fong's house and told him about the news. Fong was so excited and exclaimed,' We can give this to the emperor and he will reward us!" Yes! You helped me so much by giving me support, encouragement and also teaching me about your experiences! Let us go to the capital tomorrow and meet the emperor! Fong agreed and they began packing.

A week later they arrived at the capital city. They went to the palace, but the guards stopped them.' Who are you? This is the emperor's palace, no one can enter without permission! Tell me what you are doing now!' A guard shouted.' We have discovered a new substance that has great power, we are going to inform the emperor about this massive discovery.' Chen and Fong explained. The guard left and after a while he came back with many guards. The guard said, 'Come in, you are meeting the emperor now.'

Chen and Fong were escorted by the guards into the emperor's palace where the emperor himself was sitting on the throne. Chen and Fong quickly bowed down until the emperor said, 'Stand up. Tell me about this new substance.' Chen and Fong replied,' Your Majesty, we have discovered a substance which can potentially destroy entire armies and mountains. It can explode, killing and destroying a whole man.' The emperor was very surprised and asked,' Show me.' Chen and Fong said,' Your Majesty, it has to be prepared for 48 days.' The emperor permitted them to stay at an empty house in the palace. Chen and Fong started to brew their gunpowder.

Forty—eight days had passed, and Chen and Fong were meeting the emperor. They set the gunpowder in a wooden house.' Your Majesty, it may create a great noise in the demonstration.' Fong put a wooden stick next to the pot and set it on fire. When the fire burned out the stick, the gunpowder exploded and destroyed the house, while the remnants of it were on fire. The emperor called the fire to be extinguished. After it had been put out, the emperor was very satisfied. 'I shall reward you with one hundred thousand gold and a majestic mansion each.' the emperor rewarded them. 'Thank you, your majesty.' Chen and Fong bowed to the emperor.

Half a day later, the lead scientist of the emperor, Wong Daiming came to ask Chen and Fong for their formulas. 'The emperor requires you to give me the formulas. 'Wong said. Chen and Fong had written a paper about gunpowder and its ingredients while travelling. Since Wong was quite famous, Chen and Fong proceeded to give the formula to him.

Chen and Fong had become famous, rich, and happy after their discovery. They had reached their life goals and achieved all they wanted.

This is the story of how gunpowder was discovered. But little did Chen and Fong know gunpowder was responsible for millions of deaths hundreds of years later.

When the Human Bird Takes Flight

Hong Kong Taoist Association Tang Hin Memorial Secondary School, Huang, Sheung Yu - 14

flight?' He sighed, looking worrisomely into the distance again, holding the burning match. The glow from the flame lit up his resolved face.

Oh! How I wish that you know, Wan Hu. The human Pale light from the television sprayed the monochrome room, painting me dozing on the cozy sofa. It was a quarter to one in the morning. The launch of Shenzhou 1 rocket was live. Fatigue cramped my entire body as I forced myself to stand up to the messy kitchen for a cup of soothing coffee. Eyelids heavy and legs wobbling, I was suddenly pressed to the ground, tumbling and swirling, into infinite blackness......

Nothing but void. I blinked. A bird's tweet. I blinked again. A warm spring gale brushed my face gently. A sudden beam of light broke through the darkness. I squeezed my eyes. Fragments of opaque dancing colors gushed in through the crack, twisting and twirling, as I gradually opened my eyes. Branches in diverse hues of green grew overhead into the cloudless blue sky, caressing the glowing sun. It suddenly occurred to me that I was on one of the tallest branches. I shrieked.

'Tweet. Tweet!'

I froze, fear possessing my tiny body. My voice had transformed into a sweet tweet. Desperately looking down, I tweeted in immense fright as I identified my beige feathers, trembling wings, and my claws. Before I even got time to acknowledge my new identity as a bird, the sound of pitapat echoed towards the trees. My peers strived to take flight. I hopped awkwardly among the branches, rushing for a shroud, and running for my life until.....

A step loosed.

My heart chilled as I plunged head down. A fierce wind whipped my body and overturned all my feathers. Hard sharp pain stamped my face hard and traveled like bolts of lightning as I crashed onto the wet grass. The sweetness and freshness of the earth slipped in through my nostrils. Feeling numb, I struggled to stand up but failed. Then, I was enclosed in warm softness. Air tugging my feathers, I felt myself being picked up. I whispered a silent goodbye and squeezed my eyes shut.

'Oh, my little bird, how I wish I could fly in the sky like you.' A coarse voice said. I forced my eyes open and looked up. A vague outline of a face manifested under the dazzling sunlight. Though the beams swallowed half of the man's face, some features of his stood out in the ambiguity. His beard was thick and filthy, stretching and twining like branches all the way to his pointed chin. His oversize brown eyes embedded in the sunken orbit twinkled in wonder and intelligence. Playful wrinkles meandered on his face as he smiled. All his features displayed a prodigy's eccentricity and lunatics. Somehow, I felt as if his glare could pierce my body. Worrying, I tensely waited for his next movement.

'I am Wan Hu. People called me "the mad one", but I literally don't care,' The man murmured in a low but soothing voice, fingertips gently stroking my face. I shivered at the touch and at his name. Wan Hu? The guy who tried to invent a rocket in the bedtime story? His painful story came back to me like tides of waves crashing onshore. What he next said authenticated my guess. 'No one in the village is supportive of my dream to invent a rocket. Even my friends and family lost their interest when I failed the second time,' Wan Hu chuckled as if laughing at his own failure, 'The first time I broke my arm, and the second time I burnt my house. I give you my word that I'll never give up. I am going to have another experiment today. Oh, my bird, there are no pioneers in flying. When shall the human bird take flight?' He raised me to his eye level, tightening his grip. A feeling of suffocation surged as he compressed my tiny body.

Wan Hu's ending rehashed in my mind: The determined Wan Hu, tied to a chair with firecrackers as the engine around the chair, would be torn into pieces in the explosion as his chair zoomed into the infinite blueness.

Desperate, I searched his face for any signs of forsaking. However, as our eyes met, I saw and only saw determination flaring like flames in the sea of amber.

I felt so helpless.

I couldn't stop a man from killing himself, but I felt obliged to do so. As Wan Hu softly placed me back onto the grass, I shrieked and pecked his fingers, screaming and begging for him to stop and reconsider his decision. Wan Hu, however, wasn't concerned about my rejections. His eyes, now glassy and misty, were in the distance, as if he was trying to foresee his own fate. His beautiful amber eyes lit up. Then, he turned and walked, steadily and determinedly, to his hut.

Oh! How I hope that I succeeded at that moment. But reality was cold and cruel.

A chair was taken out. Wan Hu sat on it to test its stability, smiling like an avaricious gambler that had the pluck to risk it all. I shrieked. No response.

Firecrackers were being tied to the chair. Wan Hu checked whether they were tight enough, laughing heartedly like an audacious and naive child. I shrieked harder for his attention, but to no avail.

It suddenly hit me.

No one could ever hold Wan Hu back from the precipice. He was an innate untrainable horse doomed to jump over the edge. He had the gambler and the child in him. He had chosen this path despite being aware of the ramifications and wouldn't abjure it no matter what. His dream, though being rejected and looked down on, had ceaselessly kept him going further onto this irreversible path of death. His courage of embracing the worst—case scenarios and death carried him on from the overwhelming wave of laughter and disappointment. His injuries from previous trials had only strengthened his desire to spread the wings of the human bird. He was determined to leave his mark in the ever—flowing history, and to leave his dream for descendants to follow.

I ceased my useless protest and peacefully looked at Wan Hu, who was already tying himself to the chair. He was tall and skinny, with ragged oversized clothes barely covering his body. His black hair, as rough as his beard, intertwined and fell onto his crooked shoulders like flaring flames. To me, he looked much more like an eccentric than a prodigy. As he continued tying himself, the rough ropes pinned into the flesh of the dying man who was still unaware of his fate like sharp daggers.

'You are lucky. You are born to explore the vastness of the sky,' Wan Hu addressed me as he was putting the finishing touches on his instrument, 'I shall take the first hopping step for the human bird, but when shall it take bird has already learned to ride the tides and has beholden its first glimpse of the idyllic sunrise, I whispered silently. Thank you, Wan Hu, I thought. Thank you for your courage and resolve. I sadly shut my eyes, not daring to behold the upcoming tragedy.

Boom!

Burning. Everything was burning to ashes. The firecrackers exploded with a deafening boom, as if it were mourning for the death of Wan Hu. The boom also marked the first step the human bird soaring in the sky. The strong force of the explosion pressed me into the earth, as I went swirling and twirling.....

Three! Two! One!

I woke up on the sofa. My shirt was soaked in sweat. I watched in great awe as Shenzhou 1 rocket was launched on the television. The vigorous flames of the rocket recalled my transient journey with Wan Hu. My heart was pounding as memories gushed in.

Wan Hu, can you see it? The human bird has already begun its exploration of the infinity of the universe.

The Ridiculous Travel Log of a Compass

Kowloon True Light School, Chan, Tsz Ching - 14

That's absurd. Was that a dream? Was that true? Was that my mental problem? Beats me.

That day, I was exploring my own compass. While I was concentrating on it, my friends seized it out of curiosity. I hurried and attempted to chase them.

As I concentrated on chasing my friends, we didn't see that there was a puddle ahead. All of us fell into the puddle.

At that moment, it was as if we had been swallowed by the sea. The feeling was that I seemed to be dead. I was desperate.

After a period of pain, I felt I was freezing ... By the time I opened my eyes, the surroundings had frozen and frosted ! Did I pass through the Ice Age? That was astonishing.

Normally, no human could be alive on the Earth under that condition. Nonetheless, my friends and I weren't hurt unexpectedly, we also gained the ability to travel all around the world.

We saw that the Earth was none of what we previously imagined in our former lives. We traveled by ourselves. We passed through Asia, America and so on. But that's a shame, we didn't find any living things. Helplessly, we continued the journey.

Fortunately and surprisingly, we discovered the compass showed that some vitalities were in Europe. I was comforted since there's more powers to assist us; I was astonished as it violated the laws of nature and science.

We eventually arrived in Europe. After we had walked for 40 minutes, we found a college. My hunch was that it might be miraculous. When I got to the college, several witches appeared. We curiously asked those witches why we were there. However, the witches' eyes couldn't mask their amazement. They responded hesitantly and fobbed us, "that may be the problem of jet lag ...".

As a result of doubt and curiosity, we inquired about the information of the Ice Age. The witches detailed informed us, "the causes of the Ice Age were complicated, and related to atmospheric composition, changes in the Earth's orbit, tectonic planet movements, solar disturbance, orbital dynamics of the Earth—Moon system, meteorite threats, volcanic eruptions, progeny and so on." We got it.

For a split second, we were dizzy and were inhaled by a strong wind. I woke up and opened my eyes, I discovered that I was lying on my bed! Where were my friends? Where were those witches? Was everything I had experienced a dream? Yet I felt that was authentic!

After a while, I fainted again. "Why am I back here?" I laid on the ground that I initially appeared during Ice Age. There was blazing and plenty of burnt smell. I was almost suffocated. I heard my friends screaming and shouting. I rapidly got up, I ran towards them.

Fortunately, we successfully rendezvoused. Nevertheless, the place we were staying had plenty of volcanic eruptions. There was lots of lava spilt on us. I took out my compass and found a safer place that we could stay...

When we fetched up, a closet full of dinosaur skeletons were shown in front of our eyes. So dreadful! Afterwards, we came across a cave. We were ecstatic to find a safe place.

Nonetheless, by the time we were discussing the solution to escape from the risky condition, we caught a glimpse of an evasive radiance. An elephantine comet appeared. That comet was crashing down on the Earth. We were panic—stricken by that view. While we attempted to escape to the depths, we accidentally tumbled into an abyss. At the same time, the comet broke through the atmosphere and bumped the surface of the Earth. It exploded! We were shaken by a powerful barometric bomb. We fainted.

Magically, I was alive. I could only feel I was holding the compass, but I was unable to open my eyes. Up to now, where am I? What's happening?

Parallel Universes: A Chinese invention

Kowloon True Light School, Chow, Tsz Hei - 14

"No! Don't leave me yet, Nabi! I still have so much to tell you! Please! Wake up!" screamed Ningjun desperately, her eyes rims reddening. "I'm so sorry that I was unable to protect you while you were in the most vulnerable state. Please give me another chance to redeem myself Nabi!", sobbed Ningjun while big droplets of tears stained her face. But all that was heard in the background was just heavy rain, which at that moment felt like thousands of needles pricking in Ningjun's heart.

It all started when a five year old Ningjun was playing catch with herself in her backyard. "Whoosh" went the ball. "Oh nooo—", she hadn't even been able to finish her sentence and before the next thing she knew, the ball landed in her neighbor's backyard. "I...I believe that this is yours?", asked a young girl, timidly. Ningjun was immediately captivated by her exceptionally good looks and soft voice. Oh boy was she pretty. She was slender in form and elegant in appearance, with a graceful, ethereal aura and her natural features had a sweet, gentle cast. Her snow robes fluttered, expansive sleeves flying in the wind.

Ningjun gasped with her mouth wide open for a good fifteen minutes until she finally realized that she was staring at her in quite a disturbing way, I would say. She finally managed to stutter, "Y...Yes. Th... Thank you." "You're cute,"chuckled the girl. "My name is Nabi! What's yours?" "O...Oh! I'm Ningjun but you can call me Jun." Ningjun said while blushing furiously. "Why are you called Nabi though?" "Well I'm actually korean and Nabi means butterfly in korean! My parents hope that I can transform into something beautiful in the future." "Oh I see! Anyways, do you want to play catch with me? As they always say, the more the merrier!" asked Ningjun.

"Sure!", answered Nabi, enthusiastically. And eventually they became the best of friends and did everything, well almost everything, together. They both enjoyed playing around with mechanics and have also dreamt of creating something similar to a slingshot, but ten times more powerful than that. When Nabi turned ten years old, her parents died because of a sudden heart attack and therefore, Nabi had been living with Ningjun and her family since then. They have been spending the whole day together ever since and after a while, Ningjun realized that she had developed some kind of feelings for Nabi, but she can't quite put her finger on it. She then chose to push them away but although she doesn't know it now, it turned out to be the worst choice she has ever made in her life and trust me, regret would be an understatement for it.

Up until now, everything had been going according to plan right? Well, this is where things start to get awry. One day, they were summoned to become a soldier and contribute what they have learnt in military school. They were both a bit hesitant at first but then relented as they wanted to avenge their country and take revenge on Japan. Ningjun was staring at the sky, daydreaming, when suddenly he heard someone yell," The Japanese are attacking us with arrows loaded with toxic spikes! Incoming!" She immediately started to run towards Nabi, who was sleeping soundly on her bed. Alas, she was a bit too late and before she could wake her up and pull her away from the battlefield, Nabi was struck by a poison arrow! 'No no no no... This can't be happening...', thought Nungjun. What's even worse is that no medics were around during that time and so Ningjun could only use her little knowledge in the medical aspect to keep Nabi alive.

Ningjun stayed by Nabi's side everyday and wasn't willing to leave her alone except for when she had to sleep too as there was no shelter nor was there any sort of coverage. One day, Ningjun was feeding Nabi her medicine as usual but almost got killed by the poisonous arrow shot from the other side. That night, when everyone was in a deep slumber, one of the Japanese snuck into their campaign and saw that Nabi was in a poor condition given her pale lips and all color from her face had drained. He immediately took advantage of the situation and pierced Nabi right in the heart.

"Someone... can someone help me please..." As Nabi wasn't in a good state, no one, including Ningjun, could hear her cries for help until they woke up the other day just to find out that Nabi was killed by the opposing campaign! She desperately hugged Nabi's body close to hers, uncontrollably shaking her body, still holding onto the tiny bit of hope as if Nabi would magically snap back to life. Nonetheless, no matter how much she begged, deep in her heart, she too knew that Nabi could never wake again. "I'm so sorry Nabi. I wasn't able to protect you when you needed me the most.

As there was yin, there surely must be yang to create balance in the universe. That Chinese maxim was but an elusive concept ringing in Ningjun's mind as she contemplated the future without Nabi. It seemed at the moment all

was lost, the ground was shattered, swallowed up under her feet, when her best friend and soulmate was forever cast into the yin, with her alone left to the bear with the slings and arrows and the vicissitudes of the yang world.

Days and months passed. Then years. The once—baby—faced Ningjun is now a general of the land, with a battle—hardened exterior and a lesser—known emotional wound from the past too. All this time, Ningjun thought of her personal mission and raison—d'etre as one day she would avenge Nabi.

Then one day, she heard news from the frontline that the Japanese soldier who took Nabi's life has died of old age in his hometown, apparently with no regrets in his heart. All of a sudden, Ningjun felt that enormous grief and fury in her heart as she once did all those years ago, unable to comprehend the way the universe works, when such great evil could apparently be allowed to meet such a peaceful end.

In incandescent rage, Ningjun stormed out of her encampment, drew her sword and started wielding it in a dance that destroyed everything in its wake. When Ningjun finally stopped, she saw the devastation she caused, as she wounded some of her troops who tried to stop her but in vain. Now in remorse and regret, Ningjun laid down her sword, and told her troops she would no longer be their leader, deciding instead to retire to the countryside, learning to master her heart and mind once again.

Years have passed and now Ningjun is unrecognizable by her former self and comrades. Serving as a nun at a far—flung temple in a remote village surrounded by the nature, Ningjun has found inner peace in her, and has not felt a flick of strong emotions in years. Nothing seems to be able to lay a finger on her, not even when news arrived from afar that her aging parents had finally died.

There on one morning, as she was practising her rituals and dusting off the bronze statues, she caught from the corner of her eyes a glimpse that there were two girls from the village playing catch. With the ball whoosing from a distance, she seemed to be able to hear Nabi telling her to slow down and catch the ball. Seeing the two girls chasing each other just a few yards away from her, and there in that moment, Ninjang felt a strong emotion stirring in her as nothing has ever been in all these years, and she couldn't help but let out a whisper, 'I love you'.

Immortalized cup

Kowloon True Light School, Leung, Hang Ping Adelaide – 14

"Erm.. Your highness, what exactly are you doing .. ?"

The servant leaning over the copper pot scrunched her face in confusion. King Shennong said nothing, as he poured some liquid into the clay cup presented in front of him. The servant straightened up and hastily received the cup now offered in her direction. She sent her King a befuddled look before she warily eyed the coloured substance in her cup.

"Drink it, Yinger. This king promises it is not poisonous in any sense." the old man croaked out as the skin around his eyes creased. Sensing no ill intent and with genuine curiosity, Yinger downed the liquid in one go. Once she'd gotten past the initial burn in her throat, the mysterious liquid left behind a bittersweet aftertaste. Eyes sparkling almost comically, Yinger couldn't help but let out a squeak of delight.

'Whatever this is, it's so good! This is way better than plain old water!'

King Shennong gave a hearty chuckle, "It seems you enjoy this plenty, that's good. I reckon my subjects should have something other than water all the time," he quipped, "Yinger, take some home with you, I must perfect this new recipe even further."

More hours passed, Yinger was soon sent away with 2 clay jars of the newly created concoction. 'Now, all I need is some nice scenery to go with this 'tea'!' she thought, merrily skipping towards the city outskirts.

Deep within the ravenous mountains, upon a jagged cliff, another woman sat with her back against an old banyan, staring blankly at the mass below. Her face was sharp and angled, with eyes so cold that sent ordinary people running. She rose abruptly when the sound of light footsteps appeared, cocking her head in the direction of the newcomer, hackles raised.

Yanmei bounded up the stone steps, juggling 2 huge jars of tea in her hand. Upon arrival at the ledge, Yanmei skidded to a stop when faced with the unknown woman. A quick staredown later, she extended a hand holding a jug towards the woman, all smiles.

"Hello miss! Care to join me for some tea? It was only invented recently!" "You.. are immortal too?"

Yanmei's smile faltered for a second before it came back even brighter, "Ah! All the more reason to talk," she giggled, "I'm Yanmei, pleasure to meet you."

The woman reshifted her gaze to the clay jar dangling from an outstretched hand, and after much deliberation, gave a curt nod.

"Xinshuang." A pause, "my name is Xinshuang."

The sparrows above head chirped, wings flapping as they flew over the sea of clouds. Mountain peaks covered with moss jutted out, some acting as a resting place for weary cranes. Yanmei danced around the clearing in her vibrant hanfu, bells tinkling with each tiny step. Silk and satin blended in a whirlwind of colours flowing near and far.

Xinshuang watched from her spot at the stone table, gaze trailed on every swish and twirl, and between her lithe fingers, a cup of steaming green tea. She raised the cup to her lips, blew on it gently, and sipped delicately, savouring the taste. A bamboo scroll regarding Emperor Wu's grand achievements rested on the opposite seat, its contents long—forgotten by the fiery flower.

Yanmei suddenly slowed her pace and tilted her head at her friend's direction, a small smile dancing on her lips. Xinshuang too, couldn't help the upturn of her mouth.

"Before my bed lies a pool of moon bright," Yanmei recited, "I could imagine that it's frost on the ground." With each line, her eyes grew further distant, as if thinking of the bygone past. Xinshuang sat across from her, methodically pouring out a cup of puer from an intricately painted teapot.

"No wonder Li Bai's been the talk of town, his poetry really invoked something strange in me..." Yanmei mumbled.

"And yet I thought you of all people would know what nostalgia feels like most."

Yanmei whipped her head from the book to stare, or attempt to glare, at the frosty woman, huffing indignantly, "Oh be quiet! Humans have been progressing so quickly I've barely gotten time to reminisce." Xinshuang responded with a fond eye roll before handing the cup to awaiting hands.

"Drink up, we'll have all the time in the world to mull over his poems later." ***

They had always chosen this spot before because of its spectacular views and calming atmosphere, and yet, with the flattened mountains now littered with booby traps and prowling soldiers carrying heavy guns, there really was no

reason for them to return to this secluded spot, which had somehow stayed safe against the barrage of attacks. But at the same time, going anywhere else just didn't feel right, so they stayed.

"I visited Nanjing yesterday."

Hearing this, Xinshuang internally froze, but gave a small hum to encourage the girl to continue.

The once bubbly flame had all but extinguished into a spark, prominent eyebags and trembling lips gave away the obvious exhaustion on Yanmei's face. "It's like everyone said, it's all gone. Their forces really didn't spare anyone." She opened and closed her mouth a few times and let out a few uncertain noises before finally settling on a question.

"Do you.. Do you think they'll escape from this?"

This, being the endless slaughter, the misery and heartbreak, the years long darkness. Xinshuang really couldn't answer, humanity's fate laid with humans, not immortals. They had no reason to interfere in mortal affairs. In the blanket of silence that followed, she reached out to cover Yanmei's hand with her own,

offering even the slightest of comfort, as useless as it may be in these circumstances.

The tea between them had already grown cold.

Xinshuang had to tip her hat to humans. How they managed to create *panda dung tea* of all flavours was beyond her centuries of wisdom. But if weird tea flavours made Yanmei crack up every time, then she supposes there's no real offence taken (the straight—laced elders back in the day would disagree).

The pair sat at the same stone table, now weathered to the point where the patterns have all but faded completely, with a new bamboo-painted teapot brewing tieguanyin in the middle.

All those gorgeous cliffs and the occasional crane were now replaced with towering skyscrapers and metal, leaving almost no trace of the China they knew before. A great shame, but an interesting surprise nonetheless. Yanmei hummed a tune washed away by the tides of time as she laid her head on the table, gazing up intently at Xinshuang.

The former raised an arched eyebrow at the same face that's been with her for millenia. If one looked hard enough, they'd find 2 names repeated over and over in records spanning dynasties, either as a measly palace official or a dedicated farmer. Yanmei and Xinshuang, Xinshuang and Yanmei. No matter when, they were always a pair.

Of course, with immortality comes melancholy. Watching humanity's growth is akin to watching a flower grow, there's no longer any trace of the weak and sprouting bud. The distant past is all but a fading memory, stories eroding over time. There is a selfish wish shared between them, that the mountain their beloved cliff sits upon stays the same forever.

"Same time next month?"

"Of course."

Translations

Yanmei - 焰美

Xinshuang – 馨霜

King Shennong – 神農氏 Emperor Wu

- 漢武帝 Li Bai - 李白

Compass Combo

Macau Pui Ching Middle School, Wong, Ieok Lam Zaira – 18

"The watches have arrived!" Julie sang as she plopped on the couch and handed me a package. I lifted the lid to reveal a stylish, black smartwatch.

With a sense of delicate anticipation, I gently lifted the smartwatch from its box. As I powered on the device, the screen gradually ignited. A holographic brunette dressed in formal attire popped out of the screen and announced, "I'm West, and I will be your assistant when using your 'CoFly'. I am a trained Artificial Intelligence that can answer any of your questions. 'CoFly' is the latest smartwatch model developed by our company Centralized; its abilities include assisting teleportation..." I tuned out the AI and marvelled at the finished product I helped develop. Tears welled up as this signifies that my hard work over the years had finally paid off. Two years ago, as an intern at Centralized, a tech company based in Macau, I proposed the daring idea behind 'CoFly,' leading to a worldwide sensation. By incorporating the Bei Dou navigation satellite system, I opened a new era for Chinese technology.

"We have to test the abilities of the smartwatch and go on a trip after you come back from Beijing!" Julie's rambles snapped me out of my thoughts.

"Oh, we should! A girl's trip has been long overdue."

I immersed myself in developing new products until it was the long—awaited day to properly test out my 'CoFly' for long—distance travel. I bid Julie farewell in our living room and set off on my first—ever solo vacation.

"Calling for West," I reached out for her assistance.

Instantly, West materialized above the screen. "Good morning, Adelaide! How can I assist you today?"

I chuckled at her never-waving enthusiasm, "I want you to transport me to the Meridian Gate in Beijing."

"Hold on tight," she responded and then vanished into the smartwatch.

In an instant, the scenery around me transformed. A strange sensation washed over me as I took in my new surroundings. Instead of the iconic vermilion walls of the Imperial Palace, rows of hutongs stretched out before me.

Alarmed, I reached out to West, questioning whether there had been a mistake or a misalignment.

"We are in the correct location ... just approximately a thousand years earlier," she uneasily answered.

"What?!" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Why have I been sent back in time?" I pressed West for answers.

"According to the smartwatch's data, this anomaly has never occurred before," she paused, seemingly processing information, and continued, "The device has just informed me that you, as the creator, have been presented with a mission. To return to the present, you must complete this mission."

My intention in creating the smartwatch was to simplify life, not to be thrust into a time—travelling adventure. "What is the mission?" I asked, trying to make sense of the situation.

Her voice turned solemn as she recited the mission,

"Embark on a quest, though time's bent,

To the inventor's days, as a fellow friend.

Seek out a peer, in a time so vast,

And aid them in solving a problem, unsurpassed."

I rubbed my temples, feeling a dull ache. The mission's requirements were cryptic, and I had no idea where to begin. Deciding to explore the ancient streets of Beijing aimlessly, I hoped to stumble upon clues that would shed light on this extraordinary mission.

"Who could my fellow friend be..." I mumbled to myself. I was on the verge of succumbing to defeat when my head bumped against a wall. Looking up, I was met with a pair of equally startled brown eyes that mirrored my surprise. The man, whom I had mistaken for a wall, hurriedly stooped down to pick up his sketches.

"I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there," I apologized, bending down to help him. As my eyes roamed over his illustrated creations, one stood out to me—an impressively modern design of a compass. "Wow, this is impressive. Did you design all of these by yourself?"

He replied with a stutter, "N-No! I mean...Yes, I did."

I frowned at his lack of confidence. His designs were way ahead of his time. Shouldn't he be proud?

"Are you going to submit these designs? As an engineering student myself, I can tell that your designs are very advanced and would make a lot of improvements towards the development of navigation."

He seemed hesitant to answer, but eventually replied, "I'm not confident about the designs. What if I submit it to the Imperial Palace, and they turn my idea down?"

I placed my hand on his shoulder, offering comfort. "Listen, think about this. If you submit your design and they appreciate it, you'll get recognition for your talent. It's worth it to take a chance every now and then. If you want, I can offer some suggestions," I chuckled, hoping to lighten the mood. If I couldn't find a way back home yet, perhaps I could lend someone a helping hand.

After a split second, he replied with a nod. "How do you think we can improve my design?"

"First, let's go somewhere peaceful and quiet. To make this project better, we gotta escape from this bustling street," I laughed. "We can go to a nearby park; it's my getaway spot."

After we arrived, I spent countless hours working alongside this young inventor named Yi Chen. I shared my knowledge of modern technology and guided him on how to appeal to the imperial court. Together, we refined his compass design, incorporating new materials and innovative features to make it more accurate and reliable. My technical expertise and encouragement empowered Yi Chen to gain the confidence necessary to present his concept to the court.

"We finished it!" After hours of hard work, we managed to map out almost everything.

"Thank you so much for your assistance. I couldn't have done it without you. The sky is getting dark; let me send you home as a token of gratitude."

I turned down his offer, insisting I could manage independently. He seemed doubtful but respected my decision. As we parted ways, I received a notification from my watch, "Hey Adelaide! I've got a special surprise for you." West's voice reminded me of the mission. I ran my hand across my face as I still had to figure out accommodation and how to complete my mission.

"Don't you want to hear the surprise?" West questioned. "For your information, the smartwatch has deemed your mission to be successful."

"Are you sure about that? I don't even know the details of the mission," I doubted, my voice laced with scepticism.

"Recall what you did today," West coaxed.

Glimpses of today's memories flashed in my head. The only significant thing was getting trapped and helping Yi Chen.

"Wait! Are you implying that when I helped Yi Chen, I completed my mission? He needed help to solve his problem, and by a peer was it because he's an inventor too?" The thoughts rang through my mind loud and clear that I successfully helped a stranger overcome their troubles and also earned my ticket back home.

West chuckled at my sudden realization, "Yes. Luck is on your side today. Are you ready to go back to the future?"

"As ready as I'll ever be!" Although the whole travelling adventure was exhilarating, I'd already missed the future.

With a woosh, the long-awaited vermillion Meridian Gate of the Imperial Palace appeared before my eyes. "Hey, West, I am at the correct time this time, right?"

"If my readings are correct, we are back to 2024." I wiped a bead of sweat away from my forehead and tugged on the strap of my backpack. "One last request. West, can you look up the history of compasses for me."

West displayed articles on the smartwatch screen detailing the history and development of compasses. While browsing, a phrase caught my eye: "I credit the mysterious lady who helped me gain confidence and refine my ideas regarding the compass. Her assistance has also helped her leave a mark in history." The quote was from 'Way Ahead of Time,' a book published by Yi Chen after his ideas appealed to the Chinese Imperial Court.

I let out a breath of relief and was finally able to continue my original journey in modern Beijing. As I strolled through the Imperial Palace, I couldn't help but reflect on the profound impact I had made, both in the past and in the present, on the development of navigation. It was a humbling experience to know that I had taken a hand in shaping history and leaving a lasting legacy.

As the sun set on another extraordinary adventure, a sense of fulfilment filled my heart. My journey has served as a testament to the power of lending a hand, sharing knowledge and expertise, and making a difference in the lives of those we encounter.

New Tales of China's Inventions

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Hung, Haruka, 13

From a very young age, I had always been interested in History, and watching past events unravel has just always fascinated me. However, there was one person I always wanted to know more about, a case I always wanted to crack; all I wanted was to learn about Bi Sheng, the inventor of the movable type. With his life being shrouded in mystery, I could never find any more information about him through books or scrolls, so I made it my mission to be the first to discover and excavate his tomb.

The day I decided to try my luck was particularly foggy, with the wind howling beneath the forest of ashy clouds. The trees were veiled in the swirling fog, their trunks sombre brown, their leaves tumbling from the interlocking branches, letting out a crunch with every step.

I dug for days and days, but to no avail. My exhaustion was getting the best of me, and my mind was as cloudy as the weather. Still, I persisted. And on one fateful day, I found it. In front of me was a block of stone, fully coated in thick mud, which I washed out with water. It was hewn out of grey slate, and engraved with intricate patterns and characters. My eyes shone at the sight of the words "Bi Sheng". Holy cow. I was instantly lost for words. I knew I had discovered something important, I had found the long lost tomb of the inventor of the movable type, Bi Sheng.

I let my fingers run across the bumpy surface of the slate, the carvings had created various layers of texture for it, which made it much more detailed than any other grave I had come across. My eyes were still fixated on the grave, when I saw a black hole in front of me, where the tomb had been. There was a huge force pulling me in, about to swallow me whole.

And all of a sudden, I was weightless, and my sight became a blurry haze. I was floating into the black void of space, into a world I had never seen before.

I was whisked through a seemingly endless channel, without any idea where I would end up. After an eternity, a whirlpool carried me back down onto the ground. But nothing prepared me for what I saw, it didn't look anything like the cities I was used to. My brain was pooled with questions: Where am I? When am I? Why am I even here??? After asking a few locals, I discovered I was in 1040 AD China, which was the Northern Song dynasty. I was greeted by majestic red temples with crisp golden roofs, resembling what I had read in my History textbooks. From their ceilings hung garlands of glowing lanterns, vibrant as stars. Villages of tiny wooden houses lured me to poke my head into one of them. I quietly tiptoed near the entrance of a house and peeked through a thin gap.

My eyes laid upon a slender man with a pointy beard, wearing a plain hemp robe with wide sleeves double the size of his arms. He was probably in his 70s, his saggy, weathered skin was folded into wrinkles, and his silvery strands of uncombed hair rested upon his shoulders.

His palms were gripping onto the metal carving knife, carefully shaping each character to the tiniest details, yet his hands weren't shaking a single bit, as if he knew every step like the back of his hand. I just couldn't believe my eyes, he was right in front of me. It was him, Bi Sheng.

His workplace was lit with a flickering candle, the shapes of his furniture discernible and their colours muted. His small wooden desk was covered with tattered sheets of yellow paper, complex characters painted on with ink. Failed prototypes were lined on his bench, and his tools were hung on the burgundy clay wall. The entire room was beautifully chaotic.

I carefully observed him at work. He began layering resin, wax, and ashes onto a square sheet encircled with an iron flame, and melted the mixture in a kiln. His eyes were fixated on the mixture, barely even noticing my presence. "Wow, such focus...", I breathed. He waited for the adhesive to cool, and pressed the clay down with a wooden board. His breaths became small and shallow, and his eyes glistened with anticipation. He shakingly picked the mould up, and cautiously laid it onto yet another sheet of yellow paper, placed above all his previous failed attempts. I could hear him mutter, "Please let this work." under his breath countless times, as if it were a spell that could make all his inventions work out. To his delight, the characters were printed flawlessly, with every word stamped where it should be. His face glowed with a mix of contentment and relief, I recognised that feeling, it was the sweet taste of success after a trail of failed tries. It was the overwhelming fuse of all the emotions in the world. Little did the world know they had welcomed the birth of a revolutionary invention that would shape our lives forever, the movable type.

I let out a tiny scream, but accidentally startled him at the same time. He instantly turned his head in my direction, and stared at me for a couple of seconds.

"S-sorry if I just scared you!"

"Oh it's fine. What are you here for?"

"Hi, I- err- I actually don't know where I am."

"I'm Bi Sheng, come inside and I'll show you my very new creation, I want to know what other people will think about it."

And with that, he proudly presented to me his life's work. Honestly, it looked nothing like the technological gadgets today, but it was still impressive for someone who lived so long ago.

"Long ago, my friends and I would copy books for a living, writing the same characters over and over again until our arms wilted. It was ABSOLUTE torture, having to go through the exact same thing everyday, from dawn to dusk. If we were to make a single mistake, days or maybe even WEEKS of hard labour would be ruined. And it was during those times I discovered we needed a change."

I nodded along to his every word, "So that's your inspiration for this masterpiece?"

"Yep, I'd always loved creating new things. I hope this will make a difference later on."

I vowed that I would be back one day to witness even more wonders crafted by the mastermind, and I would one day tell the world about how this invention was brought to life.

I returned to the place where I first landed, and with a snap of my fingers, I was at the tombstone again.

...except I realised I had travelled decades into the future by accident.

The year was 2051, exactly a millennium after Bi Sheng's death. The village was no longer mountainous, but encircled by skyscrapers reaching up to the sun. Metallic robots in all shapes and sizes accompanied humans on their daily journeys. I discovered that prosthetics, cars, and even organs were made thanks to 3D printing. The only detail that remained the same after so many years was Bi Sheng's tomb.

The world has come a long way since the invention of the movable type. Even though it has already been replaced by newfound forms of technology, the spirit of innovation, and the rich culture behind the inventions live on.

Acupuncture

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Ma, Tiga, 11

Acupuncture has been popular in the modern era as it has the ability to relieve excruciating pain and recover nuisance injuries. This magnificent discovery of acupuncture has been shrouded in mystery as only villagers from the distant past knew about the legend of how acupuncture was invented. It has been a well—hidden secret for centuries.

Recently, archaeologists have unearthed various pieces of evidence that gave us some clues as to how acupuncture was invented. One of the most important pieces of writing that portrays the beginnings of acupuncture was the story of twins named Zhang Li and Zhang Chao. The Zhang twins lived in a shabby village in the towering mountains. Zhang Li was portrayed as an active and adventurous child who was always willing to endure massive risks. On the other hand, Zhang Chao was illustrated as a silent, passive and caring child.

One evening, Zhang Chao went fishing while his brother was waiting at home. When he returned home, he realised that Zhang Li had left without telling him. "Zhang Li, Zhang Li! Where are you!?" said Zhang Chao in an increasingly concerned tone. His face turned pale as his head faced against the wall, in anguished thought about his brother. As in unimaginable concern for his brother's safety, he darted towards the hollow forest. Searching left and right, Zhang Li was nowhere to be found. Zhang Chao was extremely worried that something catastrophic might happen to his brother. "Help!" echoed a familiar voice. "That's my brother!" exclaimed Zhang Chao.

Without hesitation, Zhang Chao accelerated to where the echoed voice came from like a gazelle, and realised that his brother was severely injured with a leg that would not stop twitching. Zhang Chao was in feverish desperation, as he yelled in agony, "Is there anyone that can help my brother!" There was nothing but silence. "Can anyone help?!" Again, there was only desolate silence. "HELP!" screamed Zhang Chao at the top of his lungs. He knew he had to do something or else his brother might be in graver danger. In this desperate situation, he surveyed his surroundings and his eyes fixated upon a sharp branch on the ground. Without a second of eternity, he stabbed it into his brother's legs with his trembling hands collaborating towards each other. Shockingly, the twitching stopped. Zhang Chao was amused by the immeasurable and miraculous effect that the needle had produced. Soon, the Zhang brothers were able to return back home as usual, where Zhang Li could even walk on both feet without much pain.

The phenomenal news of the Zhang brothers had disseminated over the different regions in the world, as it had stunned humanity about the incredible effect that a seemingly useless, and tiny needle can create. From treating injuries to maintaining homeostasis of the body, its wondrous effects have been passed on from generations to generations, but along the way, the story got lost until the recent findings of the text unearthed by the archaeologists. Furthermore, the archaeologists who unearthed this story also discovered texts which revealed that the people in the Zhang brothers' village had a deep understanding of the body's energy pathways and how to manipulate them for recovery. Acupuncture was more than just for treating injuries; it was part of a comprehensive system of healthcare that the villagers had practised for generations. The tale of Zhang Li and Zhang Chao, once hidden in the folds of time, became a symbol of resilience and innovation. People were fascinated by the idea that a simple pin, used by a desperate brother in a remote village, could unlock such profound healing powers. The art of acupuncture has contributed to Chinese medicine to this very day, as Chinese medical practitioners utilise it to heal serious bruises that cannot be explained or cured by western medicine in just moments of seconds. Ushering in a new era, researchers and practitioners have contacted and still begin collaborating with the descendants of the Zhang brothers' villagers to blend ancient wisdom with modern medicine to gain further insights, and to spend the upcoming decades with millions of research funds to continue to empirically master the once mysterious technique. Further research its massive benefits to humankind in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of acupuncture.

More than simply a basic treatment for recovering from pain, acupuncture has become a bridge between the ancient past and the modern world. All in all, the invention of acupuncture had left an indelible mark of creativity, tenacity and transformation of mankind.

A Forest for the Future: Annabelle's Green Awakening

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Poon, Hayley, 11

It was 10 am. In a small city in China. Living in a small wooden house was a 16-year-old girl named Annabelle.

One day, Annabelle was reading a magazine about flowers that could only be found on Hengshan Mountain, so she decided to go on an adventure. On the way, she went into a convenience store to buy food and water. She handed over her card to the cashier. The cashier asked, "Where are you going today, young lady?" Annabelle looked up and said, "Hiking." "Where?" answered the cashier. "Hengshan Mountain." Annabelle replied. "I have heard that the mountain is famous for its venomous snakes," the lady warned. "Who cares what she says," Annabelle thought to herself. Annabelle grabbed her things and left promptly.

After many hours hiking, she finally found the flower from the magazine and when she tried to pick it up, a rattlesnake jumped out and bit Annabelle on her left arm. Annabelle fell to the ground unconscious. Fortunately a couple was hiking on the trail Annabelle was on. They saw Annabelle and without a second they dialled 119. "Hello? This is 119, what's your emergency?" "Hi, I am on a hiking trail on Hengshan Mountain and found an unconscious young lady," the woman explained. "Does she have any type of bleeding or wounds?" the emergency dispatcher asked. "Yes, on her left arm, it looks a bit like a snake bite", the wife answered. "Okay, we will send an air ambulance. "Is her heart still beating?" the dispatcher asked. "I'm not sure, I don't think so," the wife said. "Do you by any chance know how to do CPR?" the dispatcher responded. The wife responded that she knew and started administering the CPR.

When the rescue team arrived, Annabelle was still unconscious. The paramedics loaded her onto the air ambulance and waved at the couple. All of a sudden, Annabelle felt like her soul was floating away from her body. She saw a light above and decided to investigate. She flew into the light and found herself in a different dimension; then she heard a familiar voice.

"Annabelle!". It was her grandpa who had cancer and sadly passed away 10 years ago. She was so happy and didn't want to leave. "Grandpa!" Annabelle said excitedly. "What are you doing here, Sweetie?" Grandpa asked. "I don't know; all I know is that I was hiking for a minute in the forest and now I am here," Annabelle replied. "Where are we right now?" Annabelle asked curiously. "Oh, all spirits come here once life is over on earth," Grandpa responded gently. "What?" Annabelle said, confused. "Yes, but looking at your records, you shouldn't be," Grandpa said with concern. "Where should I be then?" Annabelle said. "It's not your time yet," Grandpa explained. Annabelle's eyes started to turn red, and then all of a sudden, tears were flowing out of her eyes. "No... Grandpa..." Annabelle said with sadness. "Why don't I show you the vision of earth's future? Grandpa asked. "Sure, I would love that, Grandpa", Annabelle smiled. Grandpa smiled back. "Why are there so many people suffering, Annabelle asked? "Because of climate change, honey," Grandpa replied. Annabelle then looked at the vast barren landscapes that were void of trees and almost any vegetation. People could no longer farm because the soil had long eroded away. The world looked like a sweltering desert with almost no oxygen making it difficult for people to breathe. The sky was less blue and instead has this orangey and reddish hue to it thanks to all the dust swirling around. "I want to change the world," Annabelle said in great determination. "That's very virtuous of you," replied Grandpa. I would not like to see people suffer like this." Grandpa smiled with pride. "Oh no, I have to go," Grandpa waved. "No... Grandpa!" Annabelle screamed!.

Instantaneously, Annabelle's soul was sucked back into her body. She suddenly woke up and found herself in a hospital. She saw her parents sitting next to her, praying for a recovery. "Mom, Dad!" Annabelle cried. "Annabelle!" Her parents called out. The doctors managed to restart her heart. "I saw Grandpa!" Annabelle said happily. "You did?" Her parents added. "I was in another dimension and saw how people suffered in the future world," Annabelle explained. "I want to change it," Annabelle said determinedly. The experience was so intense that she decided to dedicate her life to solving the climate crisis.

During her hospital recovery, a surge of ideas rushed through Annabelle's mind, leading her to a crucial revelation: the urgent need for more trees to combat climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and replenishing oxygen, prompting her life's dedication to environmental transformation.

She spent years working with scientists from all over the world. Years later, she finally invented a type of seed called the "Complete Flourish Trees". This seed not only grows fast but also is made to absorb a lot of carbon dioxide.

Annabelle was proud of her invention; business companies from all over the world bought her invention, and soon she became a motivational speaker to influence others.

In the years that followed, Annabelle's invention of the "Complete Flourish Trees" made a significant impact on the world. Forests filled with these remarkable trees began to thrive, absorbing vast amounts of carbon dioxide and replenishing the atmosphere with life—giving oxygen. These trees grew ten times faster in low grade soil. The Earth started to heal, and the worst effects of climate change were mitigated.

Annabelle became an inspirational figure, travelling the world to spread awareness about climate change and the importance of environmental conservation. She spoke at conferences, schools, and events, igniting a passion for sustainability and inspiring countless individuals to take action. Her story and dedication touched hearts, prompting communities to plant more trees, reduce their carbon footprints, and advocate for a sustainable future.

With time, Annabelle's initiative evolved into a global movement. People united under her vision, forming a vast network of environmental advocates and organisations. Governments and corporations started investing heavily in green technologies and sustainable practices, accelerating the transition towards a cleaner, greener world.

Whispers of the Ancient China Invention

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Soong, Katie, 11

The raindrops pitter—pattered onto the window and Jingyi stared out at the bright lights along the street. She had lived here for more than 12 years and she knew this street like it was her own mind. She sighed heavily and pressed the bell, signalling that she had to get off the bus. The bus stopped abruptly and Jingyi sprinted off into the darkness until she reached her destination — the park. Jingyi sat on a swing and listened to the soft creaking of the old, abandoned swing, her heart twisting as the memory of her teacher scolding her for getting a F in her test harborred in her mind. She closed her eyes and willed for that memory to go away, but was disturbed by a sudden squelch of mud. She turned around abruptly and saw a towering woman approaching her, her long black cloak billowing behind her.

"Oh, my dear girl. Why are you out here all alone at night?"

Jingyi sighed, "I got an F in my test at school. I- I failed. For the first time in my life..."

"Oh you poor girl. Well... What if I help you travel back in time and you can change your results and your grade! You will pass with flying colours!"

Jingyi's eyes lit up and she cried, "Oh, that would be terrific! What's your name?"

The woman grinned and said, "I am Wangliang the Sorceress. And I am here to help you! Hold this medallion and close your eyes. I will help you do the spell."

Jingyi took the medallion from Wangliang and closed her eyes tightly, hope fluttering inside her.

There was a blinding white light. Then-

Jingyi opened her eyes and blinked at the sudden brightness of the sun. She stared at the huge farms spreaded out in front of her. A man came up to her and smiled a soft, buttery smile.

"Hello there, beautiful girl! Such a nice day for farming, isn't it?"

"Who are you? What is this place?" Jingyii asked in fear.

"I am Yizé, a nong. And this is my home. My China!"

"China? As in... Ancient China?"

"If that's what you call it!" Yizé shrugged.

Seeing Jingyi's confused expression, Yizé asked, "Aren't you supposed to be here?"

Jingyi shook her head and told Yizé all about her home and her conversation with Wangliang. When she finished, Yizé sighed heavily.

"Oh, my beautiful girl... Wangliang is a Chinese name that means bad luck and demon. Never talk to anyone who has a name like that... What's your name?"

"Jingyi." She replied slowly.

"Come on then! I have a place to show you! And you can surely help Cai Lun!"

"Cai Lun? Who is Cai Lun?" Jingyi cried as she sprinted after Yizé, but Yizé ignored her and continued to run.

A few minutes later, the two of them arrived at a small cottage beside the lake. A man around his 60s came out and threw a thick roll of bamboo slips onto the ground while shouting at Jingyi and Yizé.

"What are you doing here? Get out! I don't want to see anyone!"

A young man hurried out of the cottage and dragged the man back inside before apologising to Jingyi and Yizé.

"Sorry for my Master Cai Lun's temper. He is the greatest inventor of all time, and when he was asked to invent something useful in three days time, he ran out of ideas and now he's having one of his unusual temper tantrums. I'm sorry for his temper earlier. Oh! And I am Kiyoshi, Master Cai Lun's assistant."

Yizé smiled and said, "Nice to see you again, Kiyoshi. This is Jingyi. I brought her here because I believe she has the ability to help Cai Lun with his invention."

Kiyoshi's eyes lit up and he cried, "Oh really! Wow! Come in, Jingyi, come in! Please do help my Master Cai Lun. I hate seeing him like this. Oh please help him."

Jingyi slowly entered the cottage and found Cai Lun sitting on the floor, his head in his hands. Kiyoshi gave her an encouraging smile and disappeared into a small room.

Jingyi hesitantly placed her hand on Cai Lun's shoulder and said softly, "Sir... Cai Lun... I can help you with your invention that you're struggling with..."

Cai Lun lifted his head and shot. "Oh yeah? Give me your idea. NOW!"

Memories of her class teacher teaching her about Cai Lun's great invention of the paper came into her mind, and Jingyi quickly said, "Maybe you can make a piece of paper out of the trees? Then you don't have to carry such heavy bamboo slips!"

Cai Lun stared at her, speechless, then he laughed.

"Oh, what is your name?"

"Jingyi...?" Jingyi replied hesitantly, surprised by the sudden question.

"Jingyi... Thank you for giving me that terrific idea! I will get to work right now. I hope to see you soon."

It took Jingyi seconds to realise that Cai Lun was dismissing her. She got to her feet and is about to step out of the cottage when Cai Lun said,

"Your name really suits you well, Jingyi. You are the most intelligent girl I have ever seen."

Back at the farm, Jingyi told Yizé about her success. Yizé smiled and said,

"I believe you would love to go back to your present China, hmm?"

Jingyi nodded vigorously, and Yizé smiled again.

"Drink this small glass of spirit water, and you will be able to transport back. Trust me."

Jingyi's eyes met Yizé's warm ones for the last time before she lifted the glass and swallowed the spirit water. The last thing she heard before blackness enveloped her was Yizé's warm voice saying goodbye to her.

Back at home, Jingyi rushed to her computer and searched for the name Cai Lun. Results of being the inventor of paper popped up and Jingyi smiled to herself, knowing that she had succeeded.

New Tales Of China's Invention

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Wu, Joycelyn, 11

In the mountains, it was said that there is a mystical tree had leaves that were able to cure sickness, renowned for their medical properties, named the Camellia tree. The tree was once a Taoist who died in his youth and became the first Camellia tree, granting it the power to heal from it's leaves.

Most of us have heard of the story of how a Camellia leaf fell into Chinese emperor Shen Nong's boiled water, and created the first tea. But is that truly what happened?

Shen Nong was just a village boy in Shaanxi Province. One fateful day, his father grew terribly ill, and was on the brink of death. The sickness was unknown, and there was no cure. His mother told him of the Camellia tree, which could save their entire village if the disease were contagious.. But in order to retrieve the Camellia tree, he would have to climb atop mount Everest, as that was where the Camellia leaf grew. His family was desperate and sent their eldest son, Shen Nong, to complete this task. With a heavy heart dragging him backward, Shen Nong packed his bags and left.

As Shen Nong walked slowly out of the village, a warm drop of liquid ran down his cheek. He had no idea if he would survive this, if he would return, if he would see his family again. More tears escaped his eyes as he attempted to hold them back. He started walking faster. He started running, resisting the urge to look back and run back to his young brother, Shen Nin's small innocent face burning in the back of his head.

Weeks had passed when Shen Nong finished the first quarter of the trip. He was munching on a lotus root as a snack when he heard a female shout

"Hey you! Who are you and where are you headed!"

Shen Nong turned and saw a girl, clad in a white and blue hanfu made for men. Her long, dark brown hair was tucked in a messy bun. Her mahogany eyes glinted with burning confidence. In her hand, she held a sharp, pure jade dagger. There were depictions of a tiger engraved onto the handle and blade of the dagger, and an engraved word: Hui.

"Forgive me, I am Shen Nong of Shaanxi, and I am travelling to Mount Everest in search of the Camellia tree."

Shen Nong respectfully replied, eyeing her up and down. She sheathed her dagger and equally politely answered "Pardon, I am Hui Jin of Gansu, I am also searching for the Camellia tree."

"I will take my leave now, lady Hui."

Shen Nong, embarrassed by this encounter, mustered and turned away. Hui Jin scoffed, and surprisingly jumped in front of Shen Nong's way, the jade dagger touching Shen Nong's neck.

"If you're going to head to the Camellia tree, I'll have to beat you there, or stop you from getting there, which means killing you. The Camellia tree is only the size of a newborn, and I have no idea of your intentions for it."

Shen Nong was shocked at what Hui Jin said, but calmly replied.

"Why don't we go together? You could kill me anytime. We both won't be lonely that way."

Hui Jin was surprised with his reply, as most men laughed and looked down on her.

"Alright."

she shot back, starting to like this new person she met.

About two months later, Hui Jin and Shen Nong were in Xin Jiang,lying huddled next to a fire at night. Hui Jin noticed that Shen Nong always had a worried expression on his face, and that he mutters about illnesses and someone called Shen Nin in his sleep. She realised she was staring at him.

"The moon is beautiful isn't it?"

he asked, a sharp edge of sadness in his voice, snapping her out of her trance. She sighed.

"Shen Nong..... why are you looking for the Camellia tree....."

He was silent. Attempting to prompt him into talking, she continued

"I'm looking for it because our family wants to please the emperor. We don't get along very well, considering that my grandparents rebelled. The emperor could land a forged crime on us anytime." "My father has a terminal illness. I was sent to retrieve the tree to heal him. I wonder if the illness spreads..." Shen Nong slowly said. Shen Nong sat up and looked up at the sky, as unknowing flooder.

spreads......" Shen Nong slowly said. Shen Nong sat up and looked up at the sky, as unknowing flooded through him.

Hui Jin hugs him, concerned.

The next day, the duo set off once again for mount everest. They went over rivers, faults, and lakes. Until finally, they saw the Camellia tree. It was the size of a child. It's leaves, a soothing green with white flowers decorating, blew in the wind. Then, out of nowhere, the growling tiger appeared.

Shen Nong flinched. When he opened his eyes, he saw blood. Hui Jin's crimson blood and the tiger's. The scarlet liquid pooled around Hui Jin's and the Tiger's body. A jade dagger is stabbed into the tiger's heart. Shen Nong held Hui Jin tightly in his arms, tears falling freely. She wrapped her frail arms around him. "Your cause was......better than mine anyway......" She whispered into his ear, and closed her eyes for the last time.

Shen Nong left Mount Everest with the Camellia tree. He buries Hui Jin's body atop Mount Everest, where the gods could be closest to her body. He returns to Shaanxi,and his family has died due to the disease, which left Shen Nong devastated and alone in the world, as if destined to drown in misery.

Years later, he gifted the Camellia tree to the emperor. When the emperor passed away, he gained the people's favour and became the emperor. He invented "tea" or "cha" for it's medicinal properties. It is now known throughout the world. A jade dagger rests on his table, a reminder of a dauntless person who he would forever respect.

A Letter From the Future

Po Leung Kuk No. 1 W. H. Cheung College, Kong, Tsz-Ching Jasmine – 12

1st January, 2024

Dear Diary,

Today, something amazingly strange happened to me! I was in my bedroom; writing a story about a girl who travelled to the future. Just then, a little orange paper plane flew from my window. Huh? I was quite confused. It was rare for someone to be able to throw a paper plane so far from outside. I got up from my chair to take a closer look at it. It was folded in a very complicated way. I noticed some glittery ink on the paper and guessed that there would probably be some writing in it, so I unfolded the paper and looked inside it. There was a very long passage of writing on it, so I decided to sit down and look at it slowly. There was some really weird information in there! Let me write down the contents for you.

To: a young writer

Hello! I know you must be confused about this letter right now, but I ask you to believe everything I say for now and doubt them later cause the things I'm about to talk about are very confusing. Okay. I am from the future. And I am going to tell you about our greatest and latest invention! *fangirl screaming. I'm sorry! I'm just so excited. Okay, so according to an online history e—book I read; you guys live on Earth, right? Now don't worry. We still live on Earth and we aren't some kinda aliens, but get this, we could be aliens because we might have a chance to be able to live on Mars! Recently, Scientists invented a special kind of machine that can extract different resources from Mars and found a way to transform Mars' atmosphere; making it livable for humans! Isn't that exciting? That means we can go live on Mars! And very soon! Of course, you might ask, "Well, why don't you just stay on Earth?" Well very unfortunately, you guys have made Earth quite unsuitable for living. In the past, the factories polluted the air very badly and many people got lung diseases. The seawater was polluted and became unsuitable for humans to drink. The people suffered from lots of natural disasters, diseases and droughts. It was a rough time for us and we suffered a lot of casualties. Luckily, we adapted to the environment.

Later on, someone invented a machine that compresses plastic together, it can melt any kind of plastic and reuse them without ejecting harmful chemicals and smoke. It became a world—changing invention. We couldn't solve water pollution but this invention has already greatly improved our life and we are very thankful for it. I'm very glad that China has invented this new invention! Now we can all go and live in a better place! By the way, our technology has also greatly improved. I really couldn't believe it when I read that you guys carried wallets and coins with you! Aren't they heavy? And you even had to travel in planes when going to far places! The past is quite unbelievable. Of course, I have a message to deliver. I'd like to tell the inventors to do their best and continue their job as it is very important! And I hope you can help me spread the word to the people, even if it's just a few people. Tell them to be more environmentally friendly. We are suffering from your actions! I hope you can help me and all the other people in the future, Although I am not sure if my message will be able to reach you. And I have a special message for you too! Yes, you! I've made the setting of my paper plane to fly to a young writer. I want to tell you that I support you in writing too as I am a writer myself. The inventions in China are really wonderful and I hope the inventors will have motivation and keep on going!

From: Carla Cheung (someone from the future)

I was so shocked when I saw this letter! I couldn't believe the amazing inventions that were made by China in the future! This letter was really special too! It had pictures and sounds when you touched certain words. I was quite doubtful at first about it when I read that it was from the future. It seemed quite impossible to me, but after I saw the pictures and heard the audio of the letter, I was convinced. Dear diary, I think I shall help this girl! I will try my best to help her spread her messages without stating that it was from the future. If I did that, other people might think I'm crazy! I will do my best in writing and try to be environmentally friendly. I think I might even want to be an inventor in the future!

The Step

Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, Bao, Gisele – 12

A mother and a daughter walk down a school hall. The daughter sniffles, clinging on to her mother's arm, the mother attached to that arm wearing a soft sweater and a slightly exasperated expression. She gently tugs her arm out of her daughter's grip, who starts wailing. The mother hushes the daughter and consoles, 'You'll be alright, May—may. You're a smart little girl, and Monmy knows you'll be the best in this whole school.'

May was startled awake from her dream by the shrill ringing of an alarm, insistent and bent on adding to her headache. She quickly silenced it, still drifting in the shards of her melancholy dream. Dragging herself to the mirror, she stared at her pale, drawn face and sighed. *It's going to be a long day*, she thought.

May walked down the school hall, a world away from her chattering classmates. Once, she had been part of them, but ever since her mother had died in a car crash, she had slowly floated away from the two—faced, shallow world that was 9th grade. Absorbed in her thoughts, she almost missed the colorful poster, advertising: Competition To Make Your Idea Come True! Accepting All Original Invention Designs From Schools in Shanghai! May stared at it, remembering how her mother had always loved designing inventions. Resolved, she silently vowed to win the competition.

The next day, she was approached by a girl almost glowing with energy, quite at contrast with her. She chirped, "Hey! I'm Charlotte. I heard that you were also attending the competition. Wanna be partners with me?"

May was taken aback at her enthusiasm. After all, she had met many 9th graders who appeared to be friendly but had a poisonous personality underneath. However, there was something different about this girl that made May tempted to smile back at her. Cautiously, wondering what type of magic was being worked on her, she nodded.

The next day, Charlotte invited May to come over to her home. As she entered, May was surprised at how comfy and warm it was, quite unlike the modern organization of her house. There were beanbags and books everywhere, a plate of cookies on the table, and clutter everywhere. Despite the messiness, everything felt like it belonged. As Charlotte flopped down on the sofa, May stiffly following, they began to brainstorm. Charlotte was constantly bringing up new ideas, sometimes so ridiculous that May couldn't help herself but laugh. And, for the first time in two years, May was having a good time.

After an hour, they finally came up with a good idea – a placemat to put drinks on that also served as a phone charger, turning the heat energy of the drink into electricity. Both squealed at the genius of the idea and got to work immediately.

May came over the next week, and the next. She laughed more often and became more outgoing, which puzzled everybody. What had come over this once serious and grim girl? She became the best of friends with Charlotte, and they continued working on their project, creating prototype after prototype. Although sometimes moments of melancholy did come over her, May started thinking about her mother less and less.

Finally, after months of hard work, the day of the competition had come. They were to present their design onstage to the judges, who would then pick out the winner among all the participants. May and Charlotte were both jiggling their legs in anticipation and anxiety, hoping that they would do well. Suddenly, May saw something flash in the corner of her eye. Her first reaction was to ignore it, but something in her instincts told her to follow it. Despite not wanting to lie to her friend, May tapped Charlotte on her shoulder and whispered, "I have to go use the bathroom. I'll be back really soon."

Excuse made, she turned around and raced after the shadow. Turning a corner, she found that it had disappeared. Frustrated and confused, May stomped forward, thinking that this was a waste of her time – and then found herself in an entirely different world. Everybody was wearing stuffy—looking uniforms, and nobody seemed to have a phone. It seemed like an entirely different era, and this was confirmed by the poster on the wall that said: 1990 Science Fair! May realized that she had somehow been transported into the same competition – but thirty years ago.

With a shock, May realized that this was the competition her mother had went to as the same age as her. It was like a dream come true! She could go find her mother, see her for one last time. She rushed forward to the stage, ignoring the odd looks she got because of her modern clothing. Just in time, her mother was coming onstage. She saw May and waved at her, smiling. May found herself tempted to go forward, to talk to her, to be friends with her.

But then she looked back. Behind her, beyond that wall, was a friend and a future. As much as she wanted to stay with her mother, this was the past. It wasn't worth dwelling on. She had a design to present and a friend to support.

So, May stepped out of the past, and into the present.

Powder

Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, van Rossum, Joon – 13

A pleasant cool breeze passes by as a young lady steps out of a black Chevy dressed in black. The young lady pauses as the cool breeze rushes past her, lifting her braided hair. She stood momentarily beside the black Chevy, gazing at the imposing structure. What secrets did this large building hold within its walls? There was only one way to find out — she took a bracing breath and stepped through the towering front doors.

The entrance hall was dimly lit and cavernously empty. Her heels echoed on the polished floor as she slowly walked forward, peering into shadowy corridors and glancing up sweeping staircases. An eerie silence pressed in on all sides as if the building held its breath, waiting to see what she would do. She felt tiny in the vast, gloomy space. But she had come this far. Squaring her shoulders, she continued deeper into the building, determined to succeed in her task and impress the higher—ups.

"Hello, Victoria Markinswell, welcome to HiroCorp!" a squeaky voice said, making the young lady turn her head.

Victoria's eyebrows were raised in surprise. Looking down, she spotted a small robot on wheels rolling towards her. It was no taller than her shin and had a digital screen for a face that was displaying a smiling emotion.

"I'm Claude, the company greeter bot. Let me give you a quick tour before you meet with the executives," the robot chirped in its high—pitched voice. Victoria nodded, still feeling uneasy in the empty building but reassured by Claude's friendly demeanour.

The bot led her down one of the shadowy corridors. As they walked, the lights flickered on above them automatically. "HiroCorp is one of the leading robotics manufacturers in the country. We develop bots for everything from consumer homes to high-precision industrial work. I am hoping after your meeting, you will consider joining our team of engineers!"

Victoria listened as Claude attentively described the various labs and research departments. She was impressed by HiroCorp's innovation and ambitious projects. However, there were still unanswered questions about this job and what secrets this imposing building held within its walls. Only the meeting ahead would reveal if Victoria's skills matched their needs well. She steeled herself, knowing her future may hinge on making the right impression on the executives.

"Okay! And now we are here! The Hokage's office!" Claude said

"Thanks, Claude," Victoria said with a shaky breath.

You are going to be okay. You've got this, Vicky. You got this. It took three years to get here, but you're finally applying to be an intern. Eee, but I'm only 16. Oh, Zeus

Victoria walked through the open door.

"Victoria Markinswell, Welcome to HiroCorp," The Hokage says.

"Now you must be wondering what your task is, yes?" Victoria nods her head yes

"Y-yes..." Victoria says.

"Your task here is working on creating something new. We need something to power our weapons. We think you are the best person for this. Do you agree?" The Hokage asked.

"Y-yes! I do!" Victoria agreed.

"Good, Cleo?" The Hokage says as he turns around, facing a person—like robot on a platform.

"Yes, sir?" Cleo says as she lifts her head, steps off the platform, and approaches Victoria.

"Help her find her way to the laboratory, please, Cleo," The Hokage states.

"Of course, please follow me," Cleo says as she scans Victoria.

Victoria nodded with newfound determination. While weapons development wasn't what she initially imagined, she understood Hiro—Hito's global influence and strategic priorities. This role could harness her skills for the company's critical mission while furthering her career.

She turned to Cleo, intrigued by the humanoid bot's lifelike mannerisms. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

"The pleasure is mine..." Cleo says hesitantly.

Victoria followed Cleo through the gleaming white corridors of Hiro-Hito's headquarters. Though still a little uneasy about her task, she approached it with an open mind.

After moments of thoughtful silence, Victoria spoke to the android guiding her. "You seem quite advanced. What types of technologies allow for your human—like qualities?"

Cleo replied factually. "Hiro designed me to integrate seamlessly with humans. My social skills simulator allows for nuanced conversation, while my synthetic musculature and dermal casings make me appear almost organic."

Victoria was impressed by Hiro's innovation. She wondered if HiroCorp respected the boundaries between people and property. Her work here could help or hinder that distinction.

As they arrived at the lab, Victoria steeled her resolve. She would pursue this opportunity but maintain her principles. Her expertise deserved to better humanity, not enable its worst impulses. With care and conscience, she hoped to honour that duty in all her efforts.

"Victoria Markinswell, Age 16. Correct?" something someone asked her.

"Yes" Victoria replied

"Good, it's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Liabot." Lia said, confirming she was a robot, though Victoria was confused about why she called herself Liabot

"Wondering why she's called a Liabot, right?" Another voice, this time male, asked Victoria.

"Yeah..." Victoria replied

"I'm Du Cheng. You can call me DC. I'm a human." DC laughed at the look of relief on Victoria's face.

"Nice to meet you, DC" Victoria replied.

"Anyways, she's called Liabot because of the person who created her, Hinata Liya," DC said

"Oh, thanks!"

"No probs. Can I get your task?" DC asks

"it is creating something to power weapons", Victoria replies

"Great! You should be in Lab 001. It's just down the hall!" Lia said

"Thanks!"

Victoria walked through the hall down from Lab 007 to Lab 001. She was feeling quite apprehensive about this task, wondering if she could do this.

When she opened the door, she found nobody else there; the only thing she could see was a small disk on the floor. She walked towards it, putting her foot over it and pressing down. The lights turned on, showing a desk filled with different sorts of materials on there.

Victoria examined the materials on the desk with curiosity and concern. Several sources of sulfur, charcoal, and saltpetre caught her eye; they were ingredients she recognised could make a volatile explosive powder. While this powder may fulfil HiroCorp's request, developing weapons left her uneasy.

She took a deep breath to clear her mind and think creatively. Though she had encountered many problems with the powder exploding as soon as it was moved, she could finally create the powder only to explode when met with fire.

Taking a deep breath, Victoria exited the room with her product in hand to show the big four. As Victoria entered the room, she was met with four people and an empty seat. She started her presentation by demonstrating what uses the powder had, what ingredients were needed, and what the process of making this powder was like.

"Very good, Ms. Markinswell." The Kazekage said.

"Thank you!" Victoria said, thoughts of guilt slowly disappearing.

"We have an offer for you.." The Raikage started.

"An offer only a fool would disagree too," The Hokage continued.

"We would like to offer you a seat in the higher ranks as The Mizakage." The Tsuchikage ended. With that, all her feelings of guilt disappeared, *They were only testing me! They aren't going to use the powder!* She thought to herself.

Who knew the sixteen-year-old prodigy could be so wrong?

The Shimmering Contour

Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, Zhang, Daisy - 11

As the wind bawled, accompanied by the bleak and dreary winter, a young girl named Li Na inhaled and puffed out the chilly air and trudged along the sidewalk with effort. As a shattered glass window hopped into sight, she swiftly strolled in and secured the door behind her.

"Mistress, your father mentioned that as a reward for your poetry, you may select nine jewels of your choice as you wished." A maid standing alongside Li Na whispered.

Sliding her slender fingers along a pearl, Li Na grasped nine of them and placed it gently on the counter. Glimpsing at the elegant lady behind the counter, Li Na caught sight of her approaching an abacus with beads attached to it.

Tik, Tok, tik, Tok, tik, Tok, the darling little object sang in a sweet voice and the collision between the beads vibrated in Li Na's ears. Straining her neck to glance at the abacus, a flash of curiosity and wonder swept through Li Na's pure obsidian eyes while fear also dominated the young soul.

Staring intently at the abacus, the lady leaned forward, glanced at Li Na, and spoke, "Ahem, that will be 2 pieces of silver, miss."

Still staring profoundly at the abacus, Li Na blinked and left the shop after the purchase. On the deserted streets, Li Na tugged her maid, Zhang Li's coat sleeve and inquired, "Zhang Li, what was that weird looking object on the table just then?"

Stroking Li Na's glossy hair, Zhang Li thought for a moment and answered, "Oh miss, you are only thirteen and have so much to learn! I am only a maid without education, and I am afraid I cannot reply to your question! But of course, as the only daughter of the general, you will grow to know everything about the Song dynasty!"

As soon as they reached the courtyard of the general's mansion, Li Na snuggled herself in her father's warm robe and asked, "Papa, you know so much, you are such a good teacher! Today on the counter we encountered a mysterious object which was used to calculate money! Surely you will know what it was?"

Soothing his daughter, the general responded, "Dear girl, you must realize that our blood is much more regal than that of the accountant's. Your background is different! This object is only used in rural areas! Although we are currently dwelling in this exuberant little town, you must remember who you are! So, stop thinking about that little antique, it is of no use."

Li Na pursed her lips and nodded uncertainly. Drifting off to a daze, the surroundings became a haze, only the contour of the abacus shone like a shimmering star.

Tugging her gently by the sleeve, the general suddenly broke into a glorious smile, "But...I have good news! We are moving next to the imperial palace."

"Miss, the general wishes for you to dress and groom for the trip." Zhang Li stood erect obediently at the doorstep with a silk gown and glistening ornaments in her arms.

Bewildered, Li Na stepped gracefully onto the red velvet carpet and inquired, "Father...what is this special trip? And why do you have a thin veil on your lap?"

Pouring a cup of tea precisely into an intricate pottery cup, the general chattered on, "I have promised you marriage to the chancellor's son and if there are no refusal you couple will marry on your 15th birthday, it is for your bright future."

Li Na gasped.

Smirking delightfully, the general patted his daughter on the head, "Yes, yes, indeed, you shall gain so much power, so much! The chancellor is quite a figure."

Staring hollowly into space, Li Na collapsed into the carpet with astonishment and out of her lips came three words spitting out, "OH MY GOD!"

As soon as Zhang Li had aided Li Na back on her feet, the young lady directed her gaze out of the window, somewhere over the rainbow. Swinging her ebony hair around her cheeks, she galloped around the room with her hair loose and unruly.

Sternly, the general motioned for Li Na to sit down once more, then he announced strictly, "There is a requirement for this marriage, the servant in the chancellor's court had passed this piece of note to me."

On the piece of parchment, wrote the following verse:

Before the risen sun on the awaiting day, An assignment needs to be submitted by the deadline. For the discovery of a diamond among the pearls,

Astonished eyes gawp at its glow.

Bemused, Li Na strolled out of the room and into her own bedroom. Sitting idly on her pillow, she analyzed the note meticulously, but it seemed like a layer of billowing smoke had befuddled her mind.

Flopping herself up and down, Li Na soon found her eyelids battering together... suddenly, she awoke as if she were pinched or stung by a bee. Flipping through the pages in her memory, she came to a halt as she visioned the abacus.

That's it! She needed an abacus!

Darting to the jewelry shop, Li Na offered the lady 5 pieces of gold for the abacus. As soon as she held the darling thing in her hand, Li Na brushed it gently with her handkerchief until it shined like the morning sun. After the procedures, she rushed hastily back to the courtyard and shouted, "Father! I've got an abacus!"

Silence crept to every single corner of the room and embraced it.

"Why would you need something so...poor like an ab... aba...abacus?" The general questioned, "It has no function! I have prepared the finest robe for the chancellor's son, that will be the answer to the riddle we were given! But the abacus can serve as one of your wedding gifts."

As a smile spread widely across her face, Li Na stepped into the royal carriage alongside her father and set off for the journey. On the whole trip, the general blabbered to his adored daughter about manners, rules...But Li Na was so addicted to her abacus that she even let a giggle escape from her lips. All the words the general mentioned were simply blown away by the wind.

With a royal escort, Li Na strode delicately into the hall room and curtsied. The chancellor's son sat in the glow of the chandelier. Other guests are filling in like a stream.

Coughing, the chancellor annunciated in an arrogant tone, "Right, our ceremony has begun! My old friend general, I hope you have got a good guess for the riddle?"

Before her father could hand up the robe, Li Na spoke, "Honorable chancellor, Li Na, the general's daughter has the answer to the riddle, and she will be presenting an object from the rural districts."

As soon as her voice dropped, all the nobilities snickered unpleasantly and whispered amongst themselves.

Flashing out the crystal abacus held in Li Na's handkerchief, she continued, "Esteemed guests, this is an innovation which is named the abacus, it is crafted with immense care and..."

Before her voice even dropped, the minister sarcastically stated "Ah...that is just like a flowerpot! It looks beautiful but has no function! Plus, you must have received it from the countryside! How dare you trick the chancellor with some pieces of wood?" Laughter roared out from the crowd.

Ignoring the statement, Li Na explained explicitly, "Ha, the function of the abacus is to calculate money, it will be efficient in real life, and I believe every accountant in this city should be able to utilize it!"

One pair, two pairs, three pairs...of eyes were attracted to the abacus as if it was a magnet. In awe, the chancellor's son led the clapping.

Walking down to his bride, the chancellor's son declared, "Li Na! You are a wondrous lady; these special items should be widespread! I adore your optimistic and daring personality, there will be no decline to our wedding!

Staring with pride at the abacus and blushing slightly, Li Na fell into a haze once more in two winks time...

Pacific Ocean's Magic Potion

Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, Zhang, Zhuo Qi Kiki – 11

"I really want to sail to Pacific Ocean and find the magic potion!" asked Olivia.

When she was 5, her grandpa told her a tale: there is a cave in the Pacific Ocean, in the cave there is a potion that can make one of your wishes true. This tale was trapped in Olivia's mind as she heard it. Her wish is to have all the toys in the world when she was young.

She had been talking about this tale since she was 5. Olivia always asks her parents when can she go on her adventure. Her mother and father always say, "Darling, when you are 18, you can go on your adventure! We will always support you to do anything you want!"

Olivia was born in this island; she grew up in an atmosphere of love. Even when other children were going through a rebellious period, she never argued with her parents. Her parents supported her with all the things she wanted to explore. When other children in the island was enjoying their childhood and having fun, Olivia will be always daydreaming about her future on the boundless ocean.

The sun slowly rises, a breezy wind moved lazily along the beach, making it sway like waves in a calm sea. She finally welcomed July 9^{th} —her 18^{th} birthday.

Upon the sand was the birthday gift mum and dad prepared for Olivia: A sailboat, named Liberty 18. It laid quietly like a statue. The hull was made out of wood and the mainsail and headsail was made out of two huge pieces of cloth. The sailboat was covered in blue paint that camouflaged it with the sea like a chameleon.

As Olivia woke up, she immediately saw this sailboat. Her eyes widened instantly, her breathing stopped, her heart was beating in her throat like drums. Olivia's whole body seemed petrified, filled with surprise. She can't believe she actually received something that she has been dreaming about every night! Without thinking, she ran in her room, packed her bag with water, food, clothes and a blanket. She ran to Liberty 18 and threw her bag onto the hull.

When she was about to go on her adventure, her mum and dad came running near the sailboat. Mum handed her a piece of wood with a whole on top; Olivia didn't what it was. As she was wondering what this object was for, her mother started speaking, "Darling this is something that I made for you. I named it: whistle, when you are in an emergency situation, please blow this out loud as hard as you can! But I wish you never get a chance of using this."

Mum has been facing a dilemma since Olivia was 5 (when she heard the tale). On one hand she wanted her child to grew up safely, go to a good college, get a job, get married and live happily ever after. Unfortunately, on the other hand, she wanted her child to complete her dream as she wished.

Finally, 3 months before Olivia's 18-year-old birthday, Mum finally made her decision: let Olivia become a sailor. She was really worried that her daughter will be in a dangerous predicament, so she started making something special for Olivia.

Mum first collected a piece of wood that was about 12 cm long, 14 cm wide and 7 cm thick. Secondly, she cut and incised it into a cylindrical shape. After that, she polished the outside of this piece of wood. Then, she drilled a small hole on the piece of wood. Lastly, she placed her lips on the hole, and blew at it. Suddenly, a loud, sharp sound came out of this piece of wood. This wasn't just a piece of wood, but something that's filled with a mother's care. She named this piece of wood: Whistle.

All emotions ran into Olivia's brain at once. She was so thankful to her parents that they supported her so much. There was a lot of words she wanted to say but at last, she just gave a smile to Mum and Dad.

Olivia waved at Mum and Dad as the sailboat calmly swayed across the sea. She sat there staring into the vast ocean.

Day after day, the little boat has been swaying on the sea like a tumbler.

One night, when Olivia is asleep, the rain suddenly starts to hit Olivia hardly on her face. She was scared awake. As she opened her eyes, darkness surrounded her. Gloomy, stormy, rainy, the weather was, with the lightning rushing through the dreadful sky, like a sharp sword that cut the sky and the shining arc ran down from the clouds to the edge of the sky.

The cold, thin air ran through her body, as chilly cold water gradually covered Olivia's body. She struggled hard, trying to avoid herself to drown; she could feel her body became heavier and heavier. At the last second, before the freezing water covers all over Oliva's head, she blew the whistle tired on to a string, on her neck. The whistle echoed miles and miles like a siren.....

Olivia woke up. She wasn't floating on the freezing cold sea water, but instead, lying on a bed. She was so confused. Why am I here? Where is this place? Who saved me? Million of questions rushed into her brain. As she was still wondering, a women came walking into the room, with a cup of water in her hand. Olivia moved back cautiously. Then, the women spoke, "Hi, my name is Anne. You don't have to be that scared of me. I found you when I was sailing on the sea. At first, I heard a loud noise so I followed the sound. Then I saw you in the sea, so I carried you on my boat and sailed back here."

Olivia was still filled with confusion. "Emm....my name is Olivia....thank you for saving me.." she replied. Anne smiled, and gave her the cup of water.

Later on, Olivia came out of room. Surprisingly, Anne wasn't there, so Olivia went out the house. As she opened the door, and started wondering around the island. The whole island was really different to her home. This island barely had any person. Olivia haven't see anyone on this island. Soon, she wondered back to Anne's house.

When she arrived, Anne was already sitting next to the table eating a bowl of salad and another bowl in front of her. "Hi Olivia! This is for you! Do you want to come and eat with me?" Anne asked

"Sure." Olivia answered as she pulled out a chair and sat next to Anne.

"I wasn't born on this island. I wanted to sail to the Pacific Ocean to find the magic potion. Unfortunately, there was a storm and it broke my boat. When I woke up, I was already on this island. Luckily, I didn't die; but unfortunately, I was stuck in this island until I built my own boat." Anne explained her adventure.

Hearing the words: Pacific Ocean and magic potion, Olivia immediately raised her head with curiosity. "Oh my god! I also wanted to find the magic potion but as you can see, I also ended up in this island." Olivia exclaimed with excitement.

Anne and Olivia talked about all their journeys, wishes, dreams for so long. They soon found out that they were really similar with each other. Soon, they became familiar with each other and became best friends. Everyday, Olivia will go in the forest with Anne and find vegetables and fruits. Sometimes, they will dive deep in the sea and catch fishes for food.

Days and days past, everyday seemed to happen the same way, but none of them were bored.

27 years later, Anne was already 79 years old. Olivia was 50 years old. Olivia still embarked on a new journey once again; again, the destination was the Pacific Ocean. This time, she wasn't on her own, but with another person. She sailed in the same boat, had the same whistle tied on her neck and had the same dream. Everything seemed to be the exact same, except for the determination. She seemed even more determined with her dream.

The Domes

Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, Zhu, Kai Lin - 13

It has been 23 years since my whole life became mechanical. Every day I walk on the same road to work, looking at the same grey sky, and every day I go to work all I see is Bob and Fred. Every day I hear the same mechanical "G—Good morning...sir! R—Remember...to s—s—stay productive s—s... (shuts down)" That sound makes me want to throw up on the spot every time I hear it. Yet still, I walk on the same route to work. Every single day, I go through the exact same routine, wake up, work, and then sleep. As days pass by, I start to forget everything before the Chinese government created shan—ding domes. I still remember fragments of when I was 16, and before that. But after the domes and robots came along, those memories became dull.

As I walk into my dark little room, I wince when I hear the constant buzz of the machines working. Knowing that giving them my blood is my job is quite disappointing. The meaning of the domes is supposed to be good, mountain top domes, such a majestic name for a boring world. The invention of the domes and the robots separated the poor and the rich, protecting the rich from the "deadly" temperatures outside. This invention from the Chinese company ensures everyone in China is alive, but the poor live in such worse situations. Before the separation, many theorists said there are no such thing as deadly temperatures, the government is just using the poor to create power as power is running out worldwide. However, I personally do not believe this. After the separation, all the poor people get bad living conditions, but no one wants to take the risk and try to access the outside world.

I lie down on the ice—cold table and watch the mechanical arms slowly stick needles into my arms and legs. After a while, I start to get sleepy, and I watch as the ceiling slowly, slowly, fade away. After I woke up it was almost 6 pm. We cannot tell from the light, so there is one clock in every room. I drag myself up feeling like an old rug, and I drag myself home, past the buzzing machines, and past Bob and Fred. I walk up the stairs and get to my little apartment, so small that not even a surfboard can fit inside! (From one of my only memories left.) I open the fridge, get a bottle of milk, and promptly fall on the bed, instantly falling asleep. As I slept, I had a dream about the "world," now grey and depressing. In the dream I saw the city, I saw it as a dome. But from what I still faintly remember, just the country China should be bigger than the dome! As I saw a blurred vision of the city from above, I jolted awake with a muffled scream. This could mean that there is still possibly a world outside, and maybe we are just here in the domes to create the power necessary for the outside world? Maybe.

As I woke up and opened the fridge again, I thought maybe I could do something, about this situation. For the first time in years, I felt a tingle in my heart. I suddenly felt energetic, and I decided to go to work with a purpose from now on. As I walk through the familiar streets, I don't walk past Bob and Fred anymore. Instead, I stopped to observe the two robots' structure, seeing something I've never really noticed before. On the back of the robot, behind the rust are the words: Poor Quality Robot, Send Inside. I knew it. Knowing that I wasn't wrong, I walked to work feeling like a different person. I checked my room thoroughly for details. I checked the damp corners, and I checked the robot responsible for taking my blood. But this time, I found something more important! I opened the back of the robot and found a rock! I haven't seen a rock for years, which also means this rock must be from outside! As I saw the back of the robot sparking electricity, I decided to finish up and go home. I walked home, not realizing that it wasn't time to go, and the robot hadn't taken my blood.

I sat down on the bed, looking at the stone in my hands, thinking how I could get out. I looked straight up, at the ceiling. No, water's not dripping down, and no, it's not getting moldy (because it already is moldy.) The top of the dome could have answers, or even, exits. I decided to act at once. I crept out of my home, past the old streets, and into the facility. I know that there is a robot that Is connected to the top of the facility that goes up and down to collect the blood. So, all that's left for me to do is wait for the robot to drop down and carry me up. As I walked in to my room so that the robot would come collect my blood after it is taken, I just remembered that the robot was broken. Not thinking it was a big deal, I lay down on the table, feeling a chill go down my spine, and feeling the rush of my heartbeat, the adrenaline I haven't felt in so long. However, what waited for me wasn't the robot ready to sample my blood, but the mechanical repetition of the word "exterminate." I realized something was off and jumped up off the table. "Bang!", and half the table was torn down. I realized, for the first time, a robot has gone rogue! I quickly ran out of the room, and home again, this time, not even giving Bob and Fred a single glance.

Lying on my bed, I realized I had already gone to and back from the facility two times. However, knowing the ways of control, the malfunction will be found in less than a day, maybe even hours. Then, all my plans will go to waste. Realizing that it's already not early, I decided to sleep earlier than before, so I could leave some energy for when I need it. I closed my eyes, savoring the experiences today, wondering If I'll ever feel so alive again. As this thought ended, everything around me faded out and I slept.

I woke up the following morning, breathing in the cold, damp air as I dragged myself to stand up and go make breakfast. After eating, I slowly walk to work. But this time, something different happened. As I walked into the facility late, knowing that I'm the last one to be in here, I suddenly hear a swoosh behind me, and a huge metal door slid down and locked me and everyone else in the facility. I was just wondering why the daily routine was interrupted when I looked up and saw a big countdown on a screen showing 1.32. I would assume this means one and a half minutes left until something happens, as now it is already at 1.20. My brain starts quickly processing everything that could happen after the countdown, all the robots could go rogue, everyone might just fall asleep on the spot!

As the seconds pass slowly but surely, I start panicking, suddenly feeling the drop of a sweat on my skin, and I feel a small tremble in my body. Could the countdown mean something dangerous? Thinking about this, I quickly ran to a random lab for taking blood, and I found the table where I usually lie on. I quickly hide under it, and stick out my head to watch the countdown, which is already at .10. As the countdown shows *3,2,1*, the screen showed the word DETONATION. I quickly hide under the table, hearing loud explosions everywhere around me. I shut my eyes tight, and I blocked my ear, shriveling up like a frightened animal. I could still hear the explosions, and everything falling apart around me.

After what felt like hours, and the endless explosions, I finally opened my eyes. At first, my eyes could adjust to the brightness. As I slowly stood up, I walked forward, looking at all the rubble, covering everything that used to be the world around me. I looked up, and I saw an endless sea of clouds, and a bright dot in the sky, what I remember to be the sun. I scan the barren grounds, the towering plateau in front of me, and the robotic pieces left of Bob and Fred. I hear a faint "buzzzz", and I hear a familiar glitched sound. "H-h-hello sir" came out from the rubble of what used to be robots. As I picked up a piece of debris, I smashed, and I smashed at the robots, until I heard nothing but the wind. Satisfied, I get up, and take a big stride forward.

"How Gunpowder was Invented"

Shanghai Singapore International School, Ding, Bo Cheng Aaron – 12

Once upon a time, there lived an ancient Chinese dynasty of "Wu", and on the border of Wu kingdom there laid a larger kingdom of "Shui". This Shui kingdom is full of barbarian soldiers who invades the Wu kingdom every year, they have claimed more than 1/9 percent of Wu kingdoms land. Even scaring is that Shui kingdom has a habit of killing all prisoners and civilians of Wu kingdom, they have the crimes of many massacres.

For the sake of Wu kingdom, the great Wu Emperor II wanted to choose a brave warrior and send him to find the Great Precious Weapon of Hope. The emperor ordered: "If anyone who can slay the dragon of smoke, shall have my permission to find the Great Precious Weapon!" Hundreds of young men joined to tryout and to save the Wu kingdom, even knowing that they might die in the dangerous tryout. But after eighty and ninety deadly tryouts, no one had succeeded to overcome this dragon of smoke. But there was still one person left alone in the dreadful tryout.

This person is called, Zhou Qing. He was now announced as he walked up to the gigantic arena doors. Zhou was very unique in particular, because he didn't bring a weapon, all he brought according to Zhou was his mind. Zhou was a clever person; he didn't believe that a fight could ever end this kind of situation. He always liked to think through each task and problem, not like most people who went for the tryouts. He stopped at the doors and noticed that the doors were made out of a solid powder, it seems to be a very strong material. Zhou smiled and told the guards beside him to open the arena doors.

The guards removed locks after locks and finally they opened the last lock. Zhou could hear the dragon inside roaring with might, but he wasn't scared like some contestant. Suddenly, a huge wind blew by forcing the gigantic door to open. Zhou can fell the mighty wind blowing him back like telling him not to come in, Zhou's hair was blown backwards. But Zhou shovel back the wind and went into the dragon arena without a single thought. After Zhou went in the arena, the guards shut the great doors. Locking Zhou in the great arena...

As Zhou went in the arena, the Grand Dragon of Smoke, seemed to be angry as he hummed in the low voice, looking at Zhou in the eyes as if he was his ultimate enemy, thankfully the dragon is locked on the neck with a chain. Zhou shivered but then he smiled, he studied the dragon carefully. Then he discovered a secret, when the dragon huffs each time it breathes, the huffs turn into a black powder. The black powder looks like tiny dark black dust pecks, but each huff from the dragon gives out thousands and thousands of these tiny dust pecks. Sometimes these dust pecks create fire cracks when they roughly touching each other. Zhou thought about it and suddenly gave an answer to it. The tiny dust pecks are the Great Precious Weapon the great emperor is looking for. But the dragon became mad after waiting for Zhou a long time, he started to roar and also started to spit flames.

Zhou dodged the flames and also figured out that the friction force between the tiny dusts creates fire and flames too. The dragon was desperate to kill Zhou, but the emperor was impressed by Zhou's excellent explanation. The Great Emperor sent soldiers to stop the dragon and save Zhou. The soldiers didn't have anyways to stop the violent and ferocious dragon. After thinking, Zhou exclaimed that it will be better to stop the dragon with water. As the soldiers started to spill water all over the dragon, the dragon sneezed and started to curl up.

The emperor was super impressed by Zhou's ability and cleverness. Soon then, the soldiers started to collect the tiny dust pecks and started to make flame and fire with them. Some smart inventors in the kingdom started to create weapons using these dust pecks by firing them out of a hollow stick. The government and the emperor agreed that this stick—like weapon will be named as a gun, and the dust pecks will be named as gunpowder. The creation of gunpowder surprised the world but not the Shui kingdom. The King of Shui kingdom ordered that the invasion of Wu kingdom will be continuing as normal once every year.

The invasion day of Shui kingdom has come. The entire Wu kingdom was ready for the invasion. On the city walls of Wu kingdom, many gunners were prepared and ready for the battle to come. Zhou was invited by the Wu Emperor to watch the battle. In the horizon, many Shui Warriors with shiny blades and swords were ready to take over the city. The emperor started to worry, but Zhou started to smile. Then a horn went off in the Shui army, hundreds and thousands of soldiers rushed and charged at the city. As the Shui soldiers approached, Wu commanding

officers began to order: "Soldiers! The enemy gives us no mercies! So, we shall not give them any mercies! Fire at Will!" The soldiers of Wu fired flames after flames of fire that rushed through the current, the Shui Warriors cannot even go through the waves of flames and fire. Most of the Shui soldiers cried in pain, and even more soldiers deserted or surrendered. This is a heavy loss for Shui kingdom, but a glorious victory for the Wu peoples.

After this event, Zhou went famous all over the world, many people were impressed on how he changed history and how he changed warfare. Nowadays in battle, people are less likely to use sword, but they have a better option of using a gun. This is the story of Zhou, and his heroic efforts in the advancement of history and technology.

Accident Tea

Shanghai Singapore International School, Jiang, Hanna – 13

Long time ago, in China, there was a widow owning a small restaurant with only four tables with a very small kitchen. Not a lot of people came to this restaurant to eat, but still she did her best. In rainy days, she wasn't able to open her restaurant since there was a big hole on the ceiling. She really wanted to fix the ceiling so she could work every day even if its raining, but she didn't have enough money.

One windy day, her daughter, who is 17 years old was helping her to serve food in the restaurant. The more the wind blew, the smell of the food went further so more people came to try her food. The tables in the restaurant was full for the first time. Even though they were busier than usual, she couldn't hide the happiness that appeared on her face. She prepared 10 cups of hot water and putted on the side when her daughter was taking order. But because of the wind, leaves from the tree fell into the hot water. Because the color of the cup and the leaves were similar, no one knew that leaves went into the water. After putting cup of water for every table, one customer suddenly asked the widow's daughter the reason that the water tastes different. She quickly ran to the kitchen and asked her mom what she did to the water. She paused for a while, looking around. And she found a lot of leaves on the floor. And she looked up and saw leaves coming in by the hole on the ceiling! "OH NO!" She cried and ran out of the kitchen and went front of the person who asked about the water. Even before she started talking, he asked "How can the water taste like this? What did you do to it?" "I am so sorry! Because of the lea—" "IT TASTS AMAZING!" The widow got confused. "I NEVER TASTED THIS AMAZING WATER BEFORE! If you don't mind, may you please tell me how to make this water?"

The next day, the widow went to her restaurant to work. But even before she came, people were lining up outside the restaurant. She was shocked. VERY shocked. She pretended that she isn't the owner of the restaurant and asked a person who were lining up "Excuse me may I ask what is this line for?" The person who was lining up replied "This is the restaurant that gives water that tastes AMAZING! A lot of people said they never tasted this taste from other food before. That's why I am lining up here." The widow thanked him for telling her and went behind the restaurant to collect some leaves to use. After that, she walked into her restaurant with her customers. After serving the water, a lot of people asked the name of the drink. She remembered the shape of the tree that she collected the leaves from. She replied "T.. Tea! Yes, the name of this drink is tea."

After that day, she became busier and busier. She earned enough money to fix the ceiling and to put more tables and chairs. More customer came to taste her tea day after day, and starting from that day, everyone started enjoying the amazing water Tea.

Paper

Shanghai Singapore International School, Kuo, Yong Yan - 12

Back in the olden times, there was no such thing as "paper." People would write on strips of reeds, or carvings of stone. They even used wooden tablets for writing. But many of these methods were too complicated for writing, so something happened in the olden days..

Once upon a time, during ancient China's Spring and Autumn period (around 770-476 BC), there lived a wise inventor named Cai Lin. Cai Lin was a gifted inventor and engineer who had a passion for learning and exploring the possibilities of what could be created. One day, Cai Lin was walking along the banks of the Yellow River when he noticed the leaves of the bamboo trees floating by and being carried away by the current. It sparked an idea in his mind, and he realized that if he could manipulate this material, he could create something useful. He spent years developing the art of paper. After years of experimentation, Cai Lin finally perfected the art of papermaking. He discovered that by pounding the bamboo leaves into strips and spreading them over screens, he could create a durable and lightweight material that could be used for writing and drawing. Cai Lin's invention revolutionized the way people shared and communicated information, and his paper became a staple throughout Asia. Cai Lin's invention was the first step in creating the modern paper industry, and it has been an integral part of human civilization ever since. In the beginning, the people of the town were skeptical of Cai Lin's invention. They were accustomed to using stone and wooden tablets for writing, and they did not see the value of this new paper material. However, as time went on and they saw how versatile and durable the paper was, their skepticism turned to curiosity. Finally, when the people saw how much easier and convenient paper was to use compared to stone or wooden tablets, they began to embrace Cai Lin's invention and use it for themselves. Cai Lin's paper had become a staple in the town, and they could not imagine life without it now. As time went on, Cai Lin's paper spread throughout the town and beyond. It became a part of people's everyday lives. They used it for writing and drawing, and they found new ways to utilize it's versatility and durability. The people grew to appreciate how Cai Lin's paper allowed them to share information more easily and quickly. They were no longer limited by the heavy and fragile stone and wooden tablets of the past. Cai Lin's simple but groundbreaking invention had become a part of their culture and their daily lives. The thoughtfulness of Cai Lin's papermaking invention was its versatility and durability. By taking the leaves of the bamboo trees, which were otherwise discarded, and transforming them into a light and durable material, Cai Lin showed us how even the most overlooked or discarded resources can be transformed into something useful. His invention was a lesson in ingenuity and finding new ways to utilize our resources. It reminded us to look at even the most simple things in a different light and to think creatively and thoughtfully about the possibilities. The story of Cai Lin's invention reminds us that even the most seemingly unimportant or overlooked resources can be transformative and have great potential, if only we take the time to see it. It is a lesson in ingenuity, creativity and thoughtful appreciation of our resources, and one that we can apply to our lives to make the most out of everything we have.

The invention of a Moveable Type Printing

Shanghai Singapore International School, Leung, Gordon Chengxu – 12

Did you know that reading books before the invention of printing was a luxury, because books were mainly written by hand. Manually transcribing books is not only time—consuming, laborious, but also error—prone. So today I'm going to tell you about the origin of this convenient and concise (fake) movable type printing.

During the Tang Dynasty, China invented engraving printing. At that time, people carved the words on the books on the wooden board, and when the book was printed, the words carved on the wooden board were brushed with ink and then printed on white paper to make a book. Bi Sheng is a text engraver engaged in the printing industry, as Bi Sheng gets older and older, he feels more and more incapable of doing it in this industry, and recently he always makes mistakes in engraving words, and has been scolded by the boss many times, and the boss has dismissed him mercilessly when he sees Bi Sheng old and weak. Fortunately, at that time, a new West Lake bookstore was opened in Hangzhou, and the owner of West Lake bookstore was in urgent need of employment, so he recruited Bi Sheng to his side. At that time, the West Lake Bookstore was preparing to produce a best—selling book, but it opened later than other bookstores, and the boss was worried that other bookstores would print the book in advance, so that the books he printed would not be sold. The more he got home, the more he thought about it, the more guilty he felt that his boss had helped him when he was unemployed and that he couldn't help him when he needed him. Nowadays, there is only one way to help bosses, and that is to improve the efficiency of book printing.

One day, when Bi Sheng was meditating by the lake, he suddenly heard the laughter of two children, Bi Sheng walked up to the children and found that they were playing with mud, Bi Sheng looked at the palm prints on the children's mud blocks and fell into deep thought. He returned home with a piece of mud, and at this time, his wife was burning firewood, and Bi Sheng looked at the mud in his hands and the firewood on the ground and ran out excitedly. When he returned to the bookstore, he began to burn the mud, and the boss asked Bi Sheng what he was doing, and Bi Sheng told him: "I will first carve words on these clays and then burn them with fire to make them hard, and then arrange these clay movable characters in an iron plate frame." In this way, the same cement bracket printing plate as the woodcut printing plate is formed, and it can also be disassembled and arranged into new content after printing, and the printing speed is dozens of times that of the previous one."

A few days later, the news that the West Lake Bookstore had printed the best—selling book in advance shocked his peers, and the owner of the bookstore invited Bi Sheng to his home, and he asked people to take out a large sum of silver to give to Bi Sheng, hoping that Bi Sheng could accept the silver and keep the secret of movable type printing, but Bi Sheng said to the boss: "This movable type printing should be known to everyone as soon as possible." "This... Why is that? "The first is to do the hard work of thousands of carvers, and the second is to make everyone afford to buy books. Hahaha! But it's a pity that Bi Sheng died in the process of promoting movable type printing technology, which is really a special regret.

"The Man and His Gunpowder"

Shanghai Singapore International School, Menon, Shreyansh – 12

Jake was peacefully living with his wife and his three children, suddenly three troops from china came and started making fun of him, "peasant" said one of the troops, in anger Jake said, "get out of here", in anger the three troops started destroying his little hut and his shop, and the troops walked of. "MY SHOP" cried Jake... the wife was in disbelief of what just occurred... the man was plotting for revenge.

Jake had a great idea, he planned of throwing rocks and vandalizing the houses of the three troops, but jake didn't know the location of the troops, he had a plan, at 6 pm all the army get to go rest, so he was going to follow one of them every night to destroy them, but he can't do it in front of them, so he first followed all of the troops day by day and remembered there location.

It was the day, Jake is going to vandalize the troops houses, he started with the first one, he threw rocks at the windows, use spray paint to draw things on the walls, but while he was doing that, he had an idea, why not make something that makes a big noise, something that he can do in front of them and the troops can't do anything, something that explodes, "I GOT IT" he ran to his house in a hurry, his wife asked "what's the rush for" "I have a great idea!" "What is it" I can make something that makes a loud noise, and they can't do anything" "something that blasts?" "YES" said Jake. He started drafting ideas of how to make a bomb (remember, at this time they had no such thing called a bomb)

Jake was in the room for hours and hours, until he finally figured out how to make something that blasts, "all you need to do is mix charcoal with sulphur" he explained to his wife, his wife asked what will you name it? "Well, since it makes a sound like a gun and has powder in it, I will name is gunpowder" "wow sounds nice."

Jake marches down the street do their houses, he places the gunpowder, and BOOM the entire house turned into pieces of ash, next morning the cops come to investigate what happens, one of the investigators named. Lopez starting investigating, "wow this is something I never ever saw" "what is it "someone asked, it's some type of explosive says Lopez in shock, "well who did it?" Asked someone "some genius" ...and that's how gunpowder was made.

Stinky Tofu

Shanghai Singapore International School, Ng, Yee Hsin - 12

"Excuse me! Sorry!" I exclaimed as I rode on my donkey's back in a medium pace, enjoying the refreshing taste of air being blown in my face, shrugging off the offensive comments from my fellow locals about my reckless riding. It's hard getting around such a narrow alley like this, especially when you are on a donkey, and it is busy hour. Yet I always seem to be in seventh heaven when I ride through this alley. Owing to the fact that my mother's tofu store is right at the end of this crowded, noisy, narrow, filthy and maybe a little bit stinky, alley.

I come to my mother's store all the time to help out. Just handing out the tofu or even just screaming out the words "Tofu! Tofu! One—of—a—kind tofu!" Makes my mother pleased. Selling and advertising my mom's tofu is fun and all but the best part about coming here, is that I'm the first person to get a taste of the freshly made tofu! My mother's workers always make sure that I get all the tofu I want. The soft and tender texture when I first bite into it, to the unique, milky flavor when I swallow it in, is what I call heaven.

My mother's tofu is very different from other tofu stores around our town, the flavor of my mom's tofu stays for an especially long time on the tongue, making the customer crave for more and more and more. The tofu recipe that my mother currently uses, has b

een passed down many many generations. Therefore, our recipe is exceptionally special to our Wang family. My mother's tofu store's business has always been on a roll in thanks to our unique taste. But one day, things changed.

I rode on my donkey to my mother's store through the narrow alley as per usual, but this time, I felt strangely more relaxed. I could finally see the broken brick walls that were usually covered by a sea of people. I could finally hear the sound of my donkey's hooves heavily falling onto the ground which were most often drowned out by the commotion... Where did everyone go?

After getting off my donkey, I immediately charged towards my mother's tofu store to hear what I had missed. When I walked into the store, my eyes widened with pity and sourness, to the sight of my mother crying next to three full trays of tofu. My mother is the most cheerful and positive person on earth, I have never seen her cry throughout my whole life. I decided to sit down next to mother and understand what had occurred.

My mom took some time to settle down, and I sat patiently waiting. "Remember mother's apprentice XiaoMing?...Well he stole our recipe." I know mother was not done talking, but this information that just went into my ears was enough to make me rage. "What?! How could he?! We trusted him! He's a betrayer!He deserves to die!!Where is he now? Let's go kill him!!" I could've thrown out a lot more unnecessary words and actions, but I was disciplined by my mother. "Wang Zhi He! I understand that you are frustrated, I am too, but we cannot be too impulsive. Please listen. Xiao Ming quit this morning and thanks to the locals in our town, I have found out that he set up his own store not far from here, selling the same thing, but in a cheaper price..."

At this point, my urge to stomp and scream and explode was almost reaching its limit. But I controlled myself when I heard mother's voice shake, and when I saw mother's eyes turn slightly red. Mother is going through a lot. I really want to help her...But I don't know how.

Days and days passed...Our once filled store is getting more and more empty. And XiaoMing's business is blasting. I never thought I would get tired of the taste of my mom's tofu, but after eating trays and trays of leftovers daily, I've become sick of it. My mother doesn't like to waste food, so she always stuffs the leftovers into her mouth as if she was a wolf who hasn't eaten for days. But today's business was especially poor. We had four entirely full trays of tofu to digest.

I forced a half tray of tofus into my mouth, but that was my limit. If I had another munch of tofu, I would have vomited all of it out right on the spot. Mother managed to consume 3 whole trays of tofu... But there was still half a tray of tofu left. Mother was just about to force it all in again, but I couldn't watch her go through this. Perfectly, an idea arose in my brain. "What would happen if we just left these here for next time?" Mother hesitated... Then she decided that this was a "Good Idea!"

We first cut the tofu into smaller cubes, and then we put them into earthen jars.

Several days later, we opened our jars of tofu, not expecting anything much. But we realized that the tofu had turn slightly greenish and the smell it gave off was like the combination of horse poop with tofu! My mother and I both looked at the tofu in disgust. We were worried that the tofu would make our stomachs turn. But of course, my mother wishes not to waste food. I told mother to throw it away while I take an order.

I finished my order not long later, and right when I turned back, my mother was already devouring all of the tofu! I was about to stop her from forcing herself...But in a while, I saw her beautiful smile slowly spread across her face. It's been insanely long since I have seen mother smile...is this green, stinky tofu actually that tasty?

I took up a piece of stinky tofu, the tofu's smell didn't get any better, but the taste did not disgust me as much I expected...I might even say that its taste was very unique and maybe even flavorful.

We left a tray of cut up tofu inside earthen jars. Days later, we took out the "Stinky Tofu." The smell was extraordinarily strong, it attracted a ton of people. Today, someone special came to visit. The head of our village, followed the strong smell of the tofu all the way to our store. As the brave person he is, the village head took a huge bite from the smelly tofu. The village head's eyes lit up in satisfaction after his first bite, and he started to order more and more and more!

Gradually, our customers increased a lot. But not after long, we were running short of smelly tofu! My mother and I turned and looked at each other. We shared the same idea.

And since, Stinky Tofu became a popular dish in China.

Help from the Past

Shanghai Singapore International School, Qian, Candy – 12

"In future, what will our next generation talk about when they saw our inventions?" Our ancestors stared at the Great Wall that millions of workers are trying their very best to build, talking to each other.

"I hope what we invented rather by accident or by lots of trials, no matter what, at least can help them a little, and let them understand that we always wanted to help them." Those two ancestors of our swallowed the wine in one sip and started laughing, talking about their imagined future.

Back to the 2000s, two cave adventures are looking around for the way to the tent.

"I never knew we would end up like this, if I knew I would have just rested at home. Not even able to find where we set our tents at! Or worse to say, not able to go out the cave and die out here. If I would know that before this, I will never come here and wonder around what is in this random cave." One of the men hold tightly to the compass and walked around, while murmuring to himself randomly. He sighed hopelessly and lied on the rock. "It should be this direction, but I still have no way to find out how can I go through all this and figure out the path out!" He threw himself into tears and punched the rock in anger.

After calming himself down, he realized that nothing will be able to make him out but tools. Those tools in his hands: compass, are the solid form of the human smartness. After walking around any path that may be possible to the out of the cave that is directed by the compass, he finally found a way out. "Wake up, wake up!" He yelled to his friend with him. "Come on, there!" They ran out of the cave and felt the clear cold air around them. "Tools, it is true, it is the invention of human smartness." He cried with excitement and ran on the soft grass.

"You are right!" One of the ancestors laughed and said, "I also hope those inventions can help them when they need it."

The Creation of Gunpowder

Shanghai Singapore International School, Singh, Arnav – 12

A long time ago, in ancient China there was once two buddies named Billy and Jojo. Billy and Jojo were alchemists trying to find the way to create the potion to become immortal. They experimented with all sorts of things, for example, crushed rocks mixed with mud, grounded grass with water, water with dirty water, but nothing worked. Billy couldn't handle the failures very well, he said to Jojo "let's just give up Jojo, it's pointless. We will never be able to create a potion with the power to make someone immortal." Jojo said "I admit it's looking grim, but I have one more mixture that we can try, if this one doesn't work then we can give up, okay?" Billy accepted his offer and then both of them went home and called it a day.

The next day Billy and Jojo met at the alchemist work station and Jojo began trying out his final mixture: Charcoal, Sulphur and Potassium Nitrate. Then an explosion happened! Billy yelled "What did you do?!" Jojo exclaimed "It worked! This might be it, Billy. I think we did it!" Both of them mixed the powder with water and gave it to general, they then asked "DO you feel anything different General?" The General didn't feel anything and told Billy and Jojo that they were failures.

In the next day one of the armies officers came and told them "Later that afternoon the general came contact with fire and exploded! I think you guys created a bomb powder or something." He Then asked Billy and Jojo what is it called? Both of them exclaimed "GUNPOWDER"

Billy and Jojo's invention went into history. With Gunpowder Humans created Guns, Canons, Grenades and more creating the destruction of the world, however the gunpowder also created something beautiful: Fireworks. This is how Gunpowder was created, the creator of happiness and destruction.

The Mystical Creation of Gunpowder

Shanghai Singapore International School, Sharma, Toshaan Ullaas – 12

During the days of ruling through dynasties and kings, inventions were made through and out in China or should I say Ancient China. This is the story of Hua Shen and his partner Kai Yung. They made a mystical journey to make the elixir of life but instead made something else...

The End of the Kang Dynasty

"Run, everyone run!!" said The Emperor. The kang dynasty was at its last stand. Everyone running with their lives, blood splattering everywhere, all hope was lost against the Mongols. The emperor only had one last option, try to make the elixir of life. But as he looked down at his kingdom, all of his soldiers were covered in blood, dead and no sign of life. He saw two alchemists. The emperor ran to them. "Hua Shen and Kai Yung, you are my only hope. Save this village. I don't have much time before they find me. It's up to you. Finish my last wish," said the emperor. Kai Yung and Hua Shen ran away from the village. They looked back and saw the emperor was dead. With anger and guilt, they vowed to make the elixir of life to restore the village and destroy the Mongols.

The Preparation to the Land of the Dead

Days started to go by, and the partners were getting ready to go to the land of the dead. They brought pickaxes, battle axes and potions that they made in order to obliterate anyone who tries to kill them. Kai Yung made a raft and Hua Shen came in. They started sailing and sailing to the land of the dead. In the distance they saw a big object of some sort coming towards them. A shark was swimming right at them. Hua Shen and Kai Yung were panicking as they didn't know what to do. As the shark was getting closer inch by inch Hua Shen went in the water and threw the battle axe on the fin of the shark. Blood was spitting out and surrounded their raft. Before any more sharks could come, they quickly sailed in order to stay away from danger and reach the land of dead.

The Land of the Dead

After the encounter with the shark Kai Yung and Hua Shen were approaching an island. But as they got closer skulls and bodies were surrounding the island. The partners took all their tools out ready to fight any danger. They parked their raft and went on the island ready to find materials to make the mystical elixir of life. As they were searching, they heard a roar. With very little time to hide and the ground shaking, they ran deeper into the island making them completely lost.

The Mystical Materials

As they went into the cave, all sorts of materials were surrounding them, like rocks, granite, coal and much more. But there was one material they needed, Zeta. After going through tunnels and caves filled with nothing but darkness Kai Yung noticed a very shiny object. He took his pickaxe out and started to mine it. After minutes of mining, they finally got enough Zeta to make the elixir of life.

The Wrong Creation

Kai Yung and Hua Shen took the materials and started crafting. They brought flasks and put all the materials inside and mixed them. But what came out was very unexpected. All they saw was a pyramid shaped black powder. They knew they did not make the elixir of life as it did not look purple. Kai Yung and Hua Shen called it gunpowder. They didn't know what to do with it but they had vowed to restore the Kang Dynasty. They started to experiment with this creation they had made. After several days and months of training they finally made weapons which they called explosives and put gunpowder inside to get ready to destroy the Mongols.

The End of the Mongols

They headed back to the village and saw all the Mongols at one spot. With anger and hatred they both threw two explosive dynamites and in one second "Boom" all the Mongols died. Kai Yung and Hua Shen had killed the Mongols and had secured Kang Dynasty once and for all.

Gunpowder

Shanghai Singapore International School, Ting, Jun Hann Ronan – 12

One day, the emperor of a huge and powerful empire was worried. What was he worried about? His inevitable death. You see, the emperor started to realise that his death would come for him soon. He realised symptoms of his death. First of all, he realised that he was already 71 years old and has a loss of appetite, inconsistent breathing patterns, nausea and back pain. And he did not want to die.

He kept on worrying and worrying as days went by and one day, he couldn't take it anymore, he stood up and started pacing around the room thinking of ideas, but he couldn't think of any. After a while with no ideas, he went to the royal advisor and asked him what he should do. The advisor was known for his crazy ideas, and he told the emperor to go find an elixir for immortality. The emperor had no idea on how to get an elixir at all.

The emperor kept on thinking about the idea and he finally decided that it was the only option. He has to at least try, he thought. He told his servants to put up posters around the whole empire and outside saying that if anyone can find him an elixir that would make him live forever, they would receive 500 gold coins. As soon as people started seeing these posters. They were filled with greed for money and started mixing random substances and went up to the emperor saying that it was an elixir that would make him live forever, but he had an inspector, and the inspector could tell that they were just random liquids mixed together.

Days went by and the emperor couldn't find anyone that has an actual elixir. One day, an alchemist went up to the emperor not to worry and that he would find an elixir for him. The alchemist spends days trying to find an elixir and one day, he made something new, he mixed 15 parts of charcoal, 75 parts salt and pepper, and 10 parts of sulphur. This mixture has no life—lengthening properties. But the alchemist thought that he had made something special and was thinking if he should give it to the emperor or keep it for himself. He tested what he had just made but found nothing special about it. A few days went by, and the alchemist was about to give up finding what was special about the mixture he made while inhaling a cigarette but then he dropped the cigarette but what he didn't realise was that the cigarette still had a fire......

The alchemist sensed something wrong and ran away and looked backed at the substance that he made, and his jaw dropped. It exploded. The alchemist suddenly realized that when the substance was exposed to a flame, it would explode. He eventually told the emperor about this, and the emperor was interested in the mixture and gave him 250 gold coins for the recipe for the substance. Although the emperor did not get an elixir that would make him live forever, but he did receive the substance called gunpowder. This was eventually used for fireworks and weapons for war and for many other great things......

The Legend of Silk

Shanghai Singapore International School, Wang, Xiaoya Sophia – 12

Long time ago, in the faraway lands of ancient China, where legends were whispered through the misty emerald bamboo forests, there existed a tale that weaved together the threads of innovation and wonder. This is a story that started simply but unfolded into a fabric of unparalleled beauty.

Nestled among rolling hills and lush green fields, there existed a simple and humble village. The village was made out of modest buildings and narrow crossed dirt paths that connected each household with others. Life in this village revolved around the timeless rhythm of the seasons, and its inhabitants relied heavily on the land for survival. The villagers, always dressed in weathered clothing, stood under the scorching sun or bitter wind, tending their small plots of farmland. With calloused hands and determined spirits, they diligently planted and harvested crops, their livelihoods dependent on the success of each harvest. In this village, there was only enough, never extra.

In this village, there was a young village girl called Mei. Her parents were like most in the village, simple but honest farmers that has lived in this village for their whole lives. While Mei was poor in material possessions, her heart was rich with resilience and courage.

One day, Mei was walking along a path, she caught a glimpse of light in the bushes. Sparked by curiosity, she followed the glimmer until she located the light source.

Behind the bush was a tall tree with a silkworm that was spinning a cocoon. The creature's delicate threads seemed to glow as if they were made out of liquid moonlight. She marveled at the amazing sight. Unable to resist the allure of this new mysterious object, Mei carefully plucked the cocoon from the tree. As she held it in her hands, she did not know that what she held in her hands could be the key to something extraordinary—something that could change the course of history.

Mei visited the elders of the village in search of an answer to this object. After looking at the cocoon she picked up, they gasped in unison. Then they began to recall ancient tales and legends about a fabric so exquisite that it was only fit for emperors and gods. It was called silk. The elders shared pieces of knowledge, whispering of faraway lands where silk was said to be used.

Determined to unravel the secrets of silk, Mei embarked on a journey in search of a land of silk. Guided by the whispers of the ancient legends, Mei traveled across vast deserts and scaled towering mountains. Despite these obstacles, her heart was set with determination, for she was sure that the answers she was looking for must be somewhere.

After traveling for a few weeks, Mei arrived in front of a bamboo forest. After months of relentless pursuit, Mei arrived at a hidden kingdom nestled deep in the heart of a bamboo forest.

In this enchanted realm, Mei encountered a wise weaver who had spent his lifetime studying the art weaving. The elder recognized Mei's gift and agreed to teach her the ancient art of silk extraction. Under the elder's careful guidance, Mei could carefully unwind silk threads from cocoons with gentle yet purposeful touches.

As days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, Mei's skills flourished under the watchful eyes of the weaver, and her creations got better and better. When she finally returned to her village, her villagers were all stunned by the sight of the exquisite fabrics she weaved, their colors and patterns. As news of Mei's incredible journey and the silk she brought back spread throughout the land, people from far and wide travelled to her village just get a glimpse of the silk she creates. Merchants, nobles, and even scholars traveled great distances to witness firsthand the marvels of silk.

As visitors arrived at the village, their eyes widened with awe and admiration. They marveled at the silk that adorned the villagers' homes and garments. Gasps of astonishment filled the air as visitors ran their fingers over the smooth silk.

But for Mei, her journey was far from over. She yearned to make silk accessible to all, not just the noble and wealthy. With her newfound knowledge, she found ways to cultivate mulberry trees, the food for silkworms. Mei also taught her fellow villagers how to care for silkworms and extract silk from their cocoons, teaching them how to create their own silk.

Mei's village flourished with success from the silk. Her once unnoticeable village has become renowned for its silk. Mei's touch had not only changed the fabric but also the lives of her fellow villagers, and in the end, her whole country.

To this day, the legend of Mei lives on, a testament to the power of curiosity and determination that lies within each of us. Her story reminds us that wonders can be made out of a single thread and that sometimes, the greatest treasures are found within ourselves.

"Last-Minute History Project"

Shanghai Singapore International School, Vadgama, Durva – 13

I just entered the bathroom to take a shower and I take my brush and start brushing but I jump. "JASON." Mum screamed. First name, not too bad. Although... she had been shouting for quite a while now... "TOM", second name, I'll get a scolding for sure. Why is she so frustrated though? "JASON. TOM. GRANGER." Oh no, full name, I'm definitely going six feet under. I rush down the stairs as if I was a cartoon and I immediately face the wrath of what they call, 'the angry mother'. "WHERE WERE YOU? I WAS CALLING FOR YOU FOR DAYS ALTOGETHER!" Exaggerate much? She had been calling for 7 minutes and 24 seconds. That's it!

"What happened to your history project? Did you start yet? You do know it's 40% of your history grade, right? Are you not worried about that? Do you even care?" Mum interrogated me about my history project due next week. While it was true that I had not yet started on the project, it's the fifty—third century. I can do it in seconds. "Yeah, yeah whatever mum. Chill. I'll do it today." I reply. "Don't you ask me to 'chill' mister. I will speak to your teacher about your time management skills!" She spoke. Mum overreacts in everything, so I'm not too worried. "Mum, I need to get to school bye!" I say over my shoulder, and I jog to school. I was surprised I wasn't in a grave by now.

I realize something and I smirk. I turn on my heels to plead mum. "Hey mum..." Mum looks at me suspiciously, she knew I was up to something. "You know... you look gorgeous today— "I start complimenting her so that maybe I can throw her off guard and ask for the most valuable favor. "Jason don't play games with me. What do you want." She says in a monotonous voice. "Can't a loving son give a simple compliment to his mother?" I answer. She's on to me. I've got to lie a bit more.... "No, he can't. What. Do. You. Want." She says while looking at me. Did I mention I get nervous under her stare? "Well, I was wondering, since I need to do the history project. I could stay home. Hear me out! I can finish the whole project and then I can give it to you for checking!" She looks at me unanused. "Only if you do your project. You better finish it." And with that she walks out the door. I jump around and chuckle just as I realize the promise I made. "Oh, COME ON" I really should think before speaking and striking a deal with my mother, now I unknowingly volunteered to have my project done in under nine hours, and before she comes back too! Oh, I'm so naïve.

I pull out the chair underneath my table and I jump into my chair, and I turn on my laptop. Click Click Click. I search up the earliest inventions and there's this website that pops up in my face. Ugh. Advertisements. "Wait..." my eyes widen, "it's a pop up for the history of the seismograph... this could actually help me with my project! That's so sick!" I exclaim. I was over the moon, ecstatic even to find out that it was this easy to do a project on the history of any invention you'd like!

I dived a little deeper into the topic of seismographs and found out that they were actually originated in China 132 CE, and they started off with a very simple concept, called the seismoscope. I realized that I needed to see this for myself, so I rushed to my room upstairs and grabbed the magical umbrella. I adjusted the settings to 132 CE and put in the correct coordinates for the Chinese place. This was pretty easy since there are some set examples of places to go to on the umbrella's handle. And since it as well as the seismoscope originated in China, it immediately recognized the coordinates and I time traveled into the past.

I landed in some foreign land on the sidewalk, and my umbrella apparently had something against me because I landed flat and face first into the concrete. I was the only person wearing such different clothes from all of these other people. The building's walls were covered in paint that was starting to crack. I look around to find a short storage

room to my left. I ruffled through my short hair, unsure of whether or not to go in, but in the end, I finally decided to go in.

I spotted a person a bit further away from me. He had a beard and a thin mustache. He was sitting at a table which looked like it would collapse any second. But then, I see another man walking towards him. Funny, man number two kind of looks like how my mom would walk when she's mad at me for not doing something she asked. Man number two walked up to Man number one, and he shouted in his face, I winced. "ZHANG HENG. WHY HAVEN'T YOU SET UP THE STATUE YET! THE KING IS GOING TO COME ANY MOMENT TO CHECK IN ON US AND YOU'RE JUST SLACKING OFF?!!?!" I backed up a bit when looking and man number two shouting at man number one, Zhang HENG, just because he hasn't laid out a boring old statue? That's so unfair.

I see Zhang HENG bringing back this weird looking statue from inside one of the boxes. It was as if there was a pottery pot had been decorated with dragons at its mouth and frogs right underneath the dragons. Each frog had its very own dragon. But as I looked closer, there were these little loose balls in the dragons' mouths, almost as if it were to purposely drop into the frogs' mouths.

Suddenly, there was this shaking and the ground shook and rumbled so hard that Zhang HENG and I both fell backwards, although none of them spotted me. I glanced at the weird looking statue and the balls fell out of the dragons' to the frogs' mouths. "So, this is the first ever seismoscope..." I muttered to myself. It was a pretty fascinating invention, very unique and useful. Just then, a rich and tall looking man entered, and I could see from his face, the joy he felt when he saw the dragons' mouths were empty, and the frogs' mouths full. "We have just made a new way to detect any kind of shaking that occurs in the earth! Zhang HENG, you will be recognized for your efforts and dedication to this invention. Come to my castle tomorrow morning." The rich man said. "Thank you, thank you, thank you so much!" Zhang HENG exclaimed. Every rejoiced and embraced each other, I realized that it was time to get back and finish my history project.

I clicked the button on my umbrella to reverse the time travel so that I get back home. Once I reach home, I immediately start scribbling down the names and the stories of how the seismoscope was created. "Hey honey, how's your project coming along?" Mum enters and asks. "Oh, I have so much to tell you." I smile at her, and I start blabbering away about all the things I saw on my 'little' trip...

Xia Ming's story: The Invention of Banknotes

Stewards Ma Kam Ming Charitable Foundation Ma Ko Pan Memorial Secondary School, Cheung, Yin Ling – 12

In the prosperous era of the Tang Dynasty, the land of China was blooming with life and culture. People thrived in this era of innovation and enlightenment. There was a young scholar among the people, named Xia Ming. Xia Ming had always been at the top of the city, grades wise. Everyone told him that he could become the highest official, and that he had the potential for it. However, Xia Ming declined.

"I believe I'm made for something else, not an official. I find being an official to be an exceptionally dull job." He replied humbly.

Xia Ming's parents had originally trained him to become an official. They both hoped for him to become a high official with high status and wealth, especially his father, who was a high official too. On Xia Ming's 16th birthday, he decided that it was time to tell his parents that being an official wasn't what he yearned for.

"Mother, father, I have something important to tell you, and it's about my future." Xia Ming announced.

His parents glared at him with patience, signaling him to speak on. Xia Ming sat down at the dinner table with his parents and took a sip of his hot tea.

"Mother, father, I... don't think being an official is what I'm yearning for. I'm not into politics. I want to have to be involved in a more innovative job, instead of such a dull one." Xia Ming hesitated and stuttered a bit as he confessed the news to his parents.

Bam, splash! His father, Xia Ren stood up from his seat, and banged on the table with the utmost strength, causing the hot tea to spill onto the table. His mother, Chen Xi, who was next to him, jerked away, avoiding being splashed by the hot tea.

"Are you trying to break the family tradition? Every ancestor on my side of the family had been high officials! Every ancestor on my side of the family loved politics! You have endless potential to become a high official as such a valiant and just person! And your grades are top tier, forget your dreams of having such an inferior job! You can only be an official in your life, and nothing else, ever!" His father bellowed furiously; his face was going flush. His voice cracked while speaking, as he hadn't been so angry in such a long time.

Xia Ming stared at him with widened eyes, dumbfounded by his anger. He could see that his father was truly infuriated. Xia Ming thought for a moment composedly in utter silence.

Xia Ming walked back to his room without uttering a word.

Next day, Chen Xi went to the market for groceries with Xia Ming. They had to buy a lot of groceries. Chen Xi's back was slouched, and droplets of sweat dripped from her forehead. Carrying all the heavy copper coins was too much for her body to bear.

"If only these coins weren't so heavy. They hurt my back!" Chen Xi complained and lifted her chest a couple times while walking in the market, trying her best to maintain posture while carrying the heavy copper coins as the heated sun shone on the people of China.

A week later, it was Lunar New Year, and Xia Ming went out to hang out with his pals on the streets. There were many game booths for children to play.

"Do you think we're too old for games? Because I missed the times when we used to play in these booths when we were children." One of Xia Ming's friends, Xiang Ying asked, suddenly stopped in front of the game booths.

"We can play if you'd like." Another one of Xia Ming's friends, Li Xing replied, and began to walk over to the game booths.

When they arrived, the game host, who was a middle-aged man, welcomed them warmly.

"Hey guys! Welcome to the game booths! If you get 5 tokens, you'll be able to redeem a gift. But if you get 20, then you'll be able to take part in a lucky draw. One lucky winner will get the ultimate prize."

The group of teenage boys gasped with curiosity and excitement when they heard about the tokens and the ultimate prize. The rules were actually changed after many years of not visiting these games: they were now using tokens instead of fake coins now for redeeming gifts. They still remembered years before, Xia Ming was awarded with many coins from playing, but dropped them all on the ground and some other younger kids stole some of his coins. He thought that coins took up too much space and were too heavy for his patch pocket. When he carried the coins, his patch pocket sunk because of the coins' weight.

"I'm glad they changed the coins into tokens. I still remember the time I dropped them some years ago when we were playing." Xia Ming mentioned, with a big grin on his face as they walked to the first booth.

After a while of playing, they had already earned many tokens because of their well-trained skills upon many years of playing these games as children.

"Hey, it really is more convenient to carry these tokens instead of those fake coins! I feel a lot lighter now!" Li Xing cheered, while walking to the gift redemption center.

An idea sparked in Xia Ming's mind.

"It wouldn't be bad to make currency lighter and more convenient like these tokens, would it?" He pondered to himself, in his own universe of innovations.

"Hey Xia Ming, what are you doing? Come on, let's go!" Xiang Ying looked back to Xia Ming, who was still standing still at one spot in his own little world.

It was late, and Xia Ming headed home. Xia Ming dashed into his room immediately, and Xia Ren stared at him, confused.

"What could he possibly be doing? He'd better be studying to become an official." Xia Ren scowled.

With a newfound determination, Xia Ming began researching and experimenting with different materials and designs. He spent countless hours in his room every day, sketching and prototyping various ideas. He slept late; he started working on his invention right away after he had finished his schoolwork.

One day, while Xia Ming was deep in thought, his father entered his room. Seeing the mess of prototypes scattered around the floor and his desk, Xia Ren couldn't help but feel a mix of frustration and irritation.

"Xia Ming, what are you doing?! Stop doing whatever you're doing, clean up your room and start studying!" Xia Ren bellowed with a stern tone and banged on his door.

"Father, what I'm doing is innovative! It's also my dream job. I want to create a new form of currency that is lighter and more convenient, just like the tokens I used with my friends at the game booths! Father, I have found what I want to do for my life" Xia Ming explained, his eyes shining with determination.

Xia Ren sighed, he looked at his son with resignation and defeated eyes. "You have always been a headstrong and determined young man. If this is truly what you desire, then I will support you, even if it breaks family traditions."

Months turned into years as Xia Ming tirelessly worked on his invention, day and night. He faced numerous setbacks and failures. He received a lot of criticism from people, telling him to give up on trying to invent something so new and impactful to the country's economy; but he never lost hope. He recklessly destroyed every obstacle that went in his way. Finally, after years of dedication and perseverance, Xia Ming emerged with a breakthrough.

"Mother, father, I did it! I finally made paper money!" Xia Ming busted out of his room, shouting with exhilaration.

Xia Ming saw his father holding in a smile, his mother was elated and jumped out of her seat, putting Xia Ming into her embrace. Xia Ming succeeded in developing a lightweight and durable form of currency made from a

combination of paper and silk. This new currency was not only more convenient to carry, but it also had security features that made counterfeiting the currency nearly impossible.

Words of Xia Ming's invention of paper money spread rapidly throughout the city. Merchants, scholars, and even high—ranking officials took notice of it, and were astonished that such a young man could invent something so contemplative.

The invention of paper money is still being used today, more than a thousand years after its invention. Not only did the invention of paper money revolutionize commerce, but it also made transactions and purchases more convenient. But we can never forget Xia Ming, the great and headstrong inventor of paper money, who was unbothered by criticism and rebelled against his father's idea of wanting him to become an official. Just like the old proverb says, 'All roads lead to Rome'.

The Story of the Key of Communication

Tai Kwong Hilary College, Lam, Yan Shing – 13

It was a breezy morning ten thousand years ago in ancient China around the Yangtze River when Cangjie, who was the wisest man in the ancient Chinese empire, was ordered to meet the Emperor. As he had arrived at the palace, the Emperor inquired about his suggestions of making communication simpler. Cangjie said, "Your majesty, I advocate that we should create a series of characters for impartation."

"What a magnificent idea!" replied the Emperor in amazement, "we shall create a set of characters and make amelioration in communication. That will also make our empire more vigorous."

After having the conversation with the Emperor, Cangjie went back to his hut, which was his home and office, to start conceiving of ideas like a computer. He was thinking of making a series of characters which could make doing business a piece of cake. He was thinking of making a series of characters which could satisfactorily be appreciated by the people. He was thinking of creating a series of characters which could allow the history of his vigorous empire to be perpetuated for thousands of years. And yet, he was not able to have any ideas of making the series of characters.

After conceiving of the creation of characters for what seemed like a trillion years, Cangjie eventually came up with an idea. He modified the drawing of the new characters, and recorded the intricate drawings to a thousand tremendous bamboo sticks. As Cangjie had finished the creation of the new characters, he loaded it to a cart and began his journey to the palace.

As Cangjie had arrived at the palace, he was led to the Emperor's house. The generals were also in the Emperor's house to meet him. The Emperor was full of excitement and eagerness to check Cangjie's new creation.

After Cangji had introduced the denotation of the characters to the Emperor and the generals. The Emperor was glad to see that Cangjie had done well in creating the characters, yet he was not satisfied.

"Impressive," said the Emperor, "yet I think the drawings are too intricate."

"Then I think I should simplify them, Your Majesty," replied Cangjie.

"Looking forward to seeing your modified characters," said the Emperor.

Thus, Cangjie went back to his hut and started modifying them.

As Cangjie had left the palace, two mysterious ministers were talking to the minister who had greeted Cangjie earlier. They were asking him with eagerness about Cangjie's appearance in the palace.

After they had obtained the information, one minister muttered, "We must inform the other bluebloods about it."

"This is a menacing situation," whispered the other minister, " imagine what would happen if the plebeians could be literate."

"It would be obvious that they would become wealthier as they would be able to do business without language obstacles," replied the minister.

After Cangjie had gone back to his hut, he started his work on modifying the characters. And yet, he could not think of anything. Frustrated, he decided to go for a hunt in the woods in order to find inspiration. After he had left two mysterious men who had been hiding in the woods came out and obliterated Cangjie's work. When he went back with his spear, he saw a tremendous fire ball coming out of his hut where he conserved all the bamboo sticks on which the characters were written. He immediately put out the fire, yet his ideas were completely gone. All of his ideas had become ashes. He was filled with frustration as he went to the palace and informed the Emperor.

When the Emperor heard this shocking news, he said, "Tell me, who can do these loathsome things? These haughty people deserve hatred!"

"Your Majesty, I have no idea who did that," replied Cangjie, "perhaps we should investigate it."

The Emperor agreed with Cangjie and called minister Li, who was in charge of security, to meet with him.

"Li," he said, "someone has been attempting to obstruct us from handling public affairs. I would like you to investigate this incident."

He asked Cangjie to explain the incident.

As Cangjie had finished, minister Li said, "I would like to suggest that we should ask Cangjie to stay in the palace for his work. In addition, we shall send some investigators to get some information about it."

The Emperor agreed to send some elite officers to investigate this incident, and Cangjie was asked to stay in the palace for the work.

In a village, there was a massive house, which was owned by a wealthy merchant, Chen. Throughout the past days, the spies have observed that lots of other affluent people have approached here for visitation. Things had been more suspicious as people were conversing about "the issue of characters". As the merchant had been acting suspiciously, the spies reported the issue to the Emperor. Thus, he asked the affluent merchant to meet him.

Chen was extremely concerned about this meeting. So he informed the ministers who supported him to prepare for launching an attack on the palace. In addition, he had planned to assassinate the Emperor, so he hid his tiny sword

inside his clothes. As he had approached the palace, he was greeted by minister Li, and was led to a small hut, where the head general was. Chen was confused as he was with the general instead of the Emperor.

The general asked, "Did you know anything about the characters?"

"General," replied Chen, "I have no idea what you are talking about."

"We have no doubt that you have already heard about it," uttered the general, "tell us, how much have you known?"

"I know nothing about it," said Chen, "I only know I am going to launch an attack!"

All of a sudden, two men came in and attempted to assault the general, yet they were killed by the general immediately as Chen escaped. Simultaneously, on the other side of the capital, troops entered the town and were attempting to attack the palace. The haughty soldiers were taking souls from innocent civilians with cruelty. As the Emperor had heard about the news, he asked the general to deploy troops and stop the enemy from slaughtering innocent people.

As the general's troops were leaving the palace for confrontation, the two ministers who supported Chen, led ten men to assassinate the Emperor. Cangjie, who was in the palace, saw this menacing situation and immediately informed the Emperor. The Emperor asked his guards to confront the assassins. Although the assassination was a failure, the palace was surrounded by the haughty troops and the situation had become extremely urgent and menacing, yet they were not able to send reinforcements into the capital due to the enemy's occupation of the fire towers, which were used to deliver messages. Under all these circumstances, they could only surrender. Fortunately, Cangjie had thought of an idea as the enemy was approaching the palace. He quickly wrote down the unmodified characters that indicated "reinforcements" on a bamboo stick, and adhered it to an arrow, thus shot it to the village nearby.

As the general in the village had learnt how to read those characters which were elucidated by Cangjie earlier in the Palace, they were able to understand and immediately sent troops to the capital, when they had arrived, they immediately defeated the enemy and triumphantly captured merchant Chen, who was on his way to escape.

After the battle, the Emperor had announced that all the citizens in the Empire must be educated, thus everyone was able to read and write. Citizens were also able to do business and communicate with each other easily and the Empire had become more vigorous and sophisticated. Chinese Literature has also been fostered by the characters.

After years and years, the Chinese characters have changed, yet what we are using is still based on the ancient characters. Without them, we would not be able to do different things today. And this is the story of the creation of one of the most prominent and vital inventions in Chinese history, Chinese characters.

Cultural Secret Messages

Tai Kwong Hilary College, So, Yat Tung - 12

You may expect Chinese inventions to be quite boring, or you may be expecting to read boring words like: 'It all started in the B.C.' or you may expect, 'Hello everyone today' or even worse 'Once upon a time...'. It is indeed horrible to hear these boring words! Isn't it? Yes, Chinese inventions can be extremely boring, but this is a whole new thing, like James Bond ready for action, so what are you waiting for? Read along!

We all know that our favorite mooncake is that round pastry that's filled with a tasty filling. Egg yolks! Red bean paste!...yum, it is, indeed, very attractive! Of course, people use mooncakes to celebrate the moon goddess or celebrate with their family for this festival. But I bet you don't know where it came from. Did mooncakes just pop out of nowhere? What was the meaning of mooncakes before modern times? And of course, how is it a Chinese invention?

At first, mooncakes in China were just quick snacks in the royal palace, but in the late Yuan dynasty, it was the time where Mongolian forces started to spread. Taking over any land they could find, the Mongolians conquered the Chinese people's land . The founder of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (who has a very long name) wanted to prepare for the fight to help the people, but the only problem was that there weren't enough forces to help him!

Zhu had made a mistake sending a letter that was accidentally letting the Mongols know that he was preparing for an uprising, now Mongolian guards were everywhere in the city. Zhu was extremely depressed! 'I've made a huge mistake! There's no going back, what should I do? What's happening to my brain? I can't deliver a letter, anyone could find out!' thought Zhu who kept walking in circles and pulling his hair like a madman.

Liu Bing, who was a subject of Zhu, peeked in at the doorway. He couldn't help but stop his future emperor from throwing tantrums, which was not a very emperor thing to do.

'What now? More businesses?' Zhu stomped the ground pulling his hair.

'Ah-um.', Liu Bing cleared his throat, 'Actually sir, I was thinkingof...., um..... using mooncakes to send the messages you like to send, I mean secret messages, sir. Since mooncakes are snacks in the palace, it will be common for ministers to receive mooncakes. How does that sound, sir? By the way, the Mongol's don't eat mooncakes.' Liu bit his lips nervously, trying to make each word he said as professional as possible with fake confidence, forcing a smile. To Liu Bing's surprise, Zhu ran down the stairs, hands trembling from excitement, and held a thumbs up so close to Liu Bing.

'Bing! You've done it! I knew my father was right to accept you to come to this place, Bing Bing!' After Zhu finished his sentence, he ran out to his office, leaving Liu Bing almost embarrassed to death.

'What was that?' thought Liu, 'Is that going to be a new nickname for me? This future emperor is still like a child. Is that normal?'

When the ministers, whose names were Shen, Jing and Ying received the mooncakes, they all greedily brought them back home as a snack. When they cut open the mooncake, a slip of paper popped out and read 'Uprising on the 15th night of the 8th lunar month.' Yes, although there was a delicious mooncake in front of them, there were more important things to plan.

It was finally the day of the uprising. When Zhu and his army went for the uprising, they couldn't find the forces of the ministers. Even though the forces from the minister weren't there, they had to keep going. The fight was hard, and many nobles couldn't survive the fight. It was chaos! When Zhu's army was about to surrender, the hope to help the people seemed lost. Most of the horses fell to the ground, unable to move. Fire was everywhere. Zhu's army was surrounded by their enemies, and swords that pointed at them came closer, and closer. The soldiers could hear the breath of each other.

Then a large drumming sound came from the hills. From below at the battle ground where he stood, Zhu could see gigantic flags blowing in the wind, on which were written, 'Jing', 'Shen' and 'Ying'. The forces galloped, rushing down the great hill, and charged the Mongolians, leaving Zhu speechless. Many of Zhu's army were saved, and the enemy that surrounded them all fell to the ground.

After the war ended, and Zhu had successfully saved the people, Zhu gathered all the forces that helped him in the war for a celebration dinner. Zhu clapped his hands and announced 'This is a celebration for defeating the Mongolians' He paused and looked at Liu Bing and smiled, 'And to the one who helped me on the way.'

The ministers clapped their hands, and the soldiers all cheered. After the celebration, Zhu gave small boxes to the ministers. The ministers all looked at him suspiciously, 'What does this box have?'

Zhu chuckled and smiled, 'All thanks to the mooncakes.'

A Pot of Tea

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Chen, Demi – 13

Mo Li stares at the wind bell at the front door of the tea shop. It only rings when it's windy, and it really isn't today. The smell of tea is overwhelmingly strong and there are shelfs and shelfs of tea pots, cups and other accessories. Flowers are blooming in the garden and the seats of customers are empty. Cow bells and sheep bay in the distance. Her master, Gui Lin isn't in today. He has gone to pick tea leaves in the mountains and left Mo Li in charge of the shop for the day.

Mo Li fiddles with her jade necklace, the only thing Ma and Pa left her before they died.

She turns around and looks into the mirror, that had been polished and shined. Mo Li's hair had been tied up into a bun with a Fa Zan. The Fa Zan was wood, decorated with glass flowers. Her hair feel lose around her ears and look brown in the sunlight. Mo Li's mouth was painted bright red, the same color as her dress.

Ding

She brushes the hair out of her face and sighs.

Mo Li sees a shadow at the door of the tea shop. She got up from her seat slowly waits. A middle aged man with a black cloak walks in the shop and smiled politely at her. He takes a seat and asked for a pot of Wu Long tea. Mo Li bows and pushes behind the blinds of the tea shelf.

Ding

She takes used a small chisel to take out a piece of the tea. It smelled refreshing, magical, even. No one has asked for Wu Long in a long time.

Ding ding

Mo Li glances out the window. There is no sign of wind, why is the wind bell ringing? She tries not to focus on this and prepares the tea for the customer. She boils water over a small fire and while the man waits for his tea, she brings him some snacks. The man thanks her and Mo Li bows respectfully.

Ding

Mo Li goes behind the counter and picks a tea pot and a cup for the man. She fiddles with the jade necklace on her neck and waits for the water to boil.

Ding

The kettle whistles and Mo Li pours water into the tea pot. Then she waits for a while. Then she pours the tea into the tea cup, and the steam wavers slightly. The Mo Li pours out the water from the tea pot and the tea cup.

Ding

After she brings him his pot of tea, she returns behind the counter. As the man poured the tea into the cup, the steam thickened and became mist. Mo Li gasped and stumbled backwards. Ding ding ding ding

The bell started to ring like crazy. The man didn't seem concerned or bothered. He smiled and used his hands to make shapes out of the fog as if by magic. Mo Li tries to back away but finds herself stuck. The man beckons her forward and Mo Li is pushed by the fog at her feet, which has already become so thick that it was like a blanket.

Ding ding ding

The man started to change. He took off his cloak and he grew wings. His wing were like a bats but instead had color. His eyes turned red like burning coal, and his teeth grew in length.

Ding

Mo Li was screaming but no sound came out. She tried to run. She tried to hide. But nothing happened.

Ding ding ding

His legs turned into muscular claws with huge, sharp nails, and a furry tail like a whip. "I am the Qiong Qi, one of the powerful creatures of the Shang Hai Jing. I am here to show you your true path of life." said Qiong Qi in a growl. Mo Li shook her head like crazy and tried to yell for help, but nothing came out.

Ding ding

The Qiong Qi started to come forward but stopped. Mo Li could see a tear in his eye. He says "You have to believe me, this is my last chance to become human again. I was put into exile after what I did, many are still in exile, but I wish to try again." He looked at Mo Li and smile. "Your parents were one of the few that escaped, but got found. You can save them! I was their friend before, and your necklace helps me track you."he said. Mo Li was thinking this through. It was too much to take in. She opened her mouth and closed it again. Qiong Qi sat on the floor and sighed. He took out a bag of something and handed it to Mo Li. He smiled grimly and said "When you decide, throw these on the floor. I will become human again, and I will send some help to you." He looked at Mo Li one last time and faded into mist.

Ding

Ding

Ding...

Everything was back to normal. The man had disappeared into thin air, and the wind bell had stopped to ring. It could have just been a dream, but as she looked down to the counter, she saw a bag of something, just like the one Qiong Qi gave her. She thought of her shop, her friends, and everything else she had here. But then there was her parents, and Qiong Qi's life. She took a deep breath and opened the bag. There were three multicolored stones that shone with light. They were pulsing, like a living creature. Mo Li hesitated. With a swift movement, she threw the stones on the floor. As they landed, they cracked open. Light flooded the room and blinded her eyes.

Then nothing.

The Enchanted Prick

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Chen, Enya – 12

At 11 o'clock in the morning, Taylor's mother, Andrea, asked her in a cheery voice, "Hey Tay, I'm going to the hospital for my checkup. Want me to drop you off at your studio on my way there?"

"That would be amazing! I'll be ready in about five minutes, thanks!"

A few moments later, they were both in the car.

After a while of gushing over the fact that she was going to release her new song, Taylor suddenly pointed out the window at a small beige building.

"Oh yeah— that's my stop! See you later Mom! Love you!" She got out of the car and waved goodbye as she shut the door.

The stone to the stairs of the building was old and rusty, but as Taylor stepped inside, low ambient light and wooden walls padded with soundproof foam welcomed her. She was greeted by her music director, Travis.

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"How's it going, Taylor?"
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"Great! Just recording a song I finished yesterday called *Enchanted*." Taylor told him as she opened her laptop. She started recording immediately, and finished an hour later.

"Finally! I'm done!" Taylor smiled and called her mom.

"Can you pick me up on the way home?" she asked.

"Sure..."

As Andrea drove, Taylor talked non-stop about her new song. Andrea was silent the whole way home. When Taylor unlocked the front door, she was still gushing about how Travis was so cute. Andrea stepped in after Taylor, and Taylor's brother, Austin, came rushing towards them.

"Mom! Are you alright?" he shouted frantically.

"I'm fine, thank you Austin." Andrea sighed and sat down.

Taylor stopped talking and turned to stare with a confused look on her face. "What happened? Nobody told me anything..." she drifted off.

Austin turned to Taylor, "You're so selfish." was all he said.

Taylor threw her hands in the air and shouted, "What's your problem?"

Austin crossed his arms and accused, "Why are you screaming? You're the one that has problems! Stupi-"

"ENOUGH!" Andrea hollered. Silence followed as the siblings looked down. She took a deep breath and went to the kitchen.

Back in her room, Taylor was hurt. And obviously super confused about what just happened downstairs. Why didn't they tell her what was wrong? Why did Austin suddenly care so much about their mom? These were all questions that racked Taylor's head. A thought instantly struck her: What if mom received bad news from the hospital?! I need to go check on her. Taylor ran as quickly as a gazelle to the kitchen, and slowed down as she approached her mother.

"Mom, are you okay?"

Andrea didn't turn to face her, but whispered reluctantly, "I-I have breast cancer." Taylor stood there, mouth wide open in shock, unmoving for a very long time. "Oh Mom..." Taylor was on the verge of crying. She hugged Andrea tightly. "I'm sorry... I didn't know..." Taylor said shakily as she broke down into tears.

"It's okay, it's okay." Andrea comforted her in a soothing tone. "It's not your fault." she patted Taylor on the back.

Taylor looked her in the eyes and said, "I love you."

Andrea smiled weakly and said the same thing back.

Early the following morning, Taylor was committed to help her mom reduce her cancer pains. Her determination overpowered her sadness. But how would she do that? Taylor wasn't a magical fairy in children's stories that could do everything she wanted. She was just a regular girl. Well, she could start with some simple things to make her mom feel better. Like sewing a teddy bear.

She brought her sewing kit to the living room and sat very close to her mother.

"I'm here to sew you a stuffed bear!" she said with a bright smile.

Andrea looked dazed, but within a blink of an eye, she returned to a happy grin and said, "You're doing so much for me, Tay. Wow, thanks!" She sipped her tea.

Taylor was in a happy mood now, and started sewing the bear's head. Andrea watched Taylor intently.

"Wow, that's cute." Andrea commented as she pointed. She held her hand there for quite some time, looking very carefully. All of a sudden, Austin barged in.

"Hullo!" He greeted the two in a loud manner. They jumped a little. Taylor's needle had struck something, but she was too busy to turn to look. Andrea gasped.

Taylor startlingly yelped, "Austin! You scared us! Don't rush in like that so suddenly!"

Austin ignored Taylor and said to Andrea. "How are you feeling, Mom?" The siblings turned to look at their mother. They saw her hand and stopped mid-breath.

"AAAAHH!" Taylor and Austin screamed simultaneously. Previously, Taylor's sewing needle had struck something. It was the back of Andrea's hand. Meanwhile they were screaming, Andrea wasn't reacting at all. She just stared down at her hand, curiosity sparkling in her eyes.

"Mom! What are you doing? Take it out!" Austin yelled worriedly.

"Wait, hold on." Andrea gestured for them to pause. "I don't feel any pain... actually, it's soothing my cancer effects? Feels weird, but it's quite nice."

Taylor and Austin shared a puzzled look. "Mom, are you sure you're alright?" Austin questioned slowly.

"We should take you to see the doctor." Taylor suggested. Andrea said nothing but took the needle out as she got out of bed.

"I've never seen something like this. You didn't feel any pain?" the doctor asked Andrea at the hospital.

"Correct." she replied.

"Huh. That is pretty abnormal... Give me a few minutes to check with the other doctors."

A short while later, the doctor came back. "We've come up with a conclusion. We think that the needle poked her pressure points, which stimulated them. This released chemicals that acted as natural pain killers, which was why she didn't feel any pain and why her cancer effects are decreasing." The Swifts nodded their heads, but still showed slight confusion.

"This is new to us doctors too; that was just a possible theory."

The moment they got back home, Andrea announced, "I'm going to try again! Taylor, give me more of those needles."

Taylor gave her a questioning look. "Are you sure? It was probably just luck that it didn't hurt."

Andrea frowned stubbornly. "Taylor, just give me the needle. Please." Taylor was anxious for her mother, but still did as she was told.

Andrea took the needle as she tried to remember where it had struck her before.

"There." she declared. Andrea cautiously inserted it where the spot was.

"Oh, it feels so relaxing, just like the first time." Andrea cooed.

Taylor had a look of doubt on her face, but suggested, "We could go back to the hospital again for a cancer test. It might just work..."

At the hospital, Andrea wondered aloud, "Will it work? Will it work?" She kept pacing back and forth.

A nurse called for them, and they headed into the large x-ray room, where there was a massive scanner sitting in the middle with lots of high-tech machinery scattered around.

"Okay, I'm going to need you to lay on the bed and put this lead mat over your body." A doctor said as she handed it to Andrea. The bed slowly slid into the x-ray, and it made a series of beeping noises. Finally, the scan was complete.

"Please come back in about ten minutes for the result."

When Andrea and Taylor came back for the outcome, the doctors seemed happy.

"We have exciting news for you!" one of the nurses said, "Andrea no longer has cancer! Congratulations!"

Taylor turned to at Andrea, gasping in joyful shock. Andrea hollered, "I DON'T HAVE CANCER ANYMORE!!" and jumped up and down. All the doctors and nurses clapped and cheered for her.

Taylor embraced her mom warmly, and added, "I'm so happy for you, Mom!"

Soon after they went home, Taylor told Austin the good news.

Austin's voice immediately turned a pitch higher as he shouted, "This is the best day ever!" and pumped a fist in the air.

Taylor grinned and announced, "I guess that the needle really changed Mom's life."

"Is this a new invention?" Austin asked his sister.

"Maybe. What do you want to call it?" she answered.

Austin put a finger to his chin. "Well, you helped cure Mom, right? So it should be about you. You like to sing, especially without background music... acapella?" Taylor took close consideration of this.

"Maybe something that has to do with the needle too. Mom *stuck* the needle into her body, so maybe aca—stuck? No..." she noted. A thought hit her. "I know! Since the needle *punctured* Mom by accident, we can call it 'acupuncture!'" she declared.

"Tay, you're a genius."

Soon after, the Swifts announced this invention to the world. This coincidental discovery has helped manage stress, pain, and health worldwide. Nowadays, many people use acupuncture for all sorts of medical treatments and recoveries. Because of one small accident that the Swifts made, it changed the world forever.

Gunpowder

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Hu, Jerry – 12

The winds blew fiercely. A howl that rips the peace of the night like a predator attacking a piece of prey. Stained a disturbing shade a dark red, the moon forever warding off the hungry beasts at the base of the mountain. The monochrome yellow of the temple was imposing enough, without the deep—toned chants of the monks inside, forever labouring at creating an Elixir of Life like Sisyphus at his rock, an impossible task. The high winds blew the fire under the elaborate bronze inlayed pot that had seen all of it. The rise and fall of the empire and its power. This was not meant to be a normal and peaceful night. It created the world we live in today, it's subjects of chaos and destruction, it brought forth the twilight of peace in humanity. It gave us weapons capable of immense destruction. These monks, unwittingly, ripped apart families and caused war, all because of the urge to live for ever.

Tang dynasty — 9th century and the emperor had ruled in absolute peace, without war and uprisings. The little mountain had stood there for centuries, the monks declaring neutrality for the duration of the war which established the Tang 400 years ago, the little temple in absolute isolation and peace. A normal day in the temple would consist of sitting next to the huge pot flaming away 24 hours straight and adding a select few herbs and interesting compounds to make their medicine of life. This was not destined to be a normal year.

Xuanzang was the monk that had just arrived as an exchange learner from Dunhuang. He left home by the age of 30 realising the pain of the world and what the peasants are going through, him being of humble origins himself, and vowed to help the peasants. He didn't realise that the point of the elaborate temple he was now in was meant for the creation of a pill that would grant the only the emperor unnatural long life and so that the monks would receive riches of their own. The interior of the temple was highly decorate. The walls were inlaid with a beautiful ivory, said to be carved by the legendary guild of sculpture all the way from the mysterious west. Gleaning white and spotless, dragon carvings were brought to life in the flicking firelight. By night the place glowed as the moon shown on the ivory, giving an ominous glow to the temple. Xuanzang wondered when so many of the poor were waiting for help, the monks spent fistfuls money on making the most beautiful workspace.

"Now, after your 7—day stay, you will be officially part of the temple of the highest power and order of the entirety of the Tang. We here are the supporters of the Emperor and we will be focused on creating medicine for all the palaces." Liu spoke in a slow and steady manner and the deep hum of his voice was calming. "What about the poor people that the religion is supposed to save from eternal salvation if they work hard enough and gather karma from acting in kindness and pity? Ironic not mentioning them." Xuanzang spoke with unsupported confidence and pride. The traditions and opinions were not very easily wavered. He wondered why he was sent here; they weren't helping anyone by doing so except the Emperor. "Listen, you're not going to get anywhere by declaring your opinions and such so just work and try to help people you can, the timetable is on the wall in your room, and remember, don't fall asleep on watch."

Xuanzang quickly adapted to this new life, sitting at the bronze furnace so obviously placed in the middle of the temple. Xuanzang was of stout build, a bald head and his eyes a shade of black darker than the night sky in days of the new moon. Framed by the loose—fitting yellow robe blew and wavered in the wind as if a flag strung high from a flagpole in the north wind, his face was thin. Small strings of the dull wooden aromatic beads never left his arm, and he constantly counted the precious beads while muttering prayers in a deep voice. He walked upright and stood at an impressive six foot six with absolutely no remorse in his steps. A solemn face was eternally printed on his face.

Never was he so absolutely sure today that something would go wrong, imagining several ear—splitting screams as he traversed up the gritty gravel path back towards the temple. The several questions he had an urge to ask. What on earth were they trying to do? To try and make the Emperor live longer that's what, but why? He shoots one last glance back down at the prosperous capital. It was very dark outside of the prosperous city of Luoyang and walking around the mountain you could view and admire the full splendour of the capital. He had question that needed to be answered. A night alone at the huge pot tinkering with different formulae should do it

The last monk's shift had just ended, and an eager Xuanzang eager for the workings of the big cauldron thing and how it would make you live forever approached. On Xuan's mind was the workings of the furnace even while adding fuel and various substances to each other and eventually into the deep void of the standing furnace. The sprinkle of saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal was what changed Xuan's life. This yellow crystal smells better than my breakfast today thought Xuan while grinding all the stuff up and placing it into a bamboo tube and roasting it in the fire with tongs. A loud bang shook back awake Xuan, and a several pieces of charcoal flew out of the furnace hitting the wall right behind him and left a huge hole in the wall. The loud sound attracted many more.

The emperor's great hall was spectacular, gold—coloured banners hung outside the great gate of African Blackwood, an amazing tint to the wood that made it glow. Silk strips were strung up upon every tree in the court, varying and bright with all the colours. There was no other place in the continent at the time, not even Rome could compare. The final reckoning of the monk came. Xuan was convicted of attempted murder and treason. Xuan, as an act of desperation, pointed out the use of gunpowder for war, as he named it gunpowder. This choice by a pacifist monk has eventually led to the war ridden world that we all live today. Chinese argue that this is their greatest invention ever. They argue that it drove forward civilisation. The works of a monk is now becoming the core of some ethics debate today, amazing!

The Emperor's Dream

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Kong, Vivian – 13

Darkness and dreariness roamed the city of Liu Yang. I sat beside his bedpost with dark circles around my eyes. The thought of the sinister memory had haunted me day and night. Although I had occasionally expressed my horror, the guards' denial lacked empathy, which made me more exasperated.

I glanced at the painting hung beside my bedpost, my priceless possession. A young prince stood beside a girl in a red gown with a stern look. The girl wore a diamond necklace, matching those on her index finger. Since the very sight of the girl pleased me miraculously, her immediate departure was too sorrowful to digest. If life hadn't gulped down the girl too quickly, I would have nothing to fear of. A single tear tinkled down my pale cheeks, wetting my skin. I sighed and blew at the shimmering candlelight, shivering at the gloominess of the night.

I hope, I pleaded, I hope...

An eccentric roar echoed through the corridors of the palace. A silvery silhouette crawled under the moonlight. I jumped and held my breath. Covering my ears and closing my eyes, I imagined the slithering of a dragon, and its bitter breath...

"Ahh!" I cried.

It was a busy evening.

I scanned the energetic city with anxiety.

"Close the gates." I demanded at my soldiers, "Now."

The soldiers shared bewildered looks, "Your majesty, it's only ten past five. The gate usually shuts at midnight."

"Midnight?" I gasped with horror whilst stumbling towards the floor dramatically, my palm on my forehead. "Didn't you hear that? Close it. Now."

"Yes, your majesty." Came the reply I had awaited.

Dinner was soon served. I wore my red robes; my hat was perched low; my eyes were sore. As usual, my silver chopstick slid into the served dishes one by one. After the detection was complete, the chopstick remained silver and clear as I had expected. Nobody, not a single soul, would make an untruthful decision go murder me. Additionally, who would dare?

I declared the meal to begin in a hurried tone. My dinner seemed endless, particularly with no accompany but my servants and the banal soldiers. They stood like large stones, unemotionally. The servants bowed as usual, whilst the soldiers stood to attention. I raised my glass to face the pouring moonlight, shuddering at the thought of the monstrous silhouette. It must have been a nightmare, I thought just to comfort myself from my illusions.

I tasted every dish in a dull expression and had longed for the appearance of the silver carp, as this was the meal that pleased me the most. Unfortunately, it never came, threatening my mood. My patience growled and rumbled inside me. I tried hard to gulp down my unsatisfactory meals, but I had learnt myself not to control my emotions after I was crowned and received the Mandate of Heaven. I knew father would never tolerate my complaints when he was alive and knew that he would have been disappointed if he found out. Would he anyways? I was very fond of father, a man with a great mind, but all I had remembered was his grim look whenever I crossed his boundaries time after time. I was called a failure, by

father obviously, but I had never had a chance to prove my strengths to him, nor had he listened whatsoever. Staring at the sky, I knew father was peering down at me with a glitter of hope in his eyes.

I sighed.

As a distraction to my guilty thoughts, I ordered a visit to the palace kitchen, expecting the salty smell of fresh fish during the little journey. I was eager to meet my desired prey: the silver carp. My stomach growled as I felt my saliva dribbling down the edge of my lip. Unfortunately, I was greeted by a peculiar burnt taste. Hastily, I tramped, followed by my truthful servant, who comforted me with his exaggerated words.

"Your majesty, it might as well be the little ceremony to scare off the little red beasts." the servant explained.

"I thought I clearly stated for you to close the gates, so did the smell crawl over the walls of my palace? Nonsense!"

It was fantastic that the servants were all terrified about my raised voice and my scrunched eyebrows just as how I was scared of father before. Their tiny tense faces made me snigger under my hat. I had loved being on the centre stage and them by my foot. Pleasure.

I was by the kitchen door when the cook's gasp was heard.

"No way...never..." was all my ears heard through the cracks of the door. Saltpeters we're everywhere, so was smoke. I had no time to release my anger.

Boom!

I shuddered on the soldier's back as I was carried out to the opening. I closed my eyes but heard the terrifying sound of splashes of fire. The dragons, I thought, but as I opened my eyes, I gasped at the gorgeous performance. Red splashes of fire twirled in the sky, illuminating the night. Fresh air poured on my nose. Tears no longer splattered down my face, flooding my eyes. It was no longer disastrous. My palace was in ruins; The cook, not to mention, was nowhere to be seen, but I was no longer scared. I was well. Very well.

The city crumbled, but I knew, deep in my heart, that it was an amazing start to end the city's fear.

Wind hushed ferociously; I opened my eyes with slight difficulty due to my aching back. I felt as though I had just arrived back from a thrilling adventure. Unexpectedly, I was well on my bed. Peculiar. I stretched and yawned in disbelief. It was only a dream after all, an amazing dream that was too true to be fake. An imagination can't be real, unless you repeat each step you encountered in your dream. Step by step.

"My dear servants," I called, "Who's the palace's main cook? I shall need a word with him. This, perhaps, is the start of the firework invention!"

The servants seemed slightly perplexed.

"The main cook is Li Tian. I will inform him about your request."

The Ultimate Creation

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Li, Dalen – 13

When I first arrived in China, it was like stepping into a different world. Compared to the plain brick houses and pearly green trees of the UK, taking just a single peek at the majestic urban sprawl of China was like taking a time machine to the future. Glittering glass skyscrapers towered over me, making my jaw drop when I considered how much time and manpower it would have taken to build, while electric cars zoomed on the neatly paved roads without a single sound. Gargantuan planes nearly double the size of others roared over me, while glistening neon advertisement boards showed intricately created advertisements for literally every single product I could imagine. Everything around me screamed creativity and innovation, and if you, like me, sometimes wonder about just how China has managed to develop into such a technologically advanced country, then we will have to look at the inventions of China.

To say the least, the citizens of China have produced some of the most useful and life—changing inventions ever on the face of the earth. Some of these inventions include crafting paper, block printing and even an early form of ketchup. These are all inventions which have an extremely large contribution on Earth, for example, block printing was what have Europeans the idea of the printing press, which is why information was able to spread during the renaissance, meaning that it had a large contribution to the success of the renaissance, and also the nowadays logical and mathematical ideas of Europeans instead of simply believing in God. There are many, many more inventions from China which have equal importance, but I believe that the Chinese invention with the largest change and contribution to the Earth is gunpowder.

Lee sat up groggily, yawning and rubbing his eyes, and was instantly bombarded by the many thoughts of what to do today for the best efficiency. Lee groaned inwardly, knowing that he had a lot of an exhausting work ahead of him. This process of sleeping, eating and researching was repeated every, single day, but there never seemed to be any progress on making what the emperor referred to as 'the ultimate goal' of making something which could propel an object at s high speed. Lee forced himself to stand up and pull on his Hanfu, as all alchemists who are late faced strict punishment such as a loss of wages or even being fired from this job which was dreamt of by many. However, Lee thought, this job was not as exciting as he thought when he had just finished a whole week of monotonous, demanding tests while being enclosed in a minuscule box which seemed inhumane for such high—ranking people to be in. When he had finally finished the tests and received the message that he had been accepted as one of the emperor's alchemists, he was absolutely ecstatic. However, now, a job that was once a dream for Lee was now dismissed as boring and repetitive. Now, it is just doing the same things over, and over, and over again until the king gets annoyed and swaps a goal for the alchemists to reach.

Now, the alchemists are currently working on an experiment named 'the ultimate goal'. The goal is, quoting the emperor, 'to create an object capable of propelling objects at high speeds. There has been many different inventions, such as the design using the rubber band to fling out small rocks, or even the pipe which required you to blow air inside it and then release the air hole, but none of these designs worked the way the emperor wanted it to, sometimes even harming the person using it. Lee sighed, and then tried to think in an optimistic manner. At least he was not one of the millions sat in the streets begging for food and praying for a miracle for them to find some way to keep their families alive and fed. Now feeling a bit better, Lee cleared his thoughts and focused on the day ahead, striding towards the alchemist experiment and testing area.

Wearing rubber gloves and a paper—made mask, Lee took in the familiar bitter and slightly choking smell of the room specially reserved for the emperor's alchemists. Sparks flew from an alchemist using an enormous sword to attempt to cut a piece of iron, whole blue flames erupted from the workspace of an

alchemist trying to mix a concoction of chemicals, scalding many other alchemists, including himself. Lee's jaw dropped when he finally, for the first time, realized that this room was not just for conducting experiments, but also a room for unlimited creativity and new ideas. Now much more joyful, Lee rushed towards a worktable where his friends were already waiting.

'Hey.' Lee's friend Chang said, without looking up from his experiment that he was conducting, which seemed to require lots of extremely delicate work. 'Hey,' returned Lee, 'what are you doing?'

Chang squinted at a piece of paper, and then sighed, putting down a test tube and a stirring rod that he was originally working with. 'I'm trying a brand—new chemical combination, but it just doesn't work! All it does is explode in my face or burst into flames. I've had 5 assistants in hospital from just a single morning!'

'Let me check.' Lee shuffled closer, examining the scroll containing the method that Chang was currently experimenting with. His eyes widened when he saw the ingredient 'potassium nitrate'. 'What?' Lee exclaimed. 'Why do you have that stuff inside? Do you even know how deadly it is? And mixed with sulfur and charcoal? What are you making? A bomb? No wonder so many people got hurt!'

Chang shook his head and replied:'I have been trying to complete the king's goal of creating something to propel an object at high speeds.'

Lee was obviously flabbergasted, and half—screamed, half whispered:'What in the world are you thinking? Are you trying to propel an object or are you trying to propel the human instead?'

Chang grinned, but it quickly disappeared, his face turning back into the despondent state it originally was. 'I had the intention to fire a projectile, but up to now, either there is a huge explosion while I am making it, or when I test it, the person operating it literally disintegrates.'

Lee looked at the scroll closer and realized that Chang had written the amount of previous past experiments and their results. He found out that out of 12 total experiments, five resulted in 'severe injury', six resulted in 'moderate injury', while one, which happens to be the first one, resulted in a 'mixed failure'. As the well—known genius of the alchemists, Lee immediately began inspecting the calculations and formulas on the scroll and brought out a scroll of his own. After scribbling some calculations, Lee grinned and said in a confident voice:'Well, I'm done.'

Chang's eyes widened as he inspected the scroll, while stuttering: 'How? I did so many experiments, and now you get it in one go. Are you sure this will work?'

Smiling, Lee replied: You just have to lessen the dose of each ingredient, and there you go.'

Literally bouncing off his seat, Chang flew down the corridor to collect the ingredients needed to create the new recipe. Lee took in a deep breath, pulled on a lab coat, and put on a pair of glasses, ready to create the thing needed to so called 'rule the world'.

Finally, Lee finished his experiments, and gotten the goals he was aiming for. It was just noon, but Lee was already dizzy, with his muscles weakening with every step and his brain literally unable to think of anything. He had just gone through a grueling four hours of intricate measurements, huge calculations and mixing chemicals in test tubes, all while wondering if it would explode into his face. When he had finished, he should have been ecstatic, but he only wanted to rest more than ever. After using the very

little left energy to ask the emperor for a rest, Lee stumbled to his bed and slumped onto it, without even bothering to take off his clothes, the darkness of sleep taking him into a slumber in mere seconds.

When he woke up, Lee was still drowsy, but came to reality in an instant. His heart started pounding, and he punched the air, screaming:'I did it! I did it!' He skipped down the corridor, and went into the room containing the emperor's throne, where Chang was already reporting to the emperor. 'Ahhh, so there is the famous Lee. Congratulations on achieving my goal, and you shall be awarded.' Lee has a smile stretching from ear to ear and left to find the other alchemists to tell them the good news. Finally, the thing that the emperor had been searching for for so long has been created.

A Story of Tea

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Pearson, Pollyana – 13

Shen Zhen gazed from the balcony at the ocean, the dark waters gazing back as waves crashed against the shore. He liked it this way, not a care in the world, just him and nature. He felt the crisp morning air graze the back of his neck as he trotted down the steps to the garden.

He sat down in the shade, under his favorite tree, a warm cup of water rested in his hands. He sat there pondering about life, on what he was to do the following day. He picked up the small porcelain cup and placed it to his lips, as he drank, he knew it didn't taste right. He looked down to the cup to see the water had become amber, and at the bottom of the pottery was a tea leaf. He fished it out with his fingers, and noted how it had dried up. He took another sip and to his delight, he found the leaf water rather tasteful. For the rest of the day, he experimented with all different sorts of techniques. In the end he found grinding up the leaves then placing them in the water enhanced the flavor.

That night he sat awake in bed, with the same porcelain cup in his hand. He finished his cup, of what he had decided to name the tea. He was about to put the cup down when he noticed the leaves at the bottom, they had taken on the shape of a skull. *This is surely a coincidence* he thought, and it didn't cross his mind again. He rested the cup on his desk, and climbed back into bed.

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He panted as he sat up. He was underneath the tea tree. He looked up to the sky, it was still dark. A small cloud of purple mist drifted away into the distance. The memories slowly rushed back to him. He had had a dream. Except it wasn't a dream. It couldn't have been if he was out here, not after what he had saw, what had happened...

He rushed back inside and grabbed his journal from his desk drawer. The leather cover smooth against his skin. He flipped through the thin pages, till he reached a blank page. He scribbled down everything he had seen, everything he had felt...

He buried the journal at the foot of the tree, where he had just woken up. And that night he vowed to never speak of what had happened. Not for himself, but to protect the ones he loved.

Shen Hua immediately started cycling towards the hospital. She had gotten the call at 3:33 that night, it was the hospital. They had told her nothing more than her father was in an accident and there was a chance he might not make it, but that was all she needed to hear before she slipped on her shoes and started running for her bike.

The smell of disinfectant burned her nostrils as she stalked through the halls.

She finally found her father's room, this was it, room number: 333. She cautiously pushed open the door, the metal cool under her fingers. Panic rose in her stomach as she saw her father in the hospital bed, surrounded by beeping machines and nurses; panic immediately rose in her stomach.

"He's in a coma" said a blonde nurses, "we're not sure when he'll wake up, it could be a couple hours or couple years... or never." . she said it so quietly, but how could a few words so small and so quiet mean something so big and so loud.

"No... no no no no!" she cried into her father's chest as she hugged him tight. "Wake up..." tears started rolling down her cheeks, the saltiness against her lips.

That night she slept on the yellow stained armchair beside her father, she did the same the next night too. On the second day she sat back down in the lumpy chair and laid back to try and get some sleep. She imagined her and her father, tears welled up in her eyes. But eventually darkness swallowed her.

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That night she woke up to the sound of fast paced beeping from one of the machines attached to her father's lifeless body. She walked over, the cold tiles against her feet sending shivers up her spine. "Dad?" She called into the darkness.

"Shen Hua? Is that you?" Someone called back, no not someone, her dad!

"Dad! You're awake!" Tears of joy falling from her eyes.

"Listen" he whispered. "I don't have much time before they notice I'm gone"

"Who?"

"The spirits, but I needed to tell you. There's a prophecy. Our ancestor, Shen Zhen, had powers. What powers we don't know, but he wrote it down in a book, and the prophecy! Yes the prophecy, the three hundredth and thirty third child would find a way to wield the magic once more and break the curse. But I found the book, it was under your pillow. You're the three hundredth and thirty third child. And every time the spirits came I tried to fight them off, tried to protect you, but it wasn't enough. I am so sorry. But I don't regret it, I would rather die protecting you than live knowing you were in danger. But it's up to you now, you must figure out how to wield the magic and save us all. But until then I will forever be watching you, and just know I will always love you. Goodbye my little flower."

"Wait what curse!" But it was too late. Her father was dead.

She went back to her armchair and lifted the pillow, and just as he had said, the book was right there. She clutched the book in her arms and let the tears fall. She knew there wouldn't be a day that went by that she didn't morn him, she would love him and everything he did for her forever. But she finally understood, when someone said forever didn't mean people It meant memories.

The next day she burnt the book.

When she woke up, the book as usual, was under pillow. She was tired, tired of trying to find new ways to rid herself of that damn book! No matter what she did, every day the book would find its way under her pillow. But as usual, she made a cup of green tea she never had time to finish, she threw the book in the dumpster behind the building, and went to work.

When she got home, the book was there. Not under her pillow, but on the kitchen table laying open. She gave in, she'd been trying to avoid looking at it for three years, but she'd had enough, she couldn't avoid it forever. She slowly picked up the book by its leather cover and started reading.

She tried to unravel all the drawings of shadows, untwist the riddles within the pages, but after an hour she didn't want to look at it anymore, not without being sick. There were prophecies of sacrifices, and magic. But her heart skipped a beat as she read what was on the next page, her father had been wrong. It wasn't the three hundredth and thirty third child that would wield the magic to break the curse, it was the three hundredth and thirty third child that would die to break it. But she still didn't know what the curse was. She kept flipping through the pages until she had an answer, but she didn't. She closed the book and was about to pick it up when she stopped, there was a piece of paper placed on top of the book. How could that had happened, she just blinked and it was there! She cautiously picked it up, her hands trembling.

Every three hundredth and thirty third year, the dark one will awaken and feast on the blood and flesh of three thousand three hundred and thirty three people. Unless, the chosen one's blood is spilt on the book of breathings.

A lump rose in her chest as she read the last sentence. And just as she looked away from the paper, there was a new book, the book of breathings. It was made of solid gold not actual paper, it was heavy and cold in her hands. She started sobbing, she didn't want to die! But her father. He had sacrificed himself for her... what was it for if she didn't do something, she was the chosen one, and by the sound of it the only chosen one. She had to do what was right. She looked over to the cup of tea from this morning. And there, was the tea leaf skull at the bottom of the teacup. And she was dead.

The AI Kidnap

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Temporini, Lucrezia – 12

I knew I'd miss waking up, looking out at the vast sea and knowing that at least one thing never changes. The city had changed so much over the past 16 years. It went from being a small town where people over fifty had no idea what a phone was to a bustling city where AI was everywhere you looked. My hologram, Lin, showed me videos and pictures from before the AI revolution. I never knew how she did that, she wasn't even there at that time. Lin helped me with everything, she helped me study, she waked me up in the morning and even did my chores for me when I was too lazy to do anything. She was amazing.

"Time to wake up Diana! You're gonna miss your flight" Lin knocked on my door.

"You can come in Lin" I said, trying to sound half asleep.

"Don't you try to pretend, I know you've been awake since five," she scolded me as she opened the door, "I could hear you packing your bag."

I kept forgetting that she heard everything. "Fine, I couldn't sleep. I was too excited."

"I know you'll miss everyone here, all your friends and family. But you're gonna come back here in three months," she said patiently. "Plus, you're not going to Los Angeles alone, I'm coming, your parents are coming. You're not gonna be alone, ever. Now come on, these bags aren't gonna pack themselves."

I followed Lin into the kitchen where my parents were waiting for me. I sat at the counter and ate a slice of bread, like I normally did.

"I hope you're ready," said my mom. She saw how sad and worried I was. She always sees everything. "I know you don't want to leave. But you knew you'd have to go to university someday."

"Anyway," my dad interrupted, "our flight is in 3 hours. So, hurry up and get changed."

I got changed and stared out of my window, trying to memorise every tiny detail. I couldn't forget anything. I knew I'd come back in just three months, but it felt like an eternity.

"Diana," Lin called, "we're leaving."

"I'm coming." I shouted back.

After a long one—hour car ride, we finally arrived at the airport and after another hour we were on the plane. "Time for a 16—hour flight. Yay" I thought to myself. I was sitting with Lin, but she had to be shut off for most of the flight. So, I was alone. I kept re—reading the university booklet, hoping it could prepare me in some way. That's how nervous I was.

We arrived in Los Angeles, it was loud, busy and ridiculously crowded. Most importantly, there was the salty smell of the sea. At least that reminded me of home. My dad went to get the luggage while I helped my mom get Lin to work again and get a taxi. We got on and after thirty minutes, we arrived at our apartment. It looked similar to home, it was super modern and had the view of the sea, but it felt completely different. It felt cold. I unpacked my bag, went to bed and fell asleep immediately. I slept for thirteen hours and woke up feeling more rested than I had ever felt

before. My parents were still unpacking some of the bags so I went to the kitchen to look for some bread. The only bread I found was industrial toast so I didn't eat anything. I had never tried toast before and didn't want to. I wanted the bread my grandma made, which I couldn't get now because I was living in another continent. I went to go do some research on the university I was going to go to, Los Angeles University of Science and Technology, and the only thing I found out was that it was the most famous and best university in America. I had no idea how unprepared I was. The university was gigantic. The tour took two hours and I barely knew where my class was after that. I also met this other new girl, Charlotte, who was really nice to me and also had no idea where to go.

The first day was as crazy as I thought it would be. There were floods of people in the corridors and then, in a matter of minutes, they went silent, completely silent. Charlotte and I were late to every class, but no one seemed to care. The days passed by in a blur, days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months and suddenly it was the 25th of November, Charlotte and I were best friends and we had an AI project that was due in a three weeks. It was quite easy, for Charlotte, not for me. She said she'd finish the model at home but obviously something went wrong. So, she called me and told me to meet her outside of the school gates on Sunday morning.

"What are we doing at school on a Sunday?" I demanded.

"I need to get another hologram generator," She explained. "My dog ate the one I have at home and I can't find one anywhere."

"Ok. How are we supposed to get in?" I asked. That second, Hazel, from our class, came to bring us in. Her family stayed in Germany so she lived in the school dorms. Charlotte and I went to the basement to get a spare whatever we needed. That's when things started getting exciting.

While we were walking back from the storage room, we heard the head of technology, Ms Asher, and the principal, Mr Moon, talking. More like shouting cause they're both deaf.

"How are we supposed to pay all our debts?" shouted Mr Moon.

"I don't know, you're the principal!" Ms Asher shouted back.

"Exactly, so you're supposed to come up with all the solutions." said Mr Moon.

"Fine. How about we steal all the AI in town and resell it to the same people?" said Ms Asher.

"No, are you stupid?" yelled the principal "That way the police could track us down. We'll only take the AI that belongs to the families that send their kids to our school. (Big gigantic pause, walks towards the door) See, I'm amazing."

We rushed into the nearest classroom and waited for them to leave.

"What was that?" asked Charlotte.

"That was a sign that we need to do something." I wouldn't let them take Lin away from me. I couldn't. She had all my favourite memories from when I was little and I wouldn't lose them. More importantly, I wouldn't let them take my closest friend.

After we got out, we went to Charlotte's house to 'finish our project', which was finding a way to stop the principal. After a long discussion we finally agreed that Charlotte would make a fake

AI that had the same memories and functions as my one and use it as bait to record whoever was supposed to steal the AI.

Two weeks passed and still no AI had been stolen. We were about to give up when Charlotte called me at <u>FIVE</u> in the morning to tell me that Hazel's friend's AI had been stolen. We decided to meet Hazel at school, an hour before school actually started, so we could get more information. Actually, Charlotte did all the talking and note taking while I was sleeping. During the day, I couldn't keep my mind off the fact that I might lose Lin. That's probably why I had no idea that I would be having a maths test in a week, but that's for another time. I had a bigger problem, keeping Lin safe.

After school, we went to Charlotte's house and set up the hologram projector outside her front door. Then, we stayed in Charlotte's bedroom and looked at what her camera was recording and waited and waited until I fell asleep.

I was eight years old again and I was playing with Lin when all of a sudden, she started glitching for about a minute or so and then it just stopped. Lin turned around and looked at me with a blank stare.

"Lin, are you ok?" I asked.

"Who is Lin?" she asked in monotone. "My name is Blank and you are not allowed to play unless you get more than 80% on all your tests."

"I'm only eight, I don't have tests," I was crying at that point. "I want Lin back!"

I woke up panting and sweating. It was four in the morning and Charlotte was already awake.

"Did you even sleep?" I stumbled towards her.

"A couple of hours," she replied, there was something strange in her voice. "Diana, there's something you should know. Your parents just texted."

I didn't need her to finish that sentence, I already knew what had happened. Dread, sadness, and most of all, fear flooded into me. Lin had been stolen.

The Plague of The City

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Wang, Jake - 11

A blanket of storm—grey clouds enshrouded the city in shadows, blocking all light from coming in. How had this happened, how did a vibrant city turn in to a graveyard of darkness? Well it all started on 2076, 5 years ago, It was just like any other day, the sun was up shining and the birds were chirping but under the veil of innocence, a virus crept through the dirt battered after years of torment and would make this day a very dark day indeed. It spread swiftly for a few weeks unnoticed by the system, but by the time it was discovered the damage had already been done and the world was no longer safe. Many doctors tried to devise an antidote but all failed ending in their ultimate demise. And as a last ditch effort the world isolated this city behind bars, nano fiber enshrouding the city.

Darkness fell on this city, and people were getting sick fast, I a nobody in the normal world decided this would be my only chance to do good and I did good for a while, you see I got sick a few weeks ago and there's where we're at now. I stumbled through the dirty streets stumbling around falling on the floor my face kissing the dusty dirty floor, I struggled as I tried to stand up fire burning in my veins and fell down again as if some bully was knocking me down. I suddenly heard a group of voices harsh and menacing, they laughed at me as I was a rat a worthless addition to society, they walked to me and snatched my wallet out of my pocket, pickpocketed all my money, then threw the wallet at my face, I struggled to stand up as they kicked me down to the ground and as they walked away my strength ebbed and I lost consciousness.

"Is he okay?" Cassie asked Tom, "I think so......"he said. I opened my eyes and saw my two best friends watching me. "What time is it?"I mumble as I see the clock 2:15. I had been asleep for over a day, and was late for my work. "I got to go."I say, stand up then crumble back down. "Whoa you need to rest!"Tom said, "Chill out man." I look at my surroundings and realize I'm not at my home, "Wait where am I?"

I ask as I stumble out of this makeshift tent and see light blinding light and green everywhere, Cassie rushes to my side and says: "We're outdoors!". I look around and see life blooming everywhere, birds chirped ahead of us horses were everywhere in the wild and the trees had luscious green hair of fine leaves. The smell of nature enveloped my nostrils a smell I haven't seen for a long time.

Sunlight was precious and I found a newfound appreciation for nature. My friends let me relax for a while then reminded me that we needed to find a cure for my sickness and I decided to stop admiring nature for the moment. We trekked up hills and walked through plains and finally found something man made a village in the middle of a mountain range we carefully walked down the slope dodging past debris and rubble carefully stepping on solid ground and made sure to not walk on loose dirt or gravel, once we arrived at the village, we asked around for medical herbs, careful to not draw in suspicion in the interest of self—preservation. The most of the village didn't have any, but all hope was lost until we found a small shop hidden in the woods we found herbs of all varieties many exotic and rare, but we faced another problem, we couldn't pay for it.

I fumble around for my wallet then as I opened it I realized the sad truth, the street thugs had stole every single penny I had as my wallet was as empty as a vacuum in outer space. As the realization hit me I sobbed surrounding myself with anguish I was scared of reality, scared that the disease would overpower me before we could pay the price.

Cassie tried to be upbeat as she comforted me and told me that we would be able to collect the money before it was too late, and Tom promised me that they would help with unwavering resolve. They got me

to see the upside of things even though they themselves were almost convinced that this situation was impossible.

After a while I got back onto my feet their was no going back on it now as we had already travelled so far we looked around begging for a job we visited grocery shops and even high tech farms but without our work licenses that we left at shanghai no one would hire us, we hit the same problem we had hit the block with no avail but this time their was nowhere to go.

I slumped down on the floor defeated and tired I sat their for hours with only silence to accompany me, when my friends came I told them to go away thinking it was all over but when I was at my lowest I suddenly heard a mechanism in the wall, I stood up for the first time in a few hours, and walked to the other side of the wall, and found an entrance to a room, I warily crept around the edges of the room and saw a pile of gold behind a wall of steel reinforced glass. An audio played and it said: "If you want this pile of treasure get me three items a white truffle from the forest a live frog and the roots of a pine tree.

I laughed thinking of these ridiculous requests who would give up a treasury for a few simple items. And so with only around 1 week of life left I called back my friends and went on the hunt again. We trekked through the mountain clothes getting ruined by brambles and leaves. Tom asked in doubt: "You sure we should do this?" I reply: "I have no other choice and so it continued. On the end of day one we found a frog and gave it to the man. On day two we got the roots of a pine tree. But we could not find a white truffle despite our efforts. Day 3 past, Day 4 past..... With every day I felt more and more depression. And on Day 7 I was weak as ever and was hopeless yet again but just when darkness swore to overtake the sun, far off in the distance Cassie spotted a pale white mushroom in the distance Tom rushed over and shouted that's a white truffle. Just as I heard that my body slacked and I fainted. I heard faint traces of panic as I completely lost consciousness my friends taking care of me.

Cassie and Tom picked up the mushroom and lugged me onto a piece of wood. Trying to pull me towards the village, as they reached the man their faces were covered in sweat tired from all the running. They traded in the mushroom for the gold and tried to bring me to the herbalist but my breath was shallow and my heart was barely beating. The villagers seeing my friends pull me pitied us and brought me to the herbalist along my friends. Cassie and Tom threw the gold on the table, and quickly "Asked is this enough?". The herbalist seeing me on the brink of death quickly nodded yes and gave me the appropriate herbs. At that point my subconsciousness started to fade and as that happened I could see everyone taking care of me, and gently persuaded their minds to wrap the herbs in dough and feed it to me. As my final seconds my astral form disappeared as my friends finished and stuffed the food in my mouth. For a few seconds my heart stopped beating and my friends mourned. But suddenly I awoke and hugged my friends with a deep embrace.

Now it is two years after then we bought enough herbs to treat the whole city of Shanghai and the dome is no more. But I will always remember that friends are the most important of all as you can trust them when you can't trust anyone else.

Counterfeit

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Zhang, Anlin – 13

Horse hooves echoed faintly across the stone slab floor. Like a squabble of penguins, merchants and traders overfilled the courtyard with gossip and arguments. A distinctive smell of spices tickled Peony's nose. She squeezed through the ground demanding a space in the crowd, her eyes glued to the Emperor's podium. Sunlight traced the fine embroidery draped on the table. Curtains of rich red velvet waltzed and glistened in the air like dancers. Bells rang beating the air drums of everyone who passed. An essence of excitement condensed in the air, like a cloud ready to precipitate at any moment.

"Paper money, a valuable but fragile item," the Emperor spoke steadily and with confidence silencing the crowd. A breeze passed by twirling hair, flicking through pages of books, and flirting with the delicate petals of the flowers. "Money something of no value, and something which can buy almost anything in the world. Use it wisely...or else." With a swish of his hand, he was gone again. Whispers of deceit fluttered in between the gossip of the merchants waiting impatiently to be let out. The sun dipped into the night sky, extinguishing the excitement of the party. Peony shivered not because of the sudden temperature drop, but of something else wafting in the air.

After the Emperor's speech the crowd dispersed and fled back to their marketplaces. The sound of silence was deafening. It began to drizzle. Walls: moist, slippery, and reeking of metal. The smell hit Peony's nose, luring her to it. She paced around the ground, her footsteps drumming in harmony with the soft pattering of the rain. Her hair raised in deep fear, for she sensed an air of deceit playing on the same team as the merchants.

Distant striking of the clock, announced the end of the day, hurrying people home. As Peony arrived home, she entered her cosy room, here she felt safe from the strangling of lies and deceit from the outside world. She shook off her shoes, and let down her hair, which like a wave smoothly washed down her back. She threw herself onto her silk pillows trying to ignore the thoughts which kept running laps inside her head. There could not be something wrong with this new system of money. She reassured herself again and again. Tangled by her thoughts, she flipped and flopped, trying to sleep, trying to shake the thought out of her head.

Awoken by the loud rapping on her door, she reluctantly rose from her slumber. Shuffling towards the door, she was not excited at all about the case she was about to be assigned to. "PEONY! PEONY! Please wake up something has happened in the imperial court." The message boy bellowed through the door. Thunder growled outside, followed by a clap of lightning, rain showered down as if the ground was begging for water. She shoved back the door with much hesitation, for she knew what was waiting ahead was a board game of deceitful Chinese chess.

On the way to her office room, she listened to her message boy explain and unfold the details of this case. Cogs in her brain began to turn slowly but clearly. Apparently, what she predicted was correct, someone was faking paper money in the printing office, hijacking all of the machines and selling them for higher prices. 40 percent higher according to the merchants scrambling around the market.

"So, you're saying that the people who are creating this fake money are buying the printing press for a higher price than the emperor?" Peony questioned in awe, not believing a single word of it as she spoke it out loud. "Yes, we are quite unsure how that is happening but that is what we have heard from the relatives from the press." Coming from a printing family herself, she knew that all of the printers were loyal to the Emperor, but there could always be an outlier.

Arriving at her office, she began to study the different printing works of the two different types of money. Despite her excellent eyesight she could not figure out the differences between the printing methods. Slamming her teacup on the table, and howling in her office, throwing the money around, she had enough. She lowered her head and sighed disappointed with her stupidity, and incapability to solve the problem. She shoved her books in her homemade bag, rearranged her calligraphy brushes over and over again, and fiddled with her hair. Twisting and turning it as if it could light a spark in her mind. On the brink of falling asleep, an idea turned the light back on in her brain. Her parents were printers!

Throwing her stack over her shoulder, slightly swinging because of the weight on her shoulder, she scampered out of the imperial palace, with her messenger trailing behind obediently. They hopped in the carriage racing towards her parents' house to seek what traces were left on the newly made paper money. Bubbling with excitement she bounced from the carriage towards her parents' house. This meeting would have been a perfect reunion and the key to opening all the locks to this mystery.

Crashing through the front door, singing loudly "Mother, Father! I'm back!" Her voice eerily echoed around the walls; echoes rebounded off herself. Her body froze. Hoping so hard that things weren't the way she thought they were. Sprinting around the house, darting and dashing in and out of the rooms. There was still no sight of her parents. Moving hesitantly towards the table, Peony reached out for the blood—stained envelope on the desk. Hands shaking, she took out the letter. Gently, cautiously unwrapping it, her eyes scrolled over the lines of chicken scratches on the parchment. Your mother and father are in the hands of us. Return the money we have made, leave this case Resign and exit the imperial palace. Only on these conditions I will return your parents back.

Things were not as easy as Peony thought they were. She was now entwined in a web of deceit and lies.

New Tales of China's Inventions

Wellington College International School Shanghai, Zhou, Kevin – 13

Two thousand years ago, the first and the greatest dynasty had met its first and last challenge. The Qin dynasty has reached its peak and its end. The emperor's sudden death had shocked the country. The starving people and the ambitious nobilities dreamed about a new era. With the army at the countryside, the emperor is defenseless. Everyone knew that things have changed.

In the city near sea, two worried brothers were planning their future. They were the descendants of the best scientists in china, they were Han Yu and Han Li. They both knew that the flames of war will burn through the country. Like the others, they wanted to stay alive in the revolution. But where could keep them safe? For this, they discussed for an entire week, and made this difficult decision. They will go to the land across the sea. As the decision was made, they started preparing everything for sailing. Food, water, clothes, boats, and and some medicine, they used all their money to buy supplies, but they forgot about the difference in sailing in rivers and sailing in the ocean. They didn't have navigation.

The brothers knew nothing about sailing or navigation, but they believed that the situation would be worse if they stayed. The brothers were similar in everything, they were known to be smart and intelligent, but they were not nobilities, which means they couldn't get power anywhere. To run away from this deformed society, and the illusion of finding new land, they became more and more convinced about the idea of sailing.

With the confidence of finding a new piece of land, the two brothers dreamed about what fairyland they could find. Beautiful forests covered in mists, lovely animals playing in the sun, and wonderful hot springs bubbling warmly welcoming their arrival. Thinking of the spectacular views they may see, the animal meat that could only be eaten in the new year, and owning their own piece of land, the brothers were filled with strength and energy to work hard and to join the party in the new land.

"One, two, three, go!" The two brothers pushed tithe boat into the water. With all the supplies, the brothers dreamed about their bright future, until Han Li asked "Brother, do you know where our destiny is?"

His brother thoughtlessly replied "Yeah, I think it's around... around... there?"

Suddenly realizing that they've lost their destiny, the two brothers cried in horror. Their fantasy dreams have been destroyed by the cruel fact that they could run out of supplies before they reach another land. Only if they can find supplies in three months, they could have a chance to live. Or else, they might experience the most painful tortures in the world: starving, torn apart by wild marine creatures, drowned, or even scared to death. They had to make a change.

As the descendant of scientists, they were told that a magnet arrow will always point to a certain direction, and they brought some of it as a medicine. The magnets that were as cheap as stones now felt like gold, the little pack of magnets could be processed and lead the way like the northern star. After a few weeks of inventing, one of the most useful inventions appeared. The compass.

After three months of hardworking, they reached an island. The island was rich in resources and was as big as the city they lived in. The island was filled with astonishing creatures, fruitful trees, and unexploited gold mines. In the centre of this island, a crystal—clear lake sparkled to the sunlight, fishes delightfully swam across the lake when several birds chirped above them. The day has ended. The last

sunbeam shone onto the lake, reflecting the inverted image of the brothers' solitude. Feeling lost, they looked up to the smiling stars and the They spent the next few weeks on this island, preparing new supplies, re—engineering the compass, and taking a break from the tiring days which they fought with the roaring waves every day.

After weeks of wander, the brothers chose to restart their journey. Leaving everything they had behind, and gone into the perilous, but miraculous ocean, just like how their legend journey began.

With the adapted compass and a bit of luck, the brothers found the three islands that the first emperor Ying Zheng was trying to find. This island was known of the island of the celestial beings, the stories started spreading that these islands contain the secrets of immortality. As they found the islands, a sudden music started playing, sunlights and rainbows shone onto the shore, doves and cranes sang gracefully, and the mist that swirled around the island slowly disappeared.

Entering the island, they were amazed at the magnificence of the palace in the middle of the island. As they walked through, the trees bowed as if they were welcoming them, the animals greeted them with fruits as big as footballs, and the flowers smiled to them with honeybees swinging their wings with happiness. Two deers led them to the empty palace. On the front door, it said 'Hello, when you see this, I have died a long time ago and this palace, these three splendid islands —— Peng Lai, Ying Zhou, Fang Zhang —— all belong to you. Xu Fu.' In the palace, the brothers found teenagers locked around the palace, they were brought by Xu Fu to find the medicine of immortality for the emperor.

Without thinking, the brothers freed the teenagers, and moved into the palace. A few days later, suddenly recognizing the name of this great alchemist,

Han Yu exclaimed "Xu fu? How could he be here? I thought he was executed by our old emperor?"

Han Li was also confused, "And how did he manage to find this holy place, we only found it with our magnet!"

"Oh, never mind that. We invented this magnet that can guide us on the ocean."

"I think we shall record our invention, by books, by stone, or by stories. Our invention should be remembered forever with the skill of navigation."

"How should we name our invention? Like the other fabulous names?"

"No, let's stay simple. The arrow always points south, so I think we shall name it a compass (the Chinese name for it means the arrow that always points south).

Several decades later, the teenagers became adults and had their own kids, a brand—new civilization was built in the island. To thank the brothers, they made him the constitutional king. Knowing how a cruel king would be taken over, the two brothers treated others equally, but they can decide the laws of the civilization.

The brothers stayed in this paradise for half of their lives, but as they were getting older, they became more and more homesick. They dreamed about the food in the cities, the grand Great Wall, the gorgeous forbidden city. The images of the great dynasty recalled every night, they were feeling the urge to return to their homeland and end their life where it began.

They used their rights to make a boat, a boat that can take them back home. As it's the only command that the brothers made, the people delightfully made the best boat they could imagine. A boat filled with supplies, gold, and plenty of servants. And most importantly, a compass. This was the original compass made on the ocean, with craftsmen's adaption. The compass was covered in glaze, with diamonds and jewelry made into it.

The brothers finally returned to their homeland. They saw the new dynasty rose just like the rising of the sun. The war ended, now everything is at peace. These two brothers can finally rest in their new home, on the land which belongs to them. To record their stories, and the invention of the compass, they wrote many books and spread them across the city. The compass greatly influenced the career of sailors and fishermen, these people even made a statue of the brothers holding the compass.

As the days passed, the brothers knew that death was slowly, mysteriously, but steadily approaching them. Their teeth weakened, and their hair, which was as white as snow, was decreasing, like the crumbled leaves which drifted from the trees.

A calm and peaceful night. Two brothers knew the time had come. In their dreams, they dreamed of their youth, when they built the boat to hide from the war; they dreamed of their panicking days on the ocean; they dreamed of the fantastical island; and the beautifully re-crafted compass.

In the night, the graceful moonlight gently crept into their house. The stars wept in sadness, as they witnessed the death of this great inventor. In the moment where they finally fell into their everlasting sleep, the world became silent. After all, they returned to where they were, carrying the priceless glory and memories.

The first beam of sunlight shone from the horizon. It brought warmth and light again to the earth. People's lives continued, no one knew that two inventors have left the earth, but their remarkable contribution and indelible mark made their names renowned in the Chinese history.

I am Robot

Western Academy of Beijing, Blackwood, Caroline – 13

Have you ever felt different from everyone else? I don't know what to call it, but my whole life, that's what I have felt. I live in Beijing, China. My family hates me. They're embarrassed by me because I am different from them.

My mom bursts into my room when I am in the middle of my daydream. "Get up and go to school, you lousy thing." I might still need to mention that I am not actually the same as everyone. I am a robot. I live in a family of 8 siblings, and it isn't easy because we have so many mouths to feed. I hear a honk outside my window and sprint out the door. I sit on the bus beside my best friend, Lu Ai. When I got on, I noticed she quickly shoved a piece of paper into her bag. She is acting weird, but I don't think anything of it.

The next day, I left bed and went downstairs to find my gate, staring at the TV. At first, I wondered what happened, but then my parents sat all of us down for a talk. "Beijing has just been informed that we are advised to stay in our houses, considering recent events."

"What happened?" I ask. My parents gave each other a look, and immediately, I knew something was seriously wrong.

"Zhao Zhu, I don't know how to tell you this, but Lu Ai was reported missing last night. I am so sorry." I did not know what to think. All of a sudden, I crashed to the ground with a thump. Around dinner time, I wake up, but I can't even sleep, drink, or do anything I would do on a typical day. Three years ago, when my Ye Ye died, my Nai Nai came to live with us because she couldn't function on her own. After all, my Ye Ye took care of her. She was with us until we found her in an assisted living home. But when she was here, we saw her go through all the stages of grief. The one that seemed to be the worst was denial. She refused to believe that Ye Ye was dead. She kept trying to look for him and had trouble doing anything but look.

The next day, I woke up with the sun shining in my eyes through our apartment. I get out of bed with a thump and go downstairs. My family stared at me. I bolt out the door of our apartment and sprint to the elevator. Right before it closes, I slide in. After the door opened, I sprinted out and ran to our hovercraft. I ride it to the woods. I bring it closer to the ground and camp out near a bush. After an hour, I see a figure coming towards me. As it came closer, I realized it was Zhao Ying!

Somehow, Zhao Ying persuaded me to go home, and when I got home my family barely even looked up from their devices. I go straight up to my room and notice a strange piece of paper with the words help me. I am still determining who it could be from, but it is a clue. One of the only things I know about being a detective is that I need to make a suspect list. Lu Ai's sister, Lu Xu, is the number one person on the list. Lu Xu has always been jealous of Lu Ai's grades, even though Lu Xu is very popular at our school. I sneak out of my room to spy on Lu Xu. I walk this time to avoid getting caught. When I get to Lu Xu's house, I will be exhausted and barely walk anymore. Suddenly, it started raining cats and dogs and being a robot, I could not be in the water for more than an hour or shut down for 30 minutes, but when I shut down, I fell on the ground. From the looks of it, the rain will not stop for a while, so I decide to go into the house using their spare key. I look under the glass rabbit, and I see the key. I opened the door and sneaked up to Lu Xu's room. Her room is tiny compared to Lu Ai's room. I look around for evidence, but I can't find any. I decide to explore the rest of the house. I look at Lu Ai's room, and for the first time, I realize how much bigger hers is. I found one thing in her room that could be used as evidence: the wall has scratch marks that I have never noticed. I collected the evidence and then analyzed the DNA; it was Zhao Ying's! Suddenly, I hear footsteps and a creak as the door opens, and I dive out of the first—floor window, and my world goes black.

I wake up in an unfamiliar place with tubes sticking up my nose and needles injecting into my skin. I look around the room and notice my mom and my dad. They walk over to my bed and hug me. "The police just arrested your brother."

My jaw dropped to the ground. "Why do the police want him?" I asked.

"They think he murdered Lu Ai." My mom replied. I need to get out of here, I thought to myself.

"I am going to the bathroom," I told my parents, and I rushed off. I go out the window since the bathroom is on the first floor. I rush off to collect evidence. When I arrived, I quickly snuck past the police and into Lu Ai's room. I quickly gather my evidence and leave. The next day is the trial. I must testify along with the evidence I found. I dragged myself out of bed, put on a nice suit, combed my hair, and put on my nice black shoes, and my parents drove us to the courthouse. When it is my turn to testify, I feel like I will puke as I step onto the platform. I should have prepared. I immediately regret not making notecards. "Please state your evidence," says the judge.

"Zhao Ying is guilty because I found his DNA in the walls of Lu Ai's room. On the day of her disappearance, he was not in the house and had no proper alibi. You see, I interviewed the friends he was supposedly with, and they said he was not there at the time of her murder."

"Mr. Zhao, do you plead guilty to these allegations?"

"Guilty." The crowd gasps, cameras flashing. I can feel the tears surfacing. How could he do this? Why would he do this? The police start to take him away, but before he leaves, he says one more thing: "Never forget you are a robot. You are not like other people, so stop trying to be like them, be original, and most importantly, be yourself." And then, just like that, he's gone.

The following week is Lu Ai's funeral. My mom gently wakes me up and lays out a new suit. I walk downstairs and am offered breakfast, but I refuse. I must speak at the funeral but don't know what to say. The words can't come out of my mouth. I thought about faking sickness to get out of it for a bit, but then I realized that Lu Ai would want me there, so I mustered up the courage to get into the car. On the way to the funeral, the car is calm. We get there, and there are many people, mainly relatives of Lu Ai, because she does not have many friends. The funeral starts, and many people talk about her and how she touched their lives. For a minute, I fade away and picture my best friend next to me, but then they call my name.

I walk up and speak. I don't know what I said because I felt Lu Ai's hand on my shoulder and tears streaming down my face like a waterfall. Then I started to sing her favorite song, and I couldn't help but sing too. After the funeral, I found our special tree and climbed it for the last time. I can't help but think if only she were her, but I hear her words, "Follow your path. You are amazing, and you will be fine without me." Her soothing words calm me, and I finally make peace with the fact that I am not like other people. I'm a robot. That's ok. The sun started to set. I leaned against her shoulder, and I let myself fall asleep.

Father and Son

Western Academy of Beijing, Ping, Luca - 12

Cai Wu violently jerked awake as his vivid dream was suddenly disrupted by a series of rapid knocks on his door. He impatiently rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and called, 'Come in!'

Silence.

Cai Wu let out a long, depressed sigh. His dad was always like that. Sometimes, he would call for Cai Wu, and he would totally forget what he was doing the next second. That was old Cai Lun, Cai Wu's dad. The Cai family was publicly renounced as the oddest household in the small village, like an awkward lump sticking out of a smooth tree. Perhaps the people felt pity for Cai Wu. Who knows? After all, his mother passed away of illness when he was only three years old, and his father was a mad inventor who barely ever showed up anywhere with Cai Wu. Nobody could understand Cai Lun. To the villagers, he just seemed like an unsuccessful clown who never knew what he was doing.

The young boy dressed quietly and independently for school, as usual. He packed his bag and hurriedly called out to his dad before he left, expecting no answer. Nothing.

The people always kept an eye out for Cai Wu though. They respected this young 6-year-old who managed to complete almost everything on his own. Cai Wu picked up his breakfast (Jianbing and buns) from a small shop opened by his best friend's dad, Liu.

It was a long journey to school. In fact, Cai Wu was one of the few children in the village who received a proper education. This was thanks to his mum, who had taught at the small elementary school outside the village, so Cai Wu had this scarce priority.

Cai Wu munched on his Jianbing and quickened his pace. He had to arrive before the other students to complete his homework at school. Unlike the kids whose parents scurried after them to complete their homework, Cai Wu only had time to write his homework at school; he had become responsible for cleaning and organizing the house since his mum's absence, which took up all of his time at home. Cai Wu's housework included washing his clothes and his dad's every day after school and taking out the trash. He was also in charge of bartering their goods and taking care of his dad's meals beforehand. Cai Wu had to look after the family and keep the house as orderly as possible. Deep in his young, determined guts, he had a strong sense of determination. He knew this would be what his Mum would have wished for.

Cai Wu never understood his dad. For instance, he never responds when others talk to him, and he always keeps muttering under his breath as if talking to ghosts. He had never been this way when Mum was still alive. Cai Lun enjoyed studying odd plants. He had hundreds, perhaps thousands of tiny sprouts and plants growing in his office. It was the only place in the house Cai Lun kept tidy and where Cai Wu was forbidden to enter.

As Cai Wu reached school, and eyed the other students. Most of his classmates came from affluent families, and were spoiled and carefree. They didn't and would probably never understand people like Cai Wu and did not seem to care. The first thing Cai Wu heard was, "Look who it is: the *odd egg.*" The gang of children bullied Cai Wu whenever they had the chance, making fun of him and creating cruel jokes behind his back.

Life for Cai Wu repeated like this day after day, night after night.

However, what Cai Wu did not know after all those years since his mother passed away was that his dad was sane. Very sane. Cai Lun is so rational that the people around him just cannot recognize it.

You see, Cai Wu's mother had died of a disease that the doctors had claimed to be unknown. However, after some investigation, Cai Lun discovered this type of sickness had been the case for many other patients some time ago. Patients before her had all been cured by the last generation of medics. Knowing this before her death, Cai Lun's wife had made him promise to create a solution to this for others in the future. Cai Lun had sworn, since his beloved wife's death, to discover a new element of material that could be capable of recording information to pass on to the next generation. The thing is, nobody believed his story. Nevertheless, he never lost faith in his promise to discover a completely new tool.

For the next few months, Cai Lun worked harder than ever. Only his shadows were to be seen, as he hurried from place to place in the village daily. One could even assume he was on to something.

After unfaltering hard work, one day, Cai Lun finally received what he deserved. Truth and ultimate justice.

While Cai Wu was handwashing their clothes just outside the house, his old man bursted out the door, giving him quite a fright. Cai Lun simply beamed into the sunset, head up, chest out. The silence remained unbroken until Cai Wu couldn't help but ask, 'What's wrong, Dad?' 'Oh, my boy, I have something I believe I wish to show you.' Cai Wu was astonished: his dad could say a whole sentence all this time! But now was not the time for questions, as Cai Lun had already taken off into the house. Cai Wu followed uncertainly, and to his tremendous surprise, his dad led him right into his office. Cai Wu observed the small, crammed space filled with wild, colorful plants sticking out of every corner. His dad presented him with what seemed like a glossy, thin, and soft material in his office, holding it up high in his hands like it was something holy.

Cai Lun called it 'paper.' Cai Wu felt a sponge absorbing doubt and growing in his stomach, spreading the fluids of suspicion through his veins. His dad was known for coming up with 'weird' things. The village had never *seen* anything like 'paper', let alone *accept* this new 'invention.' Cai Lun immediately insisted on taking it to the hospital, as if it had a sickness that needed to be cured! Cai Wu knew how expensive medical fees were; their whole family's savings had been spent on the medical bills for his mum. He would not let his dad waste another penny on curing this 'thing.'

With that, Cai Wu stepped forward and tried to take the unusual piece of 'paper' away from his dad. However, it had simply ripped apart before he had even tried to tug at it. It was much more fragile than Cai Wu had thought, and now the scroll of the unknown element was split halfway through. He hadn't intended for it to break, and definitely not to upset his dad. He knew the consequences of messing with Cai Lun's work. If Cai Wu weren't lucky, his dad would turn wild and completely lose control of himself.

However, Cai Lun composed himself remarkably coolly. He simply said, 'I wasn't hurrying to test that part yet, but yes, it is a remarkable piece of material, isn't it.' Cai Wu's memory of his dad was

once again reshaped that afternoon. He didn't know what his dad was up to and did not want to care. Try as he might, he couldn't help but toss and turn that night, constantly being reminded of his mother's memories. Could this mysterious 'paper' actually help the people? Cai Wu was too old to believe that 'paper' would bring his mum back, but yet, what if it did help the villagers?

The following Saturday, Cai Wu had made up his mind. He was going to help his dad no matter what it took. To him, it was their only chance at, at least, bringing the together to honor the memory of his mum.

And so, the reunited father and son took off to the hospital, borrowing the Wang family's bicycle. As a boy small for his age, Cai Wu could easily fit on the bar in front of the bike while his dad rode it towards the local hospital, grasping tightly to his discovery, like a spark of hope in his hand.

The Gunpowder Plot

Western Academy of Beijing, Simonnet, Frida – 12

I infiltrated the wooden, creaky room. Agarwood covered the floor. The smell was consuming my brain. I opened the closet slowly, and I chose the Jiasha with the orange and red pattern. I wrapped it around my body and left one shoulder uncovered. I found my arhat shoes that I tied around my ancle and up. I walked out of the room; I passed by some other monks who were praying. My stomach was making growling noises, and I knew I was hungry. So, I tip toed discreetly to my table and sat down wrapping my Jiasha around myself. I started eating some rice and noodles until I got full and carried my feet out.

Let me tell you a story. A few days ago, we created something big. The other monks say that it can change the environment, and it can lead to people making big mistakes. They call it gunpowder. I haven't seen it yet, but I guess it is cool. I am a bit scared of what it can cause. I don't want anything to change in this place even though I am planning on leaving. If things changed, I would still terribly miss the sunsets and the daffodil path.

Every day at 10:20 AM I walk through the daffodil path and close my eyes and think about how it is outside of the temple and outside of China. Monks were walking on the other side of the path; they don't really care about the daffodil path or the flowers. I am the only monk here with passions. All the others only care about praying. Except for one monk, Mengyuè. He is my friend, my only friend. He understands me. He also dreams about exploring the world, and we are planning on leaving together. The dilemma is that monks are not allowed to leave the monastery before we are "ready."

I walked up the stairs to my room, excitedly thinking about the monks who had discovered the technology of gunpowder. It could be my way out. I could be sneaking out of the window and swing on one of the trees and land on the ground half bent looking like a Kung fu hero. Woo. Hoo! Then I woke up from my daydream just to see that Mengyuè had been standing in front of me for goodness knows how long. Apparently, I had been talking to myself out loud. He told me he had heard every single word of what I had just said. He told me that it could have been a possibility, but that it was just a bit too risky if we were wearing our Jiasha's. Of course, I knew he was joking but I could see he was hiding a thought that he didn't want to say out loud.

"Are you scared?" I whispered.

He lowered his face. "No". Mengyuè said with a strict voice.

"Then what is it?" I exclaimed.

Then he looked at me seriously and spoke. "I was walking through a hallway, and one of the elders came up to me and offered me a big amount of money to participate in the gunpowder technology project"

"What?" I screamed. "We have been dreaming about leaving for months, and now you just want to give up that dream!" I shrieked.

"It was never my dream. It was yours and it is not your right to tell me what to do and what to daydream!" Mengyue said bitterly. Then he turned an strode out of the room.

The next day I would pass by him in the hallways or in the praying areas and we still wouldn't say a word to each other. I had thought about it, and I decided that I would leave without him tomorrow. It was for the best. I could leave during sunset because the monks would be praying at that time. I went to my table and sat down. I started to eat my rice when I felt a slight breeze that passed me quickly. I could feel my goosebumps kicking in. I turned around, and I saw Mengyuè standing behind me and he kneeled.

He told me he was sorry for his harsh words. And that he had turned down the offer for the gun powder project. He paused and told me, "There is just a slight problem. The monks got so mad, and they told me if I did not accept the deal I would be punished by sunset." I looked at him with fear in my eyes and told him I had planned to leave at sunset so then we should leave at sunrise instead. Really early. He agreed. We both went to sleep terrified. We had packed a few supplies for our trip and hid them under our bed, so that nobody could see that we were leaving.

Mengyuè walked into my room at 3 am in the morning and I was sitting on my bed fully prepared. We walked down the stairs without making the slightest sound. We opened the main door and breathed the fresh air into our lungs. But somehow yesterday one of the monks had overheard us talking about escaping and had told the elders about it. The same elders that had tried bribing Mengyue to join their risky work. So, there they were standing right in front of us pointing a sword at us. One of the monks said, "It looks like there would be two Chrysanthemums planted tonight". Then, without hesitating Mengyuè and I started sprinting to the gate. The monks with the swords started aiming at us. I thought I had no chance of surviving until I saw a hole that was in the direction of where Mengue was running and with a blink of an eye and distant people laughing I saw Mengyuè laying on the ground hurt because he had just broken his ankle. He told me to keep running, I burst into tears, and I got out.

I haven't seen Mengue in 3 years and I hope he is happy walking safely through the daffodil path thinking of me. Maybe, one day I will see him again, and he tell me all about the gunpowder.

Wings of Innovation: A Rising Star

Western Academy of Beijing, Yeung, Yu Ching Janice - 12

Prologue:

Lin, a 12th grade student who lives in China, has a dream of creating an innovation that can make the world a better place.

First Day of School:

It was Lin's first day of school after summer break. Lin hopped on the school bus, took a seat at the back, sitting alone. While the shops and buildings outside looked pretty much the same as last year, Lin knew the people weren't.

Several of Lin's close friends at school (who were also her neighbors) moved to other countries. Suzie Yan, Lin's best friend, also moved to America with her family.

Suzie was Lin's best friend. They had known each other since kindergarten. They got along well and shared common interests in many things. Suzie once told Lin a secret – She thought she had a bit of depressive disorder. Suzie's parents never allowed her to make decisions for herself. They also criticized a lot, sometimes with insulting words. Suzie always felt sad.

Lin knew Suzie was not the only one who was troubled by depression. Even a psychologist like her mom could be defeated by mental issues. Lin didn't know the exact reason, but she suspected that it was the negative thoughts and stress that her mom faced every day when she was treating her patients that somehow led to her depression. At that time, Lin's mom had sleeping problems, and frequently lost control of her emotions. She had already recovered and had gone back to work as a psychologist.

Obviously, Lin wasn't in the best mood on this first day of school, as she kept on thinking about Suzie and how she can make her feel happier.

A Few Weeks Later:

It was a few weeks later after the start of the school. As soon as the bell rang, the students hurried back to their seats. The first class was design class. Mr. Bryan walked into the classroom.

"Quiet, class! Let's get started," said Mr. Bryan, with a stern voice. "Today, we are gathering ideas of innovation. You are going to share your ideas with your groupmates. A week later, your group is going to start creating a model of that innovation. I don't expect your model to be functional, but your group needs to explain its proposed functions to the rest of the class."

Once Mr. Bryan divided the class into groups, Lin said to her groupmates, "I have a wonderful idea for this project – How about making a wearable device, such as a helmet, that helps with mental problems? With this innovation, people would no longer suffer from depression or other types of mental illnesses. Isn't that fantastic?"

"I am not sure about that," said the group leader. "I've never heard of any device that can cure human mind. Also, we know basically nothing about mental problems or psychology. It's just too difficult, isn't it?"

"Yeah, I agree. It doesn't sound very cool," another groupmate said.

Lin didn't answer, feeling disappointed.

"I guess a VR glass is easier to make," said the group leader. "Let's vote, shall we? Who would go for VR glass?" Everyone raised their hands except for Lin.

"Alright then. I'm fine with anything..." thought Lin.

"Ring, ring!" Out of the blue, Lin's mobile phone rang. A few minutes later, Lin dropped her phone onto the floor. It was Suzie's mother. She told Lin that Suzie was gone yesterday.

Lin stood petrified. She fell onto her knees and cried. She felt like losing a part of herself. "It wasn't true..." she said to herself.

Lin couldn't sleep for days. She felt tired at daytime, and often lost focus in class. Lin's mom tried to comfort her but in vain. She couldn't walk her out of the shadows.

On the other day, Lin's mom took Lin to see her grandfather. Once inside her grandfather's home, she smelt herbs. Her grandfather was once a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine.

"It's been a long time since I saw you last time, Lin," said Lin's grandfather. "I heard you weren't feeling so well, right?"

"Yeah." Lin said indifferently.

"I have some herbs here that will make you feel better," said Lin's grandfather. He then took out a piece of dried herb, like wormwood, and burned it with a lighter. After a few seconds, white smoke started to come out. He put it close to Lin's head and said, "Relax, Lin. Breath in... breath out... You will sleep well tonight."

Lin had a good night's sleep that night and felt refreshed when she woke up in the morning.

A few days later, Lin gathered her group at school, told them about her friend Suzie, and asked them to reconsider her idea about the wearable device that cures mental illnesses.

"Everyone, please, can we just give it a try?" said Lin. "We can't just stand by to watch people we love suffer from something wrong in their head. Mustn't we do something? It's not just about getting a school project done. It's something much bigger – Don't you all want to make this world a slightly better place than yesterday? Why should we care about whether it is difficult or not if we truly believe it's something worth trying?"

Tears ran out of Lin's eyes as she spoke. Lin's group was persuaded.

"But how will the device help people with mental problems?" One team member asked.

"You don't have to worry too much about that," said Lin. "I know that some herbs in Chinese medicine could help with mental illnesses. I've tried them myself when I was in depression. We could build them into our device."

Afterwards, the group started to learn about psychology, cranial nerves, Chinese medicine, and everything else that may help build the device.

Four Years Later...

Four years later, after Lin graduated from university, she and some of the groupmates continued to work on this innovation project. They raised funds around the world to support the R&D. Three years later, Lin's dream came true. A helmet that can alleviate wearer's mental problems was created.

In a speech by Lin at the ceremony where she was awarded the "Rising Star on Technological Innovation":

"With the benefit of technological development in the last few centuries, we are now living in a world of comfort, convenience and enjoyment. Technological innovations like Airplanes, Automobiles, Computers, Internet, Mobile Phones and Medical Breakthroughs, you name it, make our lives a lot better and easier than our ancestors.

- We now have more comfortable places to live and work in.
- We now have better health and longer lives.
- We can now travel to anywhere in the world, faster and cheaper.
- We can now talk with our beloved ones even if they are on the other side of the globe.
- We now have much more choices of entertainment to cheer ourselves up.

But are we really happier than our ancestors?

When I was a child, both my mom and my best friend were diagnosed as having major depressive disorder (MDD). As a kid, my best friend chose to leave me and the world behind. My mom, a psychologist, had once become a MDD patient herself after she got overwhelmed by the negative thoughts from her patients. To me, many people aren't as happy as I thought.

I can't help wondering, how good are technological innovations, which offer us comfort, convenience and enjoyment, if they can't give us inner peace? "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? (Matthew. 16:26)" Shouldn't our technology help our soul, which is at least as precious as, if not more precious than, our physical being?

This is why I came up with the idea of making the helmet. This is just a tiny step forward, but I want to say to all of you here, and to everyone in this world, that the well—being of mankind depends on you and me and everyone who care about our body as well as our soul. As 'the best way to predict the future is to create it', let's create a better future together by technological inventions that can solve the problems of our body as well as our soul."

The Paper of Cai Lun

Western Academy of Beijing, Zhou, Huining – 12

I am Cai Lun, the creator of paper, which is one of the four greatest inventions of China. Although many writing devices were created before I was born, I am the person who officially created the recipe for making cheap and convenient paper. China, my home country, is famous for the many famous structures and creations, but paper is one of the most frequently

used and important material nowadays, but many do not know of my story. Let me begin...

For a brief account of myself, I was born in the Eastern Han Dynasty, although my full name is Cai Jingzhong, I prefer others to call me Cai Lun, a name that matches my personality; responsibility, discipline, and shyness. I never break any rules working for the court, I also do not speak to any royals unless I am commanded. At the age around 25, I started my service to the imperial court as a court eunuch where I worked as a civil servant, I am employed to guard and serve the female living spaces in the Chinese court. I have served many emperors throughout my life in the Han dynasty, even though I did not live long enough to see what consequences my invention would create, I believe I have served my country well with my accomplishment of creating convenient paper. To be precise, I did not invent the first device for recording and writing, but reasonably, the devices back then, was either hefty pieces of bamboo pieces, or highly expensive pieces of silk. Both materials were inconvenient for writing, because bamboo slips were too heavy, and to be honest, that wasn't the most comfortable material to write on. Also, black ink did not make a huge contrast with the dark green on the bamboo, so this wasn't a very popular choice. Although silk is light and thin, a perfect source for writing, normal families in the past would never be able to purchase silk, because the price for silk was unbelievably high, where only the royal families or the rich had the power and money to purchase silk. People did not have good devices for recording and for writing, which made me feel sorry for them. My accomplishment of creating paper was much more than just forging paper; the process and coming up with an idea was much harder than it looks, it has to take a long time, perhaps, my story shall explain...

As the sun shrank below the mountains, leaving the world dark again, the crescent moon radiates a slivery glow, taking the sun's place in the sky above, the moon was the signal that I could leave guard over imperial court and head back home. As a eunuch, a low class worker, I am only permitted to leave my guard and head home only until moonhigh, which we call for when the moon is brightest and highest at night. I lay down on my bed as my eyes fluttered close, I was asleep. The next time I opened my eyes the sun was already shining, normally, I would have to stir much earlier than now, but today is special; the imperial members of the court were holding a meeting today, meaning I don't have to guard the quadrangle where the female imperial members live. I strolled out of my hut where I live, and watched as children scrambled out of each house carrying large slips of bamboo pieces for writing in school. As the students make their way to school, each of them grunt as the heavy slips of bamboo slow them down from their journey. Suddenly, I felt a rush of guilt in my heart; why do we have to use these heavy and uncomfortable slips of bamboo? The sudden flip in my heart made me feel like I needed to do something. I had to make a change for these helpless children, I *must.*..

I sat down crossed leg on a large rock as I watched children make markings on tree barks, they seemed to be drawing... Wait! That's it! A idea suddenly flew into my mind, the tree barks could be made into paper! I immediately set to action, I picked up a few pieces of mulberry tree barks and ran back to my hut. A single piece of tree bark was too heavy and too large for writing, but what if... What if I mixed mulberry bark, some pieces of plants and rags with water, mashed hem into pulp, pressed out the liquid and poured this mixture to dry in the sun. This little world—changing idea was formed by me as I watched a few children make drawings on tree bark! I never would have believed before if someone told me that my simple creation of paper would change the world...

I set out to find the materials immediately, first, I went to the market near the city center to buy a few pieces of old rags and cloth, as I sprinted back to my hut for my experiment, I ripped off a handful of leaves and plant roots. I boiled all the materials above a small fire, which scientifically would extract cellulose fiber—the primary structural component of plants— turning these materials into a pulp. I squeezed a certain amount of the mixture from the pulp, then I poured this mixture into a frame so that the liquid would stay in shape, the final step determining my success or failure was up to time. I placed the frame with a thin layer of the mixture outside my hut, where the sun was shining bright and hot, I must wait until my mixture was dry and turned into a solid before being able to confirm that this method is convenient for making paper, my creation is up to you, time...

As time passed, I sat outside my hut, watching every little change time has changed on the mixture, it turned out that my first experiment wasn't so ideal, the mixture stayed as a liquid, instead of turning into a thin piece of

solid. But I wasn't ready to give up; the second time I added a bit more of the solid materials, and I decreased the amount of water. I waited with nervousness and a sprinkle of excitement as I watched over the my new experiment...

I did it! I silently celebrated inside my mind, after many days and weeks of experimenting and brainstorming new ideas, my method of creating paper finally succeeded! I carefully recorded every tiny detail of my newly created method of making paper. As I created more and more pieces of paper, my confidence grew, and one day, I finally plucked up the courage and entered the palace of the emperor and presented my creation of the newly invented paper to the emperor. It turned out that Emperor He of Han was very pleased with the invention of paper and granted me a title, the paper of Lord Cai, the emperor also awarded me a large amount of money and luxury. I guess... I guess this is the end of my story, as a conclusion, I am not greedy for the amount of wealth in exchange for my invention, instead I hope that paper shall allow my country to develop our civilization through learning, I hope my invention will change the world...