

# Winning Entries



# HONG KONG YOUNG WRITER OF THE YEAR

## Fiction – Group 4 Winner

### Flight of Yi Qi

*Chinese International School, Zhou, Hanyi – 15*

The first time *Yi Qi* leapt from the canopy, the air was still and heavy, clinging to its feathers like damp silk. Beneath the trees, a shadow prowled — sharp teeth glinting as it moved through the dappled light, searching for its prey. Small and fragile, *Yi Qi* knew it stood no chance against the predator below. Its membranous wings quivered as it crouched on the branch, the rough bark pressing against its talons as it calculated the distance to the next tree.

It was a gamble. The distance seemed impossibly far. Even the closest branch hovered like a distant island across the void. *Yi Qi* hesitated, its talons gripping the bark. But the predator's growl sent a shiver down its spine, and instinct took over. With a final, desperate crouch, it leapt.

Its wings stretched wide, catching a faint breeze. For a moment, *Yi Qi* wavered, its small body teetering in the air, wings trembling as they fought to keep it balanced. The void beneath seemed to pull at it, threatening to drag it down. Then, a whisper of wind steadied the glide, carrying it forward in a halting, jittery descent. *Yi Qi* landed awkwardly, its claws scrabbling at the bark, the impact jolting through its fragile frame.

The little creature panted, its chest heaving as it clung to the branch. *Yi Qi* glanced back at the forest floor. The predator's frustrated snarl rose faintly from below. Safe, for now. The leap had been far from graceful, but it had crossed the impossible distance. For a fleeting moment, it had defied gravity.

The forest stretched endlessly in every direction — a maze of trees, shadows, and hidden dangers. *Yi Qi* tilted its head, scanning the canopy. Branches reached out like a network of precarious paths, each leading further into the unknown. The air shimmered, thick with possibility.

*Yi Qi* crouched again, wings trembling with anticipation. This time, the leap was not just an escape. It was a beginning. Above the predator, deeper into the uncharted heights of the canopy, a new world awaited.

#### **119 CE, Tianmo Desert, Han Dynasty**

The desert stretched endlessly before them, its golden dunes rippling under the searing sun. The villagers trudged forward, their footsteps dragging through the loose sand.

They had left their homes weeks ago, fleeing famine and war that had reduced their village to ash and ruin. Water was running low, their food stores nearly gone. The elders' walking sticks sank deeper into the sand with each step, their hands tightening on the worn wood as their pace slowed. Even the strongest among them faltered as the heat beat down mercilessly. Overhead, a lone hawk circled, its shadow a dark smear against the glaring light, unbothered by the struggle below.

Jia, the village head, walked at the front, supporting the elder who leaned heavily on his arm. Though the ache in his legs grew with each step, his pace remained steady. The group moved in silence, the weight of their journey pressing down on them.

As the sun dipped lower, shadows stretched long across the dunes. Near the crest of a rise, a young boy stumbled, his foot striking something buried beneath the sand.

"There's something here," he called, his voice quavering.

Jia turned sharply. "Step back." He hurried to the boy's side and knelt, pressing his hands into the sand. Beneath the grains, something rough and solid resisted. The villagers drew closer, their curiosity overpowering their exhaustion.

Jia carefully scraped away the sand. A flat surface began to emerge, its texture starkly different from the surrounding desert grains. His hands worked faster, revealing a stone etched with a delicate form of a creature: a small, rounded head, its jaw curving downward like a bird mid-song, unnaturally long limbs, and membranous wings covered with feather-like patterns, outstretched and poised for flight.

"A dragon bird," he murmured, barely a whisper.

As the sunlight slipped lower on the horizon, the shimmering lines on the stone seemed to glow faintly in the amber light. The villagers stood frozen, their weariness forgotten, caught in the quiet reverence of the moment. The air around them seemed to hold its breath, heavy with stillness.

A breeze stirred, cool and refreshing, carrying with it the unmistakable scent of rain. Moments later, the first drops fell — soft and scattered, dotting the sand like tiny blessings. Jia tilted his face upward, letting the water roll over his sunburned skin. Around him, the villagers raised their hands to the sky, their parched mouths open to the gift of rain.

Jia lingered, his gaze fixed on the dragon bird's faintly glowing form. Then, with a final glance, he turned and walked on. The villagers followed, their steps pressing firmly into the dampened sand as they disappeared over the crest of the dune.

### **2006, Ottawa, Ontario, Society of Vertebrate Paleontology Annual Conference**

"It's improbable that *Yi Qi* could fly," the voice boomed across the packed conference hall.

Dr. Zhang resisted the urge to roll her eyes. She sat near the front, her fingers drumming against her notebook, the rhythmic tapping barely concealing her mounting frustration. Around her, murmurs rippled through the audience. This annual gathering was meant to celebrate breakthroughs in understanding prehistoric life, but *Yi Qi* had become a battleground. With only a handful of fossilized fragments discovered, *Yi Qi* had become the subject of intense speculation and heated debate.

"*Yi Qi* lacks the musculature for flying," the speaker continued, his pointer tracing the largely speculative skeletal reconstruction projected on the massive screen behind him. "The attachment points for flight muscles are simply too weak." He paused, his tone turning dismissive. "*Yi Qi* simply doesn't fit into what we know about the evolution of flight in theropods."

Dr. Zhang leaned forward, her pen hovering over her notebook. The speaker's arrogant tone grated at her — how could such a unique evolutionary adaptation from over 160 million years ago be dismissed so easily? She glanced at her colleagues, noting the furrowed brows and the faint, skeptical smiles. Paleontology thrived on debate, but at times, it seemed more eager to dismiss the unfamiliar than to embrace it.

"I beg to differ," she called out, standing.

The room quieted. Hundreds of eyes turned toward her. Dr. Zhang took a deep breath, steadying her voice. "Yes, its adaptations for gliding might seem inefficient compared to the specialized wings of pterosaurs. But that doesn't mean it couldn't fly. Look at the wrist structures — these elongated rods suggest that *Yi Qi* had wings."

She gestured toward the image of the wrist bones on the screen. "*Yi Qi*'s membranous wings represent an entirely different solution to the challenge of taking to the air — one we haven't seen before in theropods. Evolution is a series of experiments, and *Yi Qi* shows us the diversity of solutions nature attempted."

"We study evolution not for its certainties but for its exceptions," she continued, "*Yi Qi* may not fit neatly into our existing categories, but that's precisely why it matters."

For a moment, the room held its collective breath. Then came a ripple of murmurs. Dr. Zhang sat down, her heart pounding as the speaker resumed, his voice less assertive than before.

That evening, in the quiet of her hotel room, Dr. Zhang sat by a small desk where a sketch of *Yi Qi*'s partial remains lay beside a stack of notes from the day's sessions. She traced the lines of the sketch with her pen, the faint drag of ink on paper grounding her thoughts.

The fragments they had were incomplete, and they didn't fit neatly into the patterns scientists liked to see. But then, nature rarely worked in straight lines.

She stared at the sketch, her pen hovering as if to add a note but stopping short. The questions lingered, unspoken. How did it move? Was it more than a glide? What had it seen in the dense forests of the Jurassic?

Dr. Zhang closed her notebook and set it aside. She gazed out at the distant horizon, her reflection faint in the glass. Somewhere, in the depths of stone and time, the answers waited.

For now, she thought, the questions were enough.

## 2007, Mutoudeng Town, Qinglong County, Hebei

The wind dragged across the fields as Wei drove his spade into the hard-packed soil. Digging was part of his life — repairing walls, planting crops, and occasionally uncovering fossils buried beneath the earth.

This part of the countryside had always been rich with such treasures. The hills nearby, carved by time and wind, revealed layers of history. Fossil buyers from the city often roamed the area, snapping up whatever fragments farmers could find. Wei had sold a few himself. It was extra money, enough to buy a sack of grain.

The spade struck something solid. Wei paused, crouching to sweep away the loose soil with his hands. At first, it seemed like an ordinary, dirt-caked slab of stone, blending into the surrounding earth. But as he cleared away more soil, an intricate pattern began to emerge: thin arcs, angular and skeletal, forming the outline of something stretching across the stone.

This wasn't just another fossil. It was ... complete. Delicate patterns marked its surface — wings spread outward, preserved in stunning detail. Wei leaned closer, his fingers brushing lightly over the grooves etched into the stone. The lines arched outward like feathered arcs, weathered yet precise, as if carved by time. Even the membranous textures were preserved, capturing a creature frozen in motion.

Wei wondered how much this might be worth. Last year, a villager sold a half-complete jawbone to a buyer from the city and earned a small fortune — enough to renovate his home and buy livestock. Rumor had it the buyer later sold it to a foreign collector for an even higher price. Wei brushed away the remaining soil, wrapped the slab carefully in burlap, and hurried home.

Lying on his bed, Wei stared at the cracks in the ceiling as the distant hum of insects filled the quiet. Across the room, the burlap-wrapped slab rested on the table, its presence heavy. Wei shifted restlessly on the thin mattress, the familiar creak of the wooden frame loud in the stillness.

Selling it made sense. A heater for the winter, better tools for the fields, maybe even a new house — it would likely be more than he could ever hope to earn.

Wei rolled onto his side, his gaze falling to the slab beneath the burlap. Unlike the fragments he'd unearthed before, this one was whole, intricate, preserved in a way that seemed almost deliberate, as if it had been waiting for someone to find it.

He sighed and closed his eyes, but sleep refused to come. The image of the fossil, wings outstretched, locked behind glass in some distant country, its story lost to the land where it had rested for millions of years, lingered in his mind. The night stretched on, silent and unyielding.

The morning market was already stirring as Wei passed through, clutching the burlap tightly. Fossil buyers stood in their usual spots, their sharp eyes scanning the crowd. One of them paused, his gaze lingering on the bundle in Wei's arms. Wei tightened his grip and kept walking.

The bus stop was little more than a dusty clearing at the edge of the village. Wei stood silently, the burlap-wrapped fossil held close to his chest. When the bus finally arrived, he climbed aboard and chose a seat by the window. The vehicle rattled over uneven roads, fields blurring into low, rolling hills. Wei's fingers brushed the burlap now and then, as if to reassure himself it was still there.

Hours later, the bus came to a halt at the Tianyu Museum of Nature. Wei stepped off, adjusting his hold on the bundle. The museum's pale, unadorned walls rose ahead, catching the midday light. For a moment, Wei paused on the stone steps, his hand brushing the burlap's rough surface.

The museum doors stood heavy and still. Drawing a deep breath, Wei pushed the door open and stepped inside.

### **2030, Hong Kong, Paleoart Expo**

The auditorium buzzed with anticipation as Jing stood backstage, her sketchbook tucked under one arm and her notes trembling slightly in her hand. Years of work, countless sketches, and endless simulations had led her here.

Tonight, her creation, *Flight of the Eternal Dragon Bird*, would take the stage — a seamless fusion of art, science, and technology, bringing the enigmatic creature *Yi Qi* to life.

The thought still felt surreal. Not everyone had supported her vision. Some had dismissed it as a gimmick that undermined the rigor of paleontology. Yet Jing believed fossils, seen through new perspectives, could show more than the world had yet seen.

The lights dimmed in the auditorium, and the murmurs of the audience faded to silence. Jing stepped onto the stage, her footsteps steady despite the thrum of her pulse in her ears. She smiled, gesturing to the darkened stage behind her.

“Millions of years ago,” she began, her voice soft but steady, “a small creature gathered the courage and leapt from its perch, its wings stretching into the unknown. This leap — once etched into stone, buried in time — was uncovered by those who believed its story was worth sharing. Tonight, I want to bring that leap back to life.”

At her cue, the stage came alive. The holographic display flickered into existence — a towering tree bathed in moonlight, its branches swaying as if caught in a prehistoric breeze. The soft rustling of leaves and distant calls of Jurassic insects filled the auditorium. The audience held their breath as *Yi Qi* appeared, perched delicately on a branch. Its membranous wings glimmered softly under the simulated moonlight, casting a delicate glow.

As the creature stretched its wings and leapt, the crowd held its breath. *Yi Qi* soared above the stage with tentative grace, its body teetering in the air. Jing watched from the side as the holographic *Yi Qi* circled the stage and then perched back on its glowing branch.

For a moment, the theater was silent, the audience still caught in the spell of the performance. Then, applause erupted. Jing stood center stage, momentarily overwhelmed. She glanced back at the holographic *Yi Qi*, its poised form glowing faintly behind her.

As the applause quieted, a small voice called out from the front row. “Why did *Yi Qi* try to fly if it didn’t know how yet?”

The question caught Jing off guard, and the audience chuckled softly. She tilted her head, the holographic *Yi Qi* glowing faintly behind her.

“That’s a good question,” she said, her voice warm and thoughtful. “Maybe it wasn’t sure what would happen. But sometimes, taking the leap was the only way to discover what was possible.”

The applause swelled again as Jing bowed slowly. She glanced one last time at the glowing *Yi Qi*. The leap that began millions of years ago, she thought, is still in flight.

\*\*\*

*Yi Qi*, discovered in 2007 in Hebei Province, China, is a Late Jurassic dinosaur notable for its primitive feathers and membranous wings — a unique adaptation for flight never seen before in any other dinosaur.

# Fiction – Group 1

## WINNER

### Land of Dinosaurs

*German Swiss International School, Luk, Amelia – 7*

Charlotte and Scarlet were spending their summer holiday in Jiangxi, China. Mum was a ceramic artist and wanted to perfect her craft with a master ceramist in a place called Jingdezhen in Jiangxi. Dad offered to take the girls to Lushan, which was not too far away, while Mum went to her classes. Charlotte loved dinosaurs, so she was excited to visit Lushan's Triassic Spring Waterfall because the Triassic was the name of the period when dinosaurs first appeared on Earth.

Once they got to the waterfall, Dad immediately took out his camera to snap photos. The sisters grew bored and went to explore the waterfall on their own. They got closer and closer and spotted a gap behind the waterfall. Curious, they squeezed through and found themselves in a dark tunnel covered in moss.

When they emerged on the other side, they were astonished by the sight. Under the golden sun, giant dragonflies flew through the air, and dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes roamed an endless field of grass. When they turned around, the tunnel was gone. They had no choice but to move forward.

As they walked through the tall grass, Scarlet felt a feathery animal brush against her leg. "That's a *Sinosauroptryx*!" shouted Charlotte excitedly. "We must be in the Cretaceous Period!" When they walked past a patch of ferns, they stumbled upon a nest of huge eggs. The mother Triceratops charged at them because she thought they were odd-looking dinosaurs trying to steal her eggs. The sisters ran as fast as they could. Suddenly, the mother Triceratops stamped the ground a few times and turned in another direction.

Just when the sisters thought they were saved, they heard a booming roar. Their hearts skipped a beat, and as they staggered backwards, they saw a ferocious *Tyrannosaurus rex* standing in front of them. Its serrated teeth shone in the sun's strong rays. "Run!" cried Charlotte. She grabbed Scarlet's arm, and the sisters ran for their lives. When they reached the edge of a cliff, they tripped over a branch and fell down. They thought they were going to die, but they landed on something scaly.

The sisters peeked and saw they had landed on a dinosaur's neck. "This *Titanosaurus* saved us!" gasped Charlotte. It was as big as three school buses. When they got to the end of its tail, they fell into a pitch-black hole. They kept falling and falling. It felt like an eternity. When they finally landed with a thud, they found themselves back in the tunnel.

# Creative Writing: Fiction – Group 1 WINNER

## Life Goes On

*Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Chan, Shing Wa – 7*

As a paleontologist, I was sent to dig up dinosaur fossils in Liaoning, the well-known epicentre of fossil-hunting since the 1990s. On the first day, I immediately discovered the remains of a huge *sinosauropelta* which was buried underground. Initially, I thought this was just an ordinary scientific exploration. However, it turned out to be a unique experience for me due to a terrifying but touching dream which I had about the dinosaur I dug up.

In my dream, I turned into the dinosaur which lived with his mother peacefully in a primeval forest. The dinosaur had never left his home before, so he has always longed to explore the world on his own.

One day, the little dinosaur got the courage to leave his parents and explore the world. He sneaked into the woods while his parents were looking for food. He was thrilled to see a lot of exotic plants and animals. Unfortunately, danger lurked unexpectedly. The little dinosaur was petrified once he realized fierce pterosaurs were eyeing him.

When the little dinosaur was exhausted from his tiring escape, he saw a lake just right in front. In a flash, he jumped into the lake. However, a volcano nearby erupted and shot lethally hot lava into the sky. Much worse, there was also a strong earthquake. The little dinosaur almost fell into a dark, bottomless chasm as other poor animals did. Fortunately, his mother was able to grab him out of the death trap in the nick of time.

As the volcano burst out more lava, the little dinosaur and his mother had nowhere to go. The only way to escape was to climb up a cliff to reach the mountain top. Therefore, she made a tough decision. She helped her son to climb up a cliff until the hot lava consumed her. The little dinosaur was in dismay when he saw his mother sacrifice herself to save him. Overwhelmed by the grief, the little dinosaur kept calling for his mother with its weak scream.

In all the chaos, someone patted on his shoulder. It turned out to be a peer of his kind. Standing behind was a group of dinosaurs and other animals, mourning the loss of their beloved family members in the disaster too. The little dinosaur realized that he was not alone. He and the homeless animals should move on and stick together to start a new life on behalf of their late family members.

The last thing I saw in my dream was the little dinosaur and his peers embarking on a journey to find a new home. When I woke up in my bed, I felt deeply sorry and depressed about what happened to the little dinosaur. We should cherish those around us while they are still alive before we regret it. Life goes on after the passing of our beloved ones, and we should treasure every moment of our lives.

## Fiction – Group 2 WINNER

# A Pourquoi Tale – Why Some Dinosaurs Have Feathers

*St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Wong, Shing Ching – 11*

Dink!

To most people, it would have sounded like a chisel hitting yet another piece of rock under the obscure moonlight at the excavation area in Sichuan but, to this paleontologist, the sound of his chisel hitting a slightly different kind of rock was unmistakable. He used his brush to sweep away the dirt and he spotted the vague outline of an elaborately feathered dinosaur. His eyes sparkled in delight, and he beamed madly while cradling the fossil. He yelled in exhilaration, “Yes – finally!”

The palaeontologist's vision started to blur, and the rough rocks vibrated. A flock of tiny dinosaurs who lived in caves emerged. They had feathers with vibrant colours and sharp claws to dig. Their dazzling feathers glistened like diamonds in the radiant sunlight. They seemed to be flying just above the ground, skipping as they did with their strong hind legs. Some were darting enthusiastically on a lush green prairie, some frolicking in the stream, and some taking a short nap in a narrow cave nearby.

Boom!

A bolt of lightning flashed across the sky, startling the dinosaurs. They sprinted into the cramped cave. Rain poured down and the howling wind puffed violently, bending and twisting the trees. The nearby stream flooded and water gushed fiercely into the tiny cave, forcing the flock of dinosaurs to flee.

They soon reached a towering summit that was secure from the flood, but there were no caves for them to live in. After observing from the mountaintop, they agreed to head to a wide valley which was the nearest and warmest of all. They all scurried down the hill and were eager to find their new shelter.

The dinosaurs approached the valley. The air was pure and fresh. Peach blossoms were blooming all over the hills and fields – a majestic sea of rose and crimson. A cloud of butterflies and bees danced around the peach blossoms, drinking the nectar. A cerulean lagoon lay calmly in the valley like a mirror, reflecting the sapphire sky and the gorgeous peach blossoms. Everything was extraordinary. The dinosaurs spotted a gigantic cave on a hill, so they hurtled towards it. As they were proceeding towards the tremendous cave, an ear-splitting roar stung their senses and a massive tyrannosaur with razor claws and terrifying teeth stalked out of the pitch-dark cave. The tyrannosaur charged. The feathered dinosaurs were jolted into terror. They took to their heels at lightning speed as the tyrannosaur gave

chase, hoping for a full stomach. The flock of dinosaurs used their knife-like claws to dig a deep hole and they squeezed in. The mud masked their smell, and soon the tyrannosaur gave up in dejection and trudged back to its cave.

Once they were sure they were safe, the dinosaurs sighed in relief and hopped out. They made up their mind that the valley was too dangerous and they should move towards a faraway pristine jungle where dinosaurs rarely strayed.

Leaving the valley, they could not believe their eyes! A vast desert blocked their path and they needed to cross it to reach the jungle. After a brief hesitation, they determined to speed across the boundless desert and reach their destination as quickly as they could - there were numerous predators in the desert. After hours of galloping, the dinosaurs were dehydrated and walked as slowly as a plant growing. Their throats went dry and they were desperate for water. When they were about to collapse, a colossal lake appeared in the distance. They dashed towards the crystal body of water and hurriedly took a mouthful, quenching their thirst. After a brief pause, they continued their journey and finally reached the jungle before dawn. A cave on a hillside made a perfect shelter. They were exhausted and dozed off the moment they arrived.

Daybreak. The dinosaurs rubbed their eyes and stretched themselves comfortably. As they opened their eyes, their jaws dropped and their eyes bulged. The cave's entrance was blocked by falling rocks and the dinosaurs were trapped. They immediately began scampering across the barrier, desperately looking for a channel they might be able to squeeze through. Another boulder fell from above, nearly crushing two of them. Then another noticed a stream of light - the boulder had dislodged a pile of stones, leaving a narrow but definite escape route. They streamed through and collapsed onto the wet grass outside. Freedom.

They recommenced their search for shelter. They sprinted to the top of the hill, and discovered there was a gigantic savanna on the other side, but they worried that it was already occupied. They pondered for a long time, and finally decided to let a small team of dinosaurs explore. As they reached the frontier, they were over the moon! The bushes were laden with clusters of juicy wild berries for them to eat. The sun shone like gold dancing on a winding stream nearby, which provided a water source. The remainder of the dinosaurs sprang down the hill as well, some munching on the ripe berries and some plunging into the stream.

\*\*\*

“... for further exploration. So, to summarise: it seems extremely likely to my mind that the dinosaurs' feathers were grey to protect themselves from the numerous ferocious predators. My research and scholarship has also led me to conclude that these creatures were able to fly not only well but for long periods, and that they therefore roosted in trees when they were not hunting rodents on the ground. Finally, and most importantly, what I can make out of the brain size, and the fact that this fossil was discovered alone, implies to me that they were resolutely solitary creatures, each finding it better to operate alone rather than slowing himself down through forming associations with his fellow animals. Thank you.”

The end of the paleontologist's world-famous lecture series was met with deafening applause.

# Creative Writing: Fiction – Group 2 WINNER

## New Tales of China's Dinosaurs

*Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Law, Cheuk Wai Paris – 11*

Dr. Li Yan stood nervously under the bright lights of the Beijing auditorium. His palms were damp as he addressed the skeptical scientists. Behind him, the slide projector displayed the fossil of a small dinosaur with long forelimbs, grasping claws suited for precision, an unusually large brain cavity, and primitive tools—sharpened stones discovered alongside the remains.

“This dinosaur,” Li concluded, “may have exhibited mammal-like behaviours, such as tool use and social cooperation. It might have survived the asteroid impact that wiped out most dinosaurs and evolved to adapt to changing conditions.”

Many scientists exchanged incredulous glances. Someone scoffed, “Dinosaurs with tools? That’s absurd!” Sweat beaded on Li’s forehead.

Two years earlier, Li and his team were excavating in Liaoning, a region famous for fossil discoveries. That day, Li and Professor Truman uncovered unusual skeletons.

After brushing away dirt, they found fossils unlike anything they had seen before. Though it resembled a small theropod, its forelimbs were exceptionally long, with clawed digits suited for grasping. The skull’s brain cavity was larger than those of other dinosaurs its size. Nearby, they discovered sharpened stones and rocks marked with wear. Piled stones near a cluster of fossilized eggs suggested the dinosaur had built simple defences.

As the team analyzed the fossils, one more surprising fact emerged. A researcher announced, “Lab results indicate that this dinosaur lived during the late Cretaceous and survived into the early Cenozoic.”

“That means they might have survived the aftermath of the asteroid impact, which is widely believed to have caused the mass extinction of the dinosaurs,” Li Yan said, his eyes lighting up with excitement. “This species was likely herbivorous, as seen from their lack of sharp teeth. During the Ice Age, when conditions became terribly harsh, they would have needed tools to handle tough food — crushing bones for marrow, breaking open nuts, or digging for roots and insects.”

Truman added, “Some dinosaurs, like Velociraptors, hunted in packs, and Protoceratops protected their young. This species may have gone further—building defences for their nests and sharing tools to adapt to their harsh environment.”

But doubts lingered. Could the scientific community ever accept such a groundbreaking claim?

Back in the present, Li attempted to elaborate, but a voice cut him off: “So, are you saying our ancestors were dinosaurs?” The room erupted into laughter. Li clenched his fists, his confidence wavering under the weight of their mockery.

Later that night, back at their office, Truman tried to console him. “Every big discovery faces resistance, Li. Darwin, Galileo—they were all doubted at first.”

Li Yan sighed, “I’ve been fascinated by dinosaurs since I was a child. Even though they went extinct 65 million years ago, I’ve always believed they’re connected to the species we see today. Sometimes, I even wonder if the phoenix in Chinese mythology came from our ancestors’ distant memory of pterosaurs.”

At his countryside home, Li gazed at the majestic phoenix painting on his wall. His grandfather had gifted it to him as a child, saying, “The phoenix rises from the ashes, bringing hope and renewal. I hope it reminds you to always find strength after a setback.” Li closed his eyes, wondering if he could ever rise above the ridicule his team faced.

Out of nowhere, a dazzling, multicolored light flooded the room. Shielding his eyes, Li ran outside. Above him, a magnificent phoenix soared across the sky, its feathers blazing like molten gold. His heart pounded with awe, but in a flash, the light engulfed him.

When he opened his eyes, Li found himself in a frozen, snow-covered landscape. The air was icy cold, and frost clung to the trees. In the distance, the phoenix led him to a cave.

Inside, he gasped at the sight before him: the fossils he had discovered had come to life. Some small, red-feathered dinosaurs were using large stones to fortify their nest. One sharpened a stone, while another used it to crack open frozen fruits.

Li couldn’t believe his eyes—these creatures worked together with remarkable intelligence and creativity.

Li’s pulse quickened, and his breath caught. Their small, lightweight bodies required less energy to survive, making it easier to find food and escape predators. Their longer arms and larger brain cavities—shaped by evolution—allowed them to use tools and solve problems, helping them adapt to their environment. These traits showed the beauty of nature’s ingenuity.

He picked up one of the sharpened stones, turned to the phoenix, and whispered, “Could this species have outlived the extinction? Could they be our distant relatives?”

The phoenix didn’t respond. It spread its wings, and the world around him dissolved into shimmering light.

Li awoke at his desk, his notes scattered beneath him. It had been a dream—or had it? He glanced at the phoenix painting and felt a renewed sense of determination. Perhaps the dream was a message: to believe in his work, even when others doubted him.

He thought of Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, the physicist whose theory of black holes was ridiculed, but later proven correct. “Science is full of unknowns,” Li thought. “I just need to find more evidence.”

Suddenly, Li Yan’s eyes widened in shock. There, on his desk, lay a sharpened stone. He had no memory of bringing any stones home.

Weeks later, the fossils and tools were displayed in a museum. The plaque read: *Phoenixsaurus: The Toolmaker. A reconstructed scene of the dinosaurs’ nest and their tools drew crowds of visitors. Some marvelled, while others questioned its authenticity.*

Out in the jungle on a new dig, Li looked to the sky and saw vibrant clouds, like the phoenix was watching over him. He mused, “If that asteroid had missed Earth, perhaps dinosaurs would still rule today. What about us? Is humanity destined to face its own extinction?”

Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out the sharpened stone. Had it come from the dream? It seemed to whisper untold stories of the world, a silent reminder to seek truth with unwavering courage.

# Fiction – Group 3

## WINNER

### Under The Amber Sun

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Cheah, Zu Zheng Christopher – 13*

#### *Day Zero*

“The final rockets depart in fifteen minutes. Asteroid impact in twenty minutes.” A monotone voice threads through verdant forests and deserted cities, earth’s final countdown echoing like a fading heartbeat.

Hundreds of shuttles rise into the sky like metal tears streaming upwards from a dying earth. Decades of preparation had forged humanity’s path to Mars, a chance for survival before Day Zero, the day the asteroid would shatter their world.

The asteroid’s blaze is a glint of sapphire, beautiful, devastating blue; its radiance spills through cloud veils, casting phantoms of pink fire that dance and writhe against the golden-dappled canvas above.

James watches the sunset, dreams of tomorrow disintegrating into dust.

An unlikely companion born from amber tombs and scientific miracles – a dinosaur, presses close. Her eyes are filled with love as warm as summer sunshine, filled with despair as deep as the oceans.

The words of the space engineers flood his mind: “There’s no room for non-human creatures. This mission is for humanity’s survival.”

“I have to go,” he whispers softly to the dinosaur. The tears that fall from his eyes are crystalline, catching the asteroid’s light like fallen constellations.

Two memories ambush him.

\*\*\*

#### *Two Years Before Day Zero*

The hospital lights hummed overhead, casting their sterile glow across the polished floors. James felt that familiar hollowness in his chest.

He pushed open the door.

“James?”

Her voice was barely a whisper, but it was warm, warm like the sun on a cold day, filled with as much love as it needed to be.

“James, is this you?”

Her eyes were unfocused, as grey as winter twilight, smouldering like the embers of a once-blazing star.

“James. You’re here,” she said softly, tears tracing delicate paths down her weathered cheeks.

He sat down next to her. Her skin ruptured on the softest of touches, pale, cold. Almost lifeless. Almost gone.

“Mum?” His voice cracked, drowned in his shallow breath. “You’re going to be okay, right?”

She smiled sadly. “Not quite.”

James squeezed her hand gently, feeling the delicate bones beneath her skin.

*Stay here. Stay with me.*

“Your father’s been waiting for me,” she whispered, her gaze drifting towards the window where the evening sky painted itself in gentle purples and golds. “In heaven.”

His parents – the ones that birthed living dinosaurs from amber tombs, who taught the world to dance with dinosaurs, were going to disappear.

“Please, mum.” Tears cascaded down his face, a waterfall of sorrow. “Don’t leave me.”

“I never will,” she whispered. “Love knows no bounds; we’re all inter-connected in nature and time. When you feel lost, afraid, I’ll be there – in the painted skies, above the mountains, under the amber sun. Always beside you, always catching you, my son.”

Her words floated like dandelions in the space between them, carrying promises to eternity.

\*\*\*

### *One Year Before Day Zero*

He figured this was the best way to die – on a bridge, with rivers of warm sunlight spilling across the vast ocean below, with the world stretching right before his very eyes.

A beautiful world.

A cruel world.

The vast ocean beckoned below with azure fingers, each wave whispering his mother’s name, a symphony of absence that told him they could only be reunited – in death.

*You promised you’d be here.*

The universe held its breath. Time crystallised into amber moments, each second dripping with the weight of everything he lost. His tears, when they fell, were molten gold in the dying light – little stars of grief that spiralled down, down into the abyss that awaited him.

He stepped off the bridge.

Falling was a peaceful sensation. The waters seemed to pull him in, promising the solace that death had whispered so many times before.

The descent stirred a memory within him, a hope to feel happy one last time – the warmth of his mother’s arms, her soft presence cradling his fragile being.

He closed his eyes, waiting for the cold embrace of water.

It never came.

Instead, he felt heat – living, primal heat. He felt talons, firm, yet impossibly gentle, wrap around his body. Its warmth seeped into his, like sunlight through stained glass, painting his despair in new colours, painting the world in shades of promise.

A dinosaur had caught him.

His mother’s absence still echoed, but it mingled with something else, something that tasted like tomorrow. Like living. For the first time since his world shattered, his heart beat not with despair, but with hope.

He wanted to live. Oh God, how he wanted to live.

\*\*\*

“Rockets depart in one minute. Asteroid impact in six minutes,” the same monotone voice announces.

The boarding bridge extends to the shuttle in front of him, a stark metallic walkway suspended in the skies amidst an endless sea of clouds.

He is the last one to board the shuttle, the last human on Earth.

Walking slowly towards the rocket, he gazes at the deserted city, lush forests, towering mountains – the earth seems beautiful in its final moments. He hears the calling of the dinosaur that he had grown to love, the creature that saved his life; she flies around the bridge, eyes glimmering with longing.

James stands in front of the door leading to the rocket, a step away from a chance to live.

He takes that step.

\*\*\*

*66 Million Years After Day Zero. Year 2030 A.D.*

The ancient hall in Zhucheng, China’s dinosaur city, breathes history, its air thick with anticipation and excited whispers.

Xu Xing, a famous palaeontologist known for naming more dinosaur species than any other person, steps onto the stage.

“Welcome,” his voice ripples across the hushed space, “to a journey through time. I have a special guest.”

Elon Musk strides forward. “After landing on Mars, we found unexpected traces of fossil fuels, evidence of previous life on the red planet. A new focus for The Boring Company arose: to dig not just for infrastructure, but for history.”

Xu continues. “Together, we’ve built thousands of large drills with mapping technology to discover subterranean fossils, rendering them as holograms. Though designed for Mars, we’re testing them here in Shandong province, where we’ve only dug down to 20 million years ago. Today, as the world watches our livestream, we’ll dig deeper, down to 66 million years ago.”

Rounds of applause.

The first hologram appears – a small bird from 25 million years ago. “A Sinornithosaurus descendant,” Xu breathes, watching as digital proof of avian evolution hovers before his eyes.

Shortly after, a second hologram arises. “Here, from 45 million years ago, are feathered flying dinosaurs. They descended from bird dinosaurs that survived the asteroid collision by taking to the skies, finding refuge in the mountains as the world burned below.”

As the drills descend, a matrix of beams scans across the period from 66 million years ago.

Suddenly, gasps ripple through the hall, whispers erupting then falling into a breathless, stunned silence.

An impossible vision materializes: an amber tomb containing two figures that should have never existed together – a modern looking boy, and beside him, a dinosaur resembling a shoebill stork.

“This cannot be,” Xu stammers. “Humans appeared a few hundred thousand years ago, not millions.” He readjusts the controls, hoping to find sense in this inexplicable scene.

As the hologram shimmers, pixels coalescing into a revolving render in high-definition colour, the worldwide audience sees a smiling boy embracing a beautiful bird dinosaur, arms and wings intertwined around each other.

\*\*\*

“Five minutes to asteroid impact,” the voice announces.  
He steps not into the shuttle, but off the bridge, on to thin air.  
Gravity claims him like an old friend; he whistles, the sound piercing through the wind’s soft melody.

He closes his eyes. The fall doesn’t feel like surrender – it feels like coming home.  
His mother’s presence wraps around him, not a dream or a wish, but as real as starlight, as tangible as the air rushing past.

When he opens his eyes, he’s no longer falling, but riding above the dinosaur; her eyes are filled with love, warm like the setting sun, as bright as the embers of a blazing star. She clicks, a sound that echoes in his bones, his mother’s voice crystallised in prehistoric song.

*I’ve always been with you, James.*

The asteroid enters the horizon, fiery red drowning cerulean blue until it shatters slowly; thousands of trailing fragments crack the sky like broken glass, engulfing the earth in a parade of azure light. The sun’s rays dance with the asteroid’s approach, painting the world in impossible colours: crimson bleeding into gold, violet swirling with navy, nature’s last masterpiece spiralling across the canvas of oblivion.

And as the asteroid crashes onto the surface of the earth, exploding into a million different hues, lighting up the land and seas into a tsunami of fire, of everything beautiful and terrible, they soar into *the painted skies, above the mountains, under the amber sun.*

# Creative Writing: Fiction – Group 3 WINNER

## Secrets in the Journal

*Pui Ching Middle School, Fok, Ho Yee Kalie – 12*

Hidden secrets are simply right under your nose, my dear Aisha. We humans are just too busy to pay attention to them.” Nana told her. Those words were the ones that engraved themselves into Aisha’s mind when she was cleaning. But what she hated about cleaning Nana’s room the most this time, wasn’t because of how dusty the whole room was, but instead was the fact that they were cleaning up to find a spot to place her urn.

“Next to the vase?”

“No.”

“How about on her desk?”

“And have people knock over it? No.”

“The shelf next to her favorite books?”

Aisha pondered. That wasn’t a bad spot... “Sure, Ma.”

The moment her mother set the urn, a soft thud caught Aisha’s attention, then something hit her foot. It didn’t hurt, although the impact caused a bit of throbbing as she looked down to pick up an aged leather book.

“Oh, sorry, honey. I must’ve dropped something there. Could you help me pick it up?” Her mother was adjusting the urn, too fixated on whether the urn would look good under the lighting of the window to care what exactly dropped on the floor.

Aisha nodded, and curiosity piqued when she decided to flip through the journal. This was wrong, but...Nana can’t exactly scold her, can she?

The contents inside fueled her interest even more. The words on the first page were delicate, with their loopy handwriting and how curved the ‘L’ and ‘y’ were in ‘Lindsey’. This was Nana’s journal.

“Aisha?” She jumped at her mother’s words, distracted enough to not have heard her. “I’m trying to ask you whether or not this angle is right. I’m thinking of showing the little flower patterns on the bottom, but the reflection of this emerald right here is just too beautiful to just move to the side. And what was that that fell?”

“Oh...nothing.” That was when Aisha decided: This was going to be the first secret she’s kept from her mother.

The moment Aisha heard her bedroom door close back, she sat up from her bed. She could see the small moving shadows that shone through the door gap at the bottom, then the small quiet ‘click’ of the door next to her room. Her parents couldn’t hear her now, and she pulled out Nana’s journal from under her pillow, flipping through the first few pages.

Distinct drawings were on each yellowing page, with the loopy handwriting she recognized (and inherited) beside them describing different features of—

“Dinosaurs,” Aisha murmured to herself. This fueled her interest, how each scale seemed to be visible to the naked eye, how the drawings captured the different aspects of each creature. The feathers...the scales...not the bones Aisha had to study in school or were engrossed in books, these drawings adapted the skin and flesh of said dinosaurs, their vibrant colors and lined sketches of foot prints of shapes and sizes.

One raptor-like dinosaur caught her eye: The one that had ‘Guanlong’ written on the top. That must be its name. She hadn’t seen it in her books or even heard of it in her Dinosaur Club. It bore feathers on its arms and on its back. No scales, it seemed. A vibrant emerald green (Hey, just like the urn!) clashing with a yellow undertone, striped with magenta. It had a crown on its nose like the Dilophosaurus would, only it was singular instead of double. she’d remembered ‘guan’ meant ‘crown’ in Chinese from her tutor. Maybe that’s how it got its name. But then how did—

“Aisha! You’re going to be late! I thought you wanted to go to the field trip!” Aisha groaned when she heard her father call her, jolting up as she heard the words ‘field trip’. She had completely forgotten her class was going to the International History Museum today. The journal was loosely clutched in her hand when she got up, she must’ve fell asleep halfway through it. Frantically, she grabbed her backpack and shoved the journal in her bag, dashing to school.

“Late again, Aisha,” Mr. Johnson shook his head disapprovingly, and gestured to the bus where most people were already seated. “Just go and take any free seat.”

Aisha heaved a sigh, and got in the bus to find an empty seat next to the window. Sitting down, her eyelids grew heavy, and with a few nods against the glass, her head leaned on the window to doze off and catch up on the sleep she missed out on when woken up at 6 a.m. in the morning.

Aisha woke up to chatters and people getting off the bus later on. They must’ve arrived.

“Good morning, children! I’m your tour guide, Ms. Didi, and I’ll be showing you around the International History Museum. Remember, stay in line, and no using your phones to play video games—I see a phone over there—But photos are allowed. Now, shall we begin?”

Aisha ended up daydreaming about 70% of the tour, checking her watch whenever she was bored. What she was excited for was the dinosaurs, not how humans in the Stone Age managed to survive, or how Egyptians made mummies. The whole museum was a squared-donut shape, which she found quite amusing, as in the centre was a garden people would use to relax, and where her long-awaited dinosaur fossils were displayed. After a boring talk on the evolution process of humans, they were finally, finally moving on to her beloved dinosaurs.

The class set foot on the luscious green grass, the sun shining over them with just the slightest of wind. This was a paleontologist’s favorite weather condition (And she would know). Dinosaur fossils of the classics: T-rex, Triceratops, Pterodactyl and more were set on platforms with supporting beams to hold the bones up, a tablet next to each to learn more about these fascinating prehistoric animals. Ms. Didi led the class to each, explaining information Aisha had long ago knew, before once again, the Guanlong she had just read about yesterday caught. Only this time, it was the fossil of the ancient reptilian.

“Ah, I see one of your classmates here has found our latest donation,” Ms. Didi led the class, telling them to gather around the Guanlong as she turned to Aisha, spotting her name tag.

“Wonderful finding, Aisha. This is the dinosaur I want to tell you all about next,” Ms. Didi started. “Now, this right here, is the Guanlong. It’s a Chinese dinosaur, and so very generous of our friends from Southeast Asia to even spare this treasure for us to exhibit. The Guanlong was first found in 2006, and its name is based on its crown right there—” She pointed at the tip of the nose. “—‘Guan’ is Chinese for ‘crown’, and ‘Long’ is Chinese for dragon.” So I wasn’t wrong, Aisha thought to herself.

Ms. Didi continued. “And according to experts, it is likely that the Guanlong has scaled skin, like its cousins, the T-rex.” That received a reaction, people ‘ooh’ing and ‘ah’ing with the information that led to Ms. Did show a proud smile.

“That’s inaccurate.” Aisha cut in, surprising herself.

The tour guide’s smile faltered. “How so, Aisha?” The whole class was facing Aisha now. “Well, the Guanlong is feathered.” Aisha stated matter-of-factly, unsure where the confidence of correcting superiors came from.

“And where did you find this theory?”

Aisha fell silent. How could she explain the journal? Her tone came out sheepish. “I... I forgot.” A couple of giggles could be heard amongst the class, even a faint “Nerd!”.

“Alright, then,” Ms. Didi tried to regain her composure and settle the class down again, flashing her bright smile again. “I believe, that this is a nice attempt on expressing your ideas, Aisha. But I also believe, that I would trust the words of experts more than just a memory. It’s still admirable that you’re willing to speak up about this, Aisha, but until another group of experts find that the Guanlong is likelier to be feathered, then we should assume it’s scaled for now.”

That motivated Aisha.

Aisha took in the cheers and applause, the flashing cameras and the reporters fighting against security guards. 20 years later, she had done it. She was the head of that ‘another group of experts’. Nana’s old journal was in her hand even when she stood on the stage and gave out her speech on this Chinese reptilian. And it was only then did she notice what the last page wrote: Hidden secrets are simply right under your nose. We humans are just too busy to pay attention to them. Reminded of the only person that has supported her dream of becoming a paleontologist, but failing to see her live it, she only had a few words to mutter to herself: I did it, Nana. I paid attention.

Because she knew, if she hadn’t paid attention to explore the journal, maybe she wouldn’t be where she was now...

# Fiction – Group 4

## WINNER

### Fall of a Dragon

*Diocesan Girls' School, Lau, Yi Fei Charlotte – 15*

The air was thick with the scent of damp earth and the subtly sweet fragrance of rice plants sweating under the sun. She remembered it from somewhere, the familiarity of a memory long-unvisited but deeply embedded into her the crevasses of her mind now turning itself up like the dusty floorboard of an enclosed attic. The very atmosphere shimmered with heat and something hazy she could not name.

A group of farmers toiled on emerald-jade rice paddies under a sun dipped in gold. She watched as they ploughed the earth, watched as the soil contorted itself into ridges and ridges and ridges. Something expectant pulsed beneath the hum of the air. The farmers' laughter echoed through the fields, a melody that would ring out yesterday and always and never again. Seconds passed, or hours, and she heard the twang of their tools striking an unexpected hardness. Curiosity piqued, they—she, for she now realized she was one of them—knelt at the edge of a shallow trench. The sun illuminated a collection of white bones, half-buried and entwined with twisted roots, glistening with an unsettling sheen. She exchanged uneasy glances with her compatriots.

The bones were unlike any they had seen before—elongated and sharp, they bore an otherworldly elegance, yet a palpable malevolence radiated from them. The skull, large and menacing, was adorned with jagged ridges that resembled the scales of a fearsome creature. The eye sockets, deep and hollow, seemed to gaze back at them with an ancient wrath, as if the very essence of a long-forgotten terror lingered within.

"Look!" one farmer exclaimed, voice trembling, as he pointed to the elongated vertebrae. "This must be a dragon!"

The word hung in the air, heavy with dread and awe. Whispers of legends long passed rippled through the group, tales of splendid beasts that soared through the skies, cloaked in clouds and mystery. "The dragon of the mountains," another voice murmured, the reverence spiking a wave of irritation in her. "It has returned to reclaim what is its own."

Around them, the golden rice swayed uneasily, as if bowing to the unearthed remnants of a creature both revered and feared. The sun dipped lower, casting elongated shadows that danced like phantoms across the ground, and in that moment, she felt the weight of the past pressing in on her shoulders — a history steeped in myth, now tangible in the bones that lay before them.

She screamed, but her voice rang hollow. Silence took its place, silence and the thrum of noiselessness and nothing but *hollow hollow hollow* and a distinct buzzing that undercut it all and continued to buzz and, as the jade of the rice paddies faded to a leathery green, sounded more and more like the crackly static of an intercom.

The ugly green back of an economy-class seat bore its way into her eyes as her limbs came to life, stiff with sleep and the exertion of contorting themselves into unnatural positions for the twelve-hour flight from London. “We are beginning our descent into Guanghan Airport,” rumbled the voice of the captain. “Welcome to Sichuan.”

\*\*\*

Sichuan. A place of festering heat, of warmth and flavourful cuisine and numbing spice. Such a far cry from the dreary greys of London. She thought, with a start, that she might have paid to spend her summer in such a place, given different circumstances. As it was, the time constrictions of her visit hardly left room for sightseeing, and the rough polyester seatbelt of a dingy taxicab she’d hailed dug into her collarbone in a distinctly uncomfortable way. Already she missed the air-conditioning of the airport.

Perspiration dripped down her cheek and smeared on the plastic seat cover she’d leaned her cheek on. Palaeontology, when one got into the thick of it, was rather degradingly unexciting. Her visit for the retrieval of a newly discovered dinosaur fossil would not take long, and she would not so much as touch the fossil with her bare hands before it was whisked away to be preserved in periglass behind velvet ropes. Flashes of verdant greenery flared in her peripheral vision, the hustle and bustle of urban Sichuan giving way to the equally unstill mountains. The taxi driver, a stout man whose grin had spread wide in response to her poorly enunciated request to “take her up the mountain,” no doubt thinking her a foolish tourist, cursed under his breath, a colourful string of phrases she could scarcely make out to be Sichuan-accented Mandarin. The low-level rumble of the engine crescendoed as the taxi lurched forward over a particularly bumpy stretch of road.

Abruptly, the rumbling ground to a halt. She glanced to the side, through the window.

A small sign hung crookedly, its faded paint barely legible against the backdrop of an ancient temple. Above the sign, the temple’s ornate rooftops peeked through the foliage like the jagged teeth of a dragon. With a sigh, she gathered her belongings and stepped out, her heels sinking slightly into the dust.

The temple’s entrance was flanked by stone lions, their expressions fierce yet oddly comical. As she approached, she was met by an elderly monk, his robes a deep crimson that contrasted sharply with the lush greenery. He regarded her with an expression that was equal parts curiosity and suspicion.

“Welcome,” he said, his voice gravelly, as though he had spent years speaking only to the winds that rustled through the trees. “You seek the dragon bones?”

“Yes,” she replied, trying to keep her voice steady. “I’m here for the fossil, the—”

“Dragon bones are sacred, benefactor,” he interrupted, his tone firm. “They are not for the likes of you.”

She felt her pulse quicken, a simmering frustration igniting. “With all due respect, sir, these are not dragon bones. They are newly discovered dinosaur fossils, scientifically significant—”

“Dragon bones,” he repeated, his gaze unwavering. “Our ancestors believed they are the remains of great beasts, guardians of our land. They belong to our history, not your discoveries.”

The dismissive tone sent a jolt through her, amplifying her irritation. She had traveled halfway across the world, navigating bureaucratic red tape and cultural nuances, only to face this obstinacy. “But surely, you must understand the importance of these findings! They can teach us about evolution, about the very history of life on Earth—”

“Life is more than what you can measure,” he replied, his voice low and steady. “Your science is but one way to see the world. Here, we honor our heritage.” His gaze seemed to flicker up and down, at her jet-black hair and golden-brown skin that all the tailor-cut suits in the world could not disguise as merely a product of the sun.

She struggled to mask her exasperation, glancing around at the temple’s intricate carvings, the heaviness of tradition pressing on her linen-clad shoulders. “You’re limiting knowledge, holding onto myths—stifling progress.”

“Progress?” His brows furrowed. “What is progress if one forgets their roots? The bones are not yours to take.”

With a heavy exhale, she turned away, the heat of the day pressing in around her like a suffocating blanket. The vibrant wildlife of Sichuan seemed to mock her, the colors around her too bright, too vivid against the dull grey of her thoughts. She had come here seeking answers, but instead faced an immovable wall of belief—a wall that felt as ancient and unyielding as the mountains surrounding them.

As she walked back toward the taxi, she couldn’t shake the feeling of defeat. Perhaps there was wisdom in the monk’s words, a perspective she was too steeped in her own convictions to appreciate fully. Yet the desire to uncover the buried truths of the past burned within her like the Sichuan sun, relentless and unforgiving. She should have found a way to bridge this chasm of understanding. It was what she did; it was who she was.

As she neared the taxi, the monk’s voice called out to her, soft yet compelling. “Wait,” he said, making her pause mid-step. She turned to find him watching her with a mixture of curiosity and something akin to compassion.

“Your journey has brought you far. It is not wise to leave without understanding,” he continued, his tone sagely. “Stay with us for a while. Learn our ways, and perhaps we can share our knowledge.”

She hesitated, the prospect of staying at the temple both intriguing and daunting. This was perhaps her best chance of successfully retrieving the fossil. Yet, the thought of spending her time in a place so backwards and opposed to discovery, away from her research—though she scarcely had the opportunity to immerse herself in it now—felt like a betrayal to her vocation.

“Why would you want me here?” she asked, her voice laced with skepticism. “You’ve made your views clear.”

“Because understanding is a two-way street,” he replied, stepping closer. “You see bones; we see stories. Come, let us share our narratives. Perhaps you will find a new way to view your work.”

The sincerity in his eyes caught her off guard. She had expected resistance, perhaps even hostility, but here was a peace offer wrapped in the promise of dialogue. The sweltering heat faded into the background.

After a moment’s contemplation, she nodded slowly. “Okay. I’ll stay.”

The monk smiled, a glimpse of warmth breaking through his serious demeanour. “Good. You will find much to learn here.” He gestured for her to follow him, leading her through the temple’s entrance, where the air felt cooler, infused with the scent of incense and ancient wood.

As they entered a small, serene courtyard, the monk turned around: “I must ask. However did you study our language? You have only the slightest bit of an accent.”

She, sharpish: “I’m an autodidact.”

“Hmm,” said the monk, without any inflection in particular. He gestured broadly at the courtyard. “Wander freely. When you feel ready, tell me of your work, and I will share with you the tales of our dragons.”

\*\*\*

As the afternoon sun dipped lower in the sky, casting a warm glow across the temple courtyard, she felt a stir of unease. The monk had left her to explore the grounds, and in a small secluded room at the edge of the temple she found a rotary dial phone that looked as though it had not been used in decades. The unwieldy receiver felt heavy in her hands.

With a deep breath, she dialed the number of her employer at the natural history museum. The line rang, and she briefly considered how far she had traveled, both physically and metaphorically, from the halls of Cambridge where she had poured over ancient texts and fossils, full of dreams and ambitions.

“Hello, Dr. Chan,” came the voice on the other end, crisp and professional. “What can I do for you?”

“Hi, it’s me,” she replied, forcing a brightness into her tone that felt almost foreign. “I wanted to discuss my current project. I’ve met with some challenges regarding the fossil retrieval.”

“Challenges?” The tone shifted slightly, a hint of skepticism creeping in. “We were counting on you to bring that specimen back promptly. The board is eager to see it added to our collection.”

She hesitated, the weight of expectations pressing down on her. “I understand, but I believe my time here at the temple is crucial. The monks have offered me a chance to learn. If I stay longer, it might open pathways for future research—”

“Future research?” he interrupted, his voice clipped. “Dr. Chan, we need results, not more studies. You have a distinguished record, but we’re relying on you to deliver.”

The words stung, a reminder of the expectations that had followed her since her Cambridge days. She had thought that with her doctorate, she would carve out a niche for herself, perhaps even lead her own projects, but the museum had its own agenda. She felt like a cog in a machine that valued her credentials but not her vision.

“I assure you, I’m fully committed to the museum’s goals,” she said, her voice steadier than she felt. “But I believe that understanding the cultural context of these fossils can enhance our collection. It’s not just about retrieval; it’s about narrative.”

“Cultural context is secondary to results, Dr. Chan. We can’t afford delays. I suggest you focus on your original task.”

The words hung in the air like a thick fog, suffocating her aspirations. She could almost hear the condescension woven into the fabric of his words—the tinge of incredulity wrapped around the single-syllable Chan, so unlike the neat and tidy Joneses and Bakers of the world; the sarcasm in the honorific Dr, insisted upon by herself, the only way to be seen as her accomplishments and not her sex. It was as if instead of cultural context, she had demanded a few days to understand the fossil’s power of chi.

“Of course,” she finally replied, the resolve in her voice faltering. “I’ll do what it takes to complete the task.”

As she hung up, the weight of her situation settled heavily on her chest. She was meant to be a trailblazer in her field, a researcher unearthing the secrets of the past. Instead, she was relegated to the role of a collector, gathering fossils for someone else’s vision rather than her own.

The temple felt like suffocation, a testament to the modern day power of myth. Tradition and a blind trust in the past prevented any meaningful sort of intellectual progress. And yet, London’s velvet ropes held no place for her either.

Behind her, the sun dipped below the horizon, casting shadows in bruising hues of orange and purple into the darkened little room.

As she sat in the room for seconds or hours—she could not tell—she felt the calm and grounding presence of the monk. He settled beside her.

“I see you are deep in contemplation,” he said. “What weighs so heavily on your heart?”

She turned, suddenly hungering for the wisdom he could impart. “I’ve been thinking about the dragon,” she began, her voice tentative. “The way it’s revered here—or, I suppose, the story you spoke of.”

The monk nodded, a hint of a smile playing at the corners of his lips. “Have you heard of the tale from the Western Tsin dynasty?” he replied. “Chang Chu wrote of a dragon skeleton discovered in Wucheng County. He told of how this dragon, in its pursuit of the heavens, flew up above the mountains, seeking to enter the gates of heaven.”

As if a deeply buried memory had been unlodged from the crevasses of her mind—as if a hairline crack in its recesses now ruptured into a gaping chasm of words—she recounted, with the ease of someone else entirely: “But the gates were closed, and the dragon fell back to earth, where its bones were unearthed.”

“Yes,” the monk continued, his tone reverent. “The dragon did not fall in failure; it fell in honor, its aspirations noble despite the outcome. This is a story of perseverance, of a creature that dared to dream, even when the heavens remained out of reach.

Yet, he, like us, must eventually return to his roots.”

She considered this, the weight of his words settling within her. Memories long sealed in periglass now threatened to spill forth. Lamplight at bed, because growing up, electricity was unreliable. Tales and tales and tales. A voice she had not heard in years, telling the same tale of the dragon.

In her academic years, dragons long forgotten, she had read about Icarus, the figure from Greek mythology who soared too close to the sun, only to fall when his wax wings melted. Foolishness had always seemed to define his fate, a cautionary tale against overreaching and ambition unchecked.

“I have always seen myself as someone like this dragon,” she admitted, the words spilling forth, unguarded. “Chasing dreams that felt unattainable, only to be reminded of my limitations. I’ve often felt like I was striving in vain.”

The monk turned to her, his expression gentle but firm. “I do not know about your journey. But the dragon’s journey was not just about reaching unfathomable heights but returning to dust and ashes. Embrace your roots, benefactor. They are part of your strength.”

She thought of her father and mother, reciting stories to her in lieu of books they could not afford, scraping together money for her to attend boarding school in Britain proper and not a colony. Of jabs at her accented English that drove her to excel in every way possible to exterminate any doubt that her capabilities were as full as any natural-born Ada Smith. She swore then that she would stamp out every trace of Chineseness that remained, every reminder that she was an outsider. Report cards and then performance reports and heels and pressed suits and it became just barely possible for her tawny skin to go unacknowledged.

But she, looking at her reflection every morning, could not forget.

“I don’t think I’ve been embraced my roots in—” she traced the date she had stopped writing to her parents in boarding school—“ten years now,” she managed, her voice a strangled thing.

\*\*\*

A few days later and eight hundred miles south, outside a small house perched on the edge of jade-green rice paddies, a letter plopped into a mailbox. In the afternoon, an elderly woman would ease it out with trembling fingers, clutching it to her chest like a dragon might hoard his treasure. But for now, it sat, sealed in an envelope with the fragrance of ancient wood.

*Dear Aba and Ama, it began. I'm sorry for, well, these past ten years. (Here the ink smeared across the page with what looked like blotches of tears.) I'd like to tell you a story like you did to me once. It begins with dragons.*

# Creative Writing: Fiction – Group 4

## WINNER

### The Bones of Time

*Wycombe Abbey Nanjing, Cortes, Nina – 16*

The air was heavy with the humidity of Sichuan, thick and pressing against Lily's skin as she walked through the cobbled streets of the university town. The chatter of students, the hum of scooters, and the aroma of street food—baozi and skewers sizzling on grills—should have felt familiar, comforting even. Instead, it all blurred together, muted by the storm in her head.

Lily shuffled into her small dorm room and slumped onto her bed. A half-read textbook on The History of Ancient China lay on her desk, abandoned. Her once-vivid passion for history and archaeology felt distant, dulled by the unravelling of her parents' marriage. Mei and John Cameron had once been titans in the field of archaeology. Their shared love for uncovering the past had been legendary—until it wasn't. Now, her father had spent a long while in Canada, her mother in Chengdu, and Lily felt stretched thin between them.

"You need to focus on your studies," her mother often scolded over the phone, her tone sharp and clipped. "Don't let our problems distract you."

Her father wasn't much better. "It's not your responsibility, Lily. We've grown apart, that's all."

But it was her responsibility, wasn't it? The unspoken expectation of holding their fractured family together weighed heavily on her.

That night, restless and unable to concentrate, Lily scrolled through her phone, searching for an escape. A news article caught her eye: Special Exhibition: The Sichuan Dinosaur Museum. It featured the fossil from the groundbreaking 1986 Canada-China dig—the very project where her parents had first met.

The pull was immediate and inexplicable. She decided to go.

#### II

The museum loomed before her, an imposing building of steel and glass that glinted in the midday sun. Inside, the air was cool, tinged with the earthy scent of preserved fossils. Lily wandered the halls, past skeletons of towering sauropods and fierce theropods, until she reached the exhibit that had drawn her here.

It was breathtaking, a massive, nearly complete skeleton of a hadrosaur, its long neck curving gracefully as though frozen mid-motion. The plaque read:

*"Discovered in 1986 during a landmark Canada-China archaeological project, this fossil symbolizes collaboration and perseverance. It reshaped our understanding of Late Cretaceous ecosystems."*

Lily stared at it, overwhelmed. She imagined her parents here, decades ago, standing together, their shared passion igniting something more profound. She reached out, her fingers brushing against the cold, ancient bone.

The world tilted.

A rush of air engulfed her, and the museum dissolved. When Lily opened her eyes, she was outside, surrounded by dirt, tents, and the unmistakable buzz of an active archaeological dig. The air smelled of freshly turned soil and distant rain.

A man rushed past her, carrying a clipboard. "Hey! Are you with the Beijing team? Get to the main tent—Dr. Cameron is looking for the assistant from Nanjing."

Lily blinked, her mind racing. *Dr. Cameron?* The realization hit her like a thunderclap. She was in the dig site from 1986. Somehow, she had travelled back in time.

She glanced down at herself. Her clothes had transformed into practical work attire—cargo pants, boots, and a dusty shirt. Grasping at the opportunity to figure out what was going on, she nodded briskly and followed the man to the main tent.

Inside the tent, Lily saw them. Her mother, Mei, was hunched over a table, meticulously sketching a fossil fragment. Her father, John, stood nearby, animatedly discussing stratigraphy with a colleague. They were young, vibrant, and full of life, so different from the weary, distant versions she knew.

"Ah, you must be the assistant from Nanjing," Mei said, looking up. Her tone was firm but not unkind. Lily's heart skipped; her mother's sharp eyes and steady hands were the same, but her face held a softness Lily barely recognized.

"Yes," Lily managed, her voice shaking slightly. "I'm...Lil- Li...." Her words went halfway through, the shock of her mother's young face making the blood rush to her cheeks in surprise. "Lily." She managed to finally say with a wavering voice.

John turned, smiling warmly and oblivious to her behaviour. "Welcome, Lily. Mei, why don't you show her the ropes? We're cataloguing the hadrosaur fossil today."

As the day unfolded, Lily could only work alongside her parents, absorbing every detail in awe. Mei's precision balanced John's boundless enthusiasm. They laughed, teased, and debated passionately. But Lily also noticed the cracks—small misunderstandings, a slight edge to Mei's voice when John interrupted her, the way John seemed oblivious to her frustrations.

A constant presence lingered as Lily settled into the rhythm of the dig, especially when working with John, she couldn't shake the feeling that someone was watching her. One evening, she caught sight of a man lurking near the edge of the camp after hours, disconnected and seemingly uninterested in proper collaboration with the others. His dark eyes followed her movements, the faint line of smoke from his cigarette creating an uncomfortable aura. She couldn't help but stare, feeling a growing unease before she hastily turned away and kept walking.

### III

"Who's that?" she asked one of the other working assistants left at sundown. "Who?" The assistant asked innocently, lifting her head. "The guy smoking over there," Lily motioned her head, "oh- That's Dr. Wu," the assistant replied. "He's one of Dr. Cameron's partners, they've been working together for years." the assistant shrugs, and lets her eyes linger back to her clipboard. Lily's brow furrowed in confusion; she had never heard of any Dr. Wu working with her father. "Really? They're that close?" She couldn't help but inquire, the assistant clicked her pen mindlessly "oh yeah, well- they were close, since graduating I think." The assistant corrects, "I'm not in on the full story, but let's just say they've always clashed with funding after working in the same company, what really tipped the boat was when Dr. Wu had been pushing for funding to lead his own dig, but the board chose Dr. Cameron instead." Lily blinked, this level of information about her father's past and this Dr. Wu was heavy, but

she couldn't help but be curious, the assistant put a hand on her shoulder "maybe don't talk to him, he's been in a sour mood since getting here, and you're new—I wouldn't want you getting on his bad side for nothing." With those words the assistant walked off, leaving an unquenched curiosity- and worry, within Lily.

#### IV

She couldn't help but nitpick at strange occurrences as they days went on: tools missing, catalogue entries altered, unnecessary arguments or misunderstandings between the team, and once, a nearly catastrophic collapse of a support beam near the fossil site happened, almost hurting several people and sparking the contemplation of a shut down. Each time, Dr. Wu was conveniently nearby to help and subtly pushing the blame onto John's leadership skills. It took some time for Lily to finally notice the pattern, but she only needed one more incident as proof to take action.

Late one evening, tensions came to a head. Mei had spent hours cataloguing the fossil's intricate bone structure, only for John to present their findings as though they were solely his to the team.

Lily passed by the tent she was meant to see her parents for work finalization and happened to hear their argument escalating—"I don't understand why you're so upset Mei!" - John's voice raised worriedly, "why don't you? You never listen! I worked hard on that structure the least you could have done is credit me!" "Why is it so upsetting, I didn't know! I thought you just wanted the work done." "You should have asked me before snatching it off my desk- "I didn't do that, my assistant just handed it to me!" "That's not the point John—"

Lily quickly entered, cutting through the rising tension, "oh- sorry to interrupt..." She said, feigning an oblivious tone. Both Mei and John quickly went silent and turned away from each other. It was clear they were both unhappy with each other, but for now all Lily could do was be a distraction while she figured out what to do to fix this.

Unfortunately, the tent became a party of four as Dr. Wu appeared, an expression *too* content on his face. Though his gaze quickly became calculating when he laid eyes on Lily, "well", he began "seems there's more people with some work to get done." He shrugged and placed an unfinished catalogue on the table. "By the way, incredible work today John. Must have been difficult getting the structure done so quickly." Dr. Wu spoke in an uncharacteristic level of praise. John's shoulders tensed and he could only clear his throat, likely feeling guilt for taking all the credit. "No, no... it wasn't all me..." John's gaze drifted to Mei for a moment, but her back was still turned as she placed her focus on a different sheet of paper. "Oh, don't be modest." Dr. Wu continued, "I know you. Dr. John Cameron, top of his class." Wu's smug gaze darted between the two, and Lily finally clocked his intentions. Since there was a chance he could never destroy John's work, he could stab holes into his relationship with Mei.

Lily's heart pounded.

She realized Dr. Wu was exploiting her parents' discord to undermine them. If she didn't act, he might succeed in derailing their careers and driving them further apart.

She cleared her throat almost obnoxiously, interrupting. "Y'know... I think I saw Mei working on that fossil earlier yesterday, right John? Did she happen to help?" John's shoulders seemed to drop in relief at the inquiry, he nodded. "Yes," he couldn't help but look at Mei again "She did. It wouldn't be any good without her actually...She deserved the credit for it." He motions his head, and Mei's pencil stops moving, then resumes. She's always been a stubborn woman, but it was clear she had processed his words.

"How... humble of you John." Dr. Wu spoke in the same tone, yet holding a faint hint of mockery. He subtly eyed Lily with a judging glare, and she returned the sentiment with a slight roll of her eyes.

Later into the night, Lily and Dr. Wu excused themselves, and as they walked at a slow pace she suddenly spoke up. "It's weird that Dr. Cameron's assistant didn't clarify who made the structure, huh?" His gaze flickered from side to side at her question and he shoved one hand into his pocket, feigning ignorance and nonchalance. "Yeah, well, mistakes happen. He's not the most experienced to be quite honest." "Still—"Lily pushed, "Mei seemed upset. I doubt his assistant would just hand it over without acknowledging her first." "Is there a reason you're so invested in discussing this with me, Miss...?" He inquired to feign politeness,

"Lily." she finished

"Right." He responded,

"like I said, mistakes happen, I've known John for years, he's no stranger to slip ups—" "Oh please." she cut off, becoming easily confrontational, an unfortunate habit of hers that she picked up from her mother. "That was more than just a slip up, someone took that finished work from her desk, and I doubt Dr. Cameron's assistant would do that without her knowing."

Dr. Wu stopped in his tracks and turned to face her directly.

"I don't like what you're insinuating." "So, you admit it was you?" "Don't go getting accusational with me, you're a simple assistant, a late one at that. Aren't you a bit... young? To be a part of this project I mean. I am very meticulous about the people I work with, and I have never even heard of you before you showed up two days after we set up. You look like a university student... you just- appeared. Out of nowhere." Lily's heart thumped in her chest, this man was too observant for his own good. "Quit changing the subject, I'll remind you I don't work directly under you, Dr. Cameron is the head of this dig. Not you." Dr. Wu's jaw clenched a bit at those words, "I am aware of that.." He forced out, hiding the surfacing anger. "But you better watch yourself, at least have some respect." Lily crossed her arms and took a step closer. "I'm onto you sir. It's not as if I can prove anything, but I'd stop these games if I were you." "Touché kid, I could still get you kicked out worst comes to worst."

She stared him down from behind as he walked away, fists clenched in frustration, she concluded that she could only turn her attention to her parents and repair any damage to their relationship. The next morning, she suggested that Mei and John collaborate on cataloguing the fossil—a task that required careful coordination and communication.

"It'll save time," she argued when John hesitated. "I'm not so sure..." Mei spoke "two perspectives are better than one." Lily continued, "your work is incredible Dr. Zhang. This could be done with the most efficiency and quickly if you and Dr. Cameron did it together."

Reluctantly, they agreed. Over the next few days, Lily nudged them closer. She encouraged Mei to voice her ideas and urged John to listen. She shared stories—disguised as anecdotes—about the importance of mutual respect and balance in relationships.

## V

As the camp buzzed with activity, John called Lily over to a partially unearthed fossil. "Hey, Lily. This is a juvenile theropod. Notice the vertebrae spacing? It shows how fast they grew."

Lily sat beside him, studying the fossil. "Oh, yeah, I've seen these online." She immediately backtracked. "I mean, my dad showed me pictures he uploaded on the home computer." John raised his brows. "Wow, your dad must be cool to have such tech." Lily shrugged. "Yeah, he's into dinosaurs. Loves them."

John chuckled. "Sounds like a great guy. You're a natural at this. Ever consider doing this full-time?" She hesitated. "I've thought about it, but family stuff complicates things."

John leaned back thoughtfully. "I get that. My dad pushed me toward the army, but my mom wanted something different. It's tough to find balance, but it's important to stay true to what you love. Maybe talk to your parents." Lily smiled. "Thanks."

Later, Lily overheard Dr. Wu discussing her. "Lily's not on the roster. If she's unregistered, she's a liability." Panicking, Lily realized she couldn't stay. She resolved to find a way back to the present.

She passed Mei's tent and paused, watching her parents' shadows. Mei stepped out, startling Lily. "Oh, Lily, still out?" Lily impulsively hugged her. "Thank you, Dr. Zhang... for everything. You're one of the best archaeologists I've met. Don't forget how much you love this work." Mei, surprised but touched, replied, "Thank you, Lily. Rest well."

Lily walked into the night, scanning the surroundings. Suddenly, a gust of wind engulfed her. A strange pull gripped her chest as the world blurred. She stumbled and fell, landing on her back.

When she opened her eyes, she was back in the museum under bright lights. A security guard approached. "Miss, are you okay?"

Disoriented, Lily nodded, noticing the fossil in front of her—the same one from the dig. It was as though no time had passed. "I'm fine," she assured, her mind racing.

As the guard walked off, Lily stared at the fossil, then turned and ran home, her heart full of questions and newfound resolve.

## VII

She opened the door to her apartment, expecting to be greeted by the familiar lonesome of the property, but to her astonishment. Lily found her parents waiting for her. They were together, sitting side by side on the couch. Her parents turned at the sound of the door, John was petting Lily's dog spread out happily on the cushions, while Mei had the TV remote in her hand.

"How was the museum?" Mei asked, her tone light and casual.

"Mom- "Lily spoke, it's as if a weight was lifted from her heart. She ran over to her parents and hugged them both eagerly. They invited the embrace, John patting her back while Mei put a hand on her head, "why so excited kiddo? You weren't out for weeks." her father joked. "You should be out more," her mother commented, "you study inside all day."

Lily kept the hold on her parents tight, "I just... missed you." Is all she said. Mei scooted herself to the side so Lily could sit down, and she did so happily. She rested her head on her mother's shoulder.

"So, how was it?" Her father asked, waiting for her to answer this time.

"It was...incredible," Lily replied, her voice thick with emotion.

Her parents exchanged a glance, their hands brushing briefly. They told her stories about the 1986 dig, laughing over shared memories. They still had disagreements, but there was a warmth between them, a connection that hadn't existed before.

Lily realized she had altered the past, giving her family a second chance. The burden she had carried for so long began to lift.

As Lily returned to her studies, she found her passion reignited. She threw herself into her work, inspired by her parents' resilience and the lessons she had learned about communication and connection. She knew the past wasn't perfect, but it was a foundation—one she could build on to create a future filled with hope, love, and understanding.

## Fiction – Group 5 WINNER

### The White Lion Temple

*Victoria Shanghai Academy, Chau, Man Hei – 16*

Gu Sheng

I kneel in the sand and dust beside my team and pull out brushes and a chisel. We've been here a few weeks but have only uncovered part of a dinosaur fossil. It wasn't anything new and was not without struggle. Excavating next to an ancient Chinese temple would never be smooth sailing.

'Gu Sheng, we've encountered a bit of a problem.' my colleague says, leaning against a wall and beckoning me over.

The dinosaur's spine had been exposed, but it clearly extended further underneath the wall of the main hall of the temple. I pulled out the 3D scanner in my bag and placed it next to the wall, watching the image appear on the screen. My eyes swept across the display as they formed, showing not only the spine extending underneath the main hall of the temple but multiple whole dinosaur skeletons, too.

'Guys, look at this!'

'Never before seen in paleontology..'

'Can any of you identify that one on the right?'

'We have to excavate them right now!'

A flurry of scrambling hands and pointed fingers rush towards the screen, pushing me to the side. I feel blood rushing to my head as I make sense of what we've discovered: multiple intact skeletons and possibly a new dinosaur species. I immediately pull out my phone to draft an email to the local government and my supervisors. We've surpassed what we were sent to accomplish.

\*\*\*

Li Shi

'As you come up these steps you'll find yourself in the main temple hall. This Buddha statue was made of marble in 60AD by skilled craftsmen.' I recite as I lead the visitors through the temple. I've done the tour so many times the words practically leap off my tongue. 'The intricate design symbolizes the...'

*Bzzt bzzt.*

I mutter an apology as I scramble for my phone. As soon as I pick up I hear my friend's frantic tone emanating from the speaker.

'Li Shi! Have you heard? Gu Sheng's palaeontology team found something—'

‘Jesus — took them long enough.’ I scoff, ‘You’d think that with all the disruption they’re causing—’

‘Shut up for a second!’ She exclaims, exasperated. ‘There are signs of fossils from an undiscovered species under the temple, they just submitted a request to dig it up. I’ve just submitted our request to stop them.’

I look around the temple, at the Buddha in front of me, the coils of incense hanging from the ceiling, the intricate paintings and red and gold pillars, the shiny wooden floorboards beneath my feet, the beauty and extravagance of it all. I hang up the phone and murmur something about staying put to the visitor closest to me. I walk calmly down the stone steps before taking off running. I wind past stone statues and bushes, towards the back of the temple, where I know those paleontologists have set up camp. Every shred of manners had left my body as I burst into the biggest tent.

‘You’re not... going to rip up the temple.’ I say through gasps of air.

‘I was expecting you but thought you’d at least knock, Li Shi.’ says Gu Sheng, turning away from her desk to look at me. ‘These new fossils are a major discovery for China, we’re only digging under the main hall, unless, of course, there are more fossils in other parts of the temple.’

I can feel heat creeping up my neck as I stare at her friendly-looking smile, I do my best to gather my composure before speaking. ‘The temple... is a major part of Chinese history and culture, and is very important to the locals, which you and your team, being from the city, may not understand.’ I mutter through gritted teeth.

‘We do understand that, but fossils are not often found in China, especially not new species. We have found fossils and must dig them up, that is what my team and I were sent here to do. Whether or not we have permission is up to the local government.’ Her calm demeanour only fueled my frustration. Knowing I couldn’t do anything but wait for a response from the government, I left the tent with eyes stinging.

\*\*\*

### Gu Sheng

Walking towards the temple, I listen to the crunch of gravel under my feet. I see Li Shi sitting on the steps with her head down and arms wrapped around her knees. I feel a pang of sympathy. She may not think that I understand the grief of losing something that you feel so deeply for, but my team and I would feel the same pain if we had to pack up and leave, knowing that there was an undiscovered species that may never be unearthed and studied. I’m probably the last person she wants to see, so I sit on a bench, out of view from the steps. I’m just about to open my lunchbox when I get a notification on my phone.

*Dear Ms. Gu Sheng and Ms. Li Shi,*

*Due to the conflicting requests submitted by both individuals, this matter involving China’s Institute of Paleontology and National Cultural Heritage Administration, as well as both parties being the Luo Long representatives of their respective departments, the decision of whether to preserve the White Lion Temple or to excavate the fossils, must be decided between Ms. Gu Sheng and Ms. Li Shi.*

*The Luo Long Administrative Division*

So the local government just wants us to sort it out ourselves. Wow. Real helpful. There's no time like the present, right? I think as I make my way towards the temple entrance. I place an extra lunch box next to Li Shi and sit on the steps. She's holding her phone and her whole face is bright red. She's seen the email too.

'I'm not budging on the temple' She says, staring at the path ahead of us.

'I'm not either'

'I'm fine with you and your team being here and turning the attention of tourists away from the temple and to your little excavation project, but you're not taking away the temple. It's the most important landmark in Luo Long and has been for centuries, it's ancient history.'

'Those dinosaur bones have existed for millennia, prehistoric, Li Shi...You know, I've been thinking, and I don't think historians and paleontologists are all that different.' I smile at her, thinking wildly that she may smile back.

She doesn't even turn to look at me. I take a deep breath before continuing, 'Also, sometimes new discoveries draw even more attention to known history'. She still stares at the gravel like it contains the secrets of the universe. I admit defeat and walk away, tensing slightly, thinking she might call after me, or stomp on the ground, though she probably couldn't even bear the thought of scuffing the stone, or I don't know, hurl the lunchbox at my back, but all I hear is the crunch of gravel beneath my feet.

\*\*\*

### Li Shi

My fingers seem to blur as they fly across the keyboard. My desk is cluttered with copies of Han dynasty records and poetry volumes from centuries ago that mention the White Lion Temple. I have to include everything, anything that might justify its significance in this report. I have almost 2000 years of history to comb through. Surely the government will protect the oldest temple in China.

I glance at my clock and realize it's already past 7 pm. I stroll into the kitchen and turn on the tap to wash my hands before cooking dinner, but no water comes out. I slam a fist onto the counter in frustration as I remember that the water is shut off throughout the town today for maintenance, and I was too absorbed in writing to fill up a bucket.

I walk towards my favourite noodle restaurant and peek into the temple as I walk past. To my surprise I find Gu Sheng kneeling in front of the marble Buddha statue. Intrigued, I walk in and kneel down next to her. A few kids run around the main hall, holding incense sticks.

'I really didn't expect to see you here, Gu Sheng.'

'I wanted to find out what drew you to the temple, what makes you defend it so fiercely' She murmured, eyes closed.

I blinked. She's been living in a tent next to the temple for weeks and we've crossed paths multiple times, but I never took the time to get to know her, every time I had to talk to her it was some sort of complaint about how their excavation was affecting the temple, culminating in all of this. 'I grew up here, and spent my whole childhood learning about the history of the temple, every single statue and painting and what they represented.' I paused, am I really going to tell her my whole backstory? Maybe it's the calmness of the temple, but I continue. 'I had such a deep love for history, after high school I wanted to pursue it in university, but my parents disapproved.' Her eyes were now open and focused on me. 'They wanted me to study medicine and become a doctor, as all Chinese parents are inclined to do.'

When I stood my ground they disowned me. I found solace in the temple, the tranquillity, the beauty. Later I was able to study history by getting a scholarship. That's why I defend it so fiercely.'

She chuckled. 'I told you historians and paleontologists aren't all that different. I'll spare you the details but I also developed a deep love for history, only the fossils and discovery kind. My team and I are under a lot of pressure for fossils, something to bring back to the city. Our department risks getting cut.'

I stayed silent for a moment. Maybe we really weren't that different, we both love history. It's just that I'm trying to preserve, whereas she's trying to discover.

'I'll give it some thought,' I murmur, before leaving the temple.

As I enter the restaurant the owner apologetically tells me that because there's no water, they can only serve reheated fried rice and bottled drinks. I tell her it's fine and sit down at the table closest to the door. Just as I'm getting comfortable the door bursts open, and my frantic colleague is scanning the restaurant.

'The temple caught on fire! Come quickly!' He yells, grabbing my wrist and pulling me out the door.

When we reach the temple the gravity of his words sink in, as I stare at the orange flames that are consuming the entire structure, parts of the walls and roof crumbling down, the fire extending into the night sky. The water is shut off. There's nothing I can do, and it's too late. I sink into the gravel path and watch the flames tear down the temple, the red and gold pillars, the paintings, the beauty and tranquillity, all reduced to an ashy mess. As I stared at the wooden floorboards, something clicked. Who would want the temple gone? The temple stood for 2000 years but crumbles today? The world seemed to spin as I stood up, the flames had died down but I still saw red. I remember the drumming of my feet on the ground. I remember bursting into a white tent. I remember people pushing me backwards and fingers digging into my skin. I remember screaming at them till it hurt. I remember hot tears streaming down my face. Then I remember my vision going dark.

\*\*\*

### Gu Sheng

I try to steady my trembling hands as I walk down the gravel path, not wanting to crumple the paper I was holding. The temple had been reduced to a charred skeleton of its former glory, the stone steps that led to the opulent main hall only a day ago now led to a wasteland. Only the marble Buddha statue remained, lying on its side, and its bright white marble was now a dusty gray. In front of the statue was Li Shi kneeling with her eyes closed. My breathing is shallow as I step over rubble and charred wood that crumbled beneath my feet. When I reach her I see her cheeks are tear-stained. I gently place the paper next to her and carefully retrace my steps through the ashes.

Not too long after I returned to my tent I heard a few sheepish pats on my tent. I look up to see Li Shi standing at the entrance, her eyes on her shoes.

'Hey, I read the report on the fire.' She practically whispers, waving the paper in her hand. 'I'm sorry for how I acted last night, it didn't even cross my mind that it might have been the kids playing with incense. The pain clouded my judgement, you didn't deserve that.'

'Don't even worry about it, I was more concerned about how you're doing, knowing how much the temple meant to you.'

‘Moping about it won’t magically rebuild it right?’ she says, wiping her cheeks and forcing a smile, ‘I just wanted to know what started the fire...At least you can excavate the fossils now.’

‘I really didn’t want it to happen this way’

‘I know...Hey, can I ask you for a favour? The Buddha statue got chipped and damaged, any chance your team could do anything about that?’ She asks, finally looking me in the eyes.

‘Well, how different is marble from bone? We’ll see what we can do.’ I say with a smile.

\*\*\*

Li Shi

*5 years later*

The camera flashes are dizzying, and there are a dozen reporters telling us to look this way and that and smile and pose. I turn to look at the rebuilt temple again. The restoration was good. It could never be the same as before, but I still find comfort when I see it. Even more visitors came to see it after it was turned into a part-history museum, or maybe it’s just the attached dinosaur exhibit.

‘Ms. Li Shi!’ I was startled as I realized a reporter had been trying to get my attention, shoving a microphone in my face. ‘Do you feel as though the new dinosaur exhibit has overshadowed the temple?’

I chuckle and look at Gu Sheng, ‘Well, someone told me once that sometimes new discoveries draw more attention to known history.’

The reporter continues, turning his attention to Gu Sheng, ‘Ms. Gu Sheng, is it true that you and Ms. Li Shi had a feud in the past?’

Now it’s Gu Sheng’s turn to laugh, as she smiles at me and links her arm with mine, she says confidently into the microphone, ‘I’d say we got over it.’

# Creative Writing: Fiction – Group 5

## WINNER

### The Dinosaur's Secret

*Pui Ching Middle School (Macau), Lui, Wa Chon – 17*

#### Chapter 1: The Emperor's Court

The grand hall buzzed with life. Golden lanterns cast warm light over carved jade pillars. The scent of roasted duck mingled with the sharp tang of rice wine. Laughter rippled among the courtiers.

Emperor Xuanzong sat atop his throne, his crimson robes shimmering like embers. He raised a hand, commanding silence. All eyes turned to the scholar Li Wei, who stepped forward with measured grace. He held a scroll tied with a crimson ribbon.

“This,” Li Wei began, his voice steady, “is a record of your majesty’s reign. Peace. Prosperity. A legacy unmatched.”

He untied the ribbon and unfurled the scroll. Its ink gleamed fresh, the characters bold and precise. Gasps of admiration rippled through the room as ministers craned their necks to see.

“Read,” the emperor said, his tone calm but expectant.

Li Wei bowed. “Your armies secured the northern borders,” he began. His words painted images of victories, of treaties signed with elegance. “The Silk Road thrives under your wisdom, linking distant lands.”

General Tai Peng, seated near the emperor, chuckled. “Don’t forget the battles,” he said, his voice loud and rough. He leaned forward, his scarred. “The blood is the cost of the glory.”

The emperor smiled faintly. “Indeed, General. Share one with us.”

Tai Peng stood, towering over the seated officials. “It was ten years ago,” he said. “The steppes burned under our advance. Their leader challenged me—a duel of blades.” His hand mimed a stroke through the air. “He fell with one blow.”

Applause erupted. The air vibrated with admiration. Yet, behind the clamor, a distant rumble echoed faintly—a storm gathering beyond the palace walls.

#### Chapter 2: Shadow in the Flames

The forest was quiet. Too quiet.

Zhang Liang walked among the pines, axe resting on his shoulder. The usual hum of crickets and rustle of leaves was gone. Only the wind remained, cold and biting. He scanned the tree line, unease coiling in his chest.

A scream shattered the stillness.

He dropped the axe and sprinted toward the village. Smoke billowed above the rooftops. Flames licked the sky, casting jagged shadows over the chaos. Villagers fled in every direction, their cries swallowed by the roar of fire.

Through the inferno, Zhang Liang saw it. A monstrous shape loomed, its wings unfurled like black sails. Scales glinted in the firelight. A tail swept through a hut, splintering wood like straw. For a heartbeat, their eyes met—golden and burning with malice.

The court was in disarray. Ministers whispered in tight clusters. The emperor sat rigid on his throne, his usual composure cracked.

“The northern highlands are in flames,” a messenger had reported. “Villages destroyed. Survivors few.”

Xuanzong rose, his voice cutting through the murmurs. “Bring Li Wei, General Tai Peng, and the messenger at once.”

In the private chamber, Zhang Liang knelt before the emperor. His clothes were singed, his face pale.

“Tell me everything,” Xuanzong commanded.

Zhang Liang’s voice trembled at first. “It wasn’t human,” he said. “A beast—scaled, winged. Fire poured from its jaws. It tore through the village like paper.”

Li Wei frowned. “Dragons are myths, long extinct. Perhaps fear clouds your memory.”

Zhang Liang met his gaze. “I know what I saw.”

General Tai Peng leaned forward. “Myth or not, this is a threat. If it can destroy villages, it can march south. We must act.”

The emperor’s eyes darkened. He paced the room, his robes sweeping the floor. Finally, he stopped.

“Li Wei, your knowledge is unmatched. General Tai Peng, you are the bravest man I know. Zhang Liang, your familiarity with the region will be invaluable. Together, you will investigate this threat.”

Li Wei hesitated, then bowed. “As you wish, Your Majesty.”

Tai Peng suggested: “We leave at dawn.”

Zhang Liang rose, determination steeling his face.

As the trio left the chamber, the weight of the task ahead pressed heavy on them. Behind them, the palace lights burned against the growing night.

### Chapter 3: Into the Inferno

The village lay in ruins. Smoke still curled from blackened timbers. What remained of homes were skeletons of charred wood and collapsed stone. The air stank of ash and something sharper—like burned meat. General Tai Peng scanned the wreckage, hand resting on his sword. Survivors huddled near a half-standing wall, their faces hollow with fear.

“We’ll rebuild,” Tai Peng assured a trembling elder. “But first, tell me what you saw.”

“Wings as wide as the sky,” the elder whispered. “Fire that rained like hell itself. It wasn’t human.”

Nearby, Li Wei stood before the crumbled temple. He knelt, brushing away soot to reveal a shattered relic box. Its intricate carvings were scorched, the contents gone. He frowned. “This was no ordinary attack. Something sought this specifically.”

Zhang Liang crouched near the forest’s edge, inspecting clawed gouges in the ground. He called the others over. “These marks—they lead somewhere. Somewhere it didn’t want to be followed.”

Tai Peng nodded, glancing at the survivors. “Stay together. Stay hidden. We’ll find the answer.”

By nightfall, the trio had climbed into the highlands. The terrain grew rough, the air thin and biting. Li Wei consulted a faded map that depicted the village as it had been during the old dynasties. “If the legends are true, dragon lairs are in high, isolated places. We may be close.”

Tai Peng's hand never left his sword hilt. "Stay alert."

The roar hit them like thunder. Rocks tumbled from the cliffs above. The trio froze, eyes fixed ahead. Cresting the ridge, they saw it: a dragon, massive and terrible. Its scales shimmered like molten gold.

It turned, golden eyes locking onto them. Then came the shriek—a sound of rage and dominance. Its wings unfurled, and the beast took to the sky.

"Run!" Tai Peng shouted.

### Chapter 4: Battling the Sky

The dragon roared, shaking the ground beneath them. Its wings spread wide, blotting out the sun. Flames erupted, searing the air. General Tai Peng barely rolled away in time, his armor smoking.

"Li Wei!" Tai Peng shouted, gripping his sword. "What do we know about killing this thing?"

Li Wei ducked behind a jagged rock, coughing from the acrid smoke. "I'm thinking!" He flipped through a scorched journal, his hands trembling. "Legends say they're vulnerable under the scales—soft tissue. But getting close is suicide!"

The dragon turned, golden eyes locking on Tai Peng. It lunged, claws tearing through the earth. Tai Peng charged, sword raised, but the beast swiped, throwing him into a boulder. He groaned, struggling to his feet.

"This is madness, we are going to die" Li Wei muttered.

Nearby, Zhang Liang crouched, studying the terrain. His eyes narrowed. The cliff walls loomed high, dense forest above. A narrow pass cut through the area. He glanced at the dragon, then back at the landscape.

"I have an idea," Zhang Liang called, running to them.

"We don't have time for ideas!" Tai Peng snapped, blocking another fiery breath with his shield.

"Just listen!" Zhang Liang pointed to the pass. "If we lure it there, the trees will trap its wings, and it can't get out of the narrow cliff pass."

Tai Peng hesitated, then nodded. "Fine. But it'll follow me. Get ready."

The general sprinted toward the pass, shouting curses to draw the beast's attention. The dragon roared, chasing him. Its massive wings stirred up dust and debris.

Zhang Liang and Li Wei scrambled into position. "Now!" Zhang Liang yelled.

Tai Peng dove into the narrow pass. The dragon followed, wings scraping against the cliff walls. Its claws tore at the earth, but its wings snagged on thick branches above. The creature screeched, thrashing wildly, but it was stuck.

Tai Peng emerged, sword drawn. "Now we finish it!"

For the first time, victory seemed possible.

### Chapter 5: The Hidden Truths

The battlefield was quiet now. Smoke curled from the dragon's carcass; its massive body sprawled across the forest floor. General Tai Peng wiped blood from his blade. Li Wei leaned against a rock, catching his breath.

Nearby, Zhang Liang noticed faint footprints leading away from the scene. "There's more," he said, signaling the others to follow.

"What is that?" Tai Peng asked, walking over.

Li Wei crouched and lifted a delicate piece of jewelry, encrusted with jade and gold. His face paled. "This... this belongs to Prince Qinzong."

Tai Peng frowned. “The emperor’s brother? How did it get here?”

The tracks led them to a hidden cave, partially concealed by dense undergrowth. Inside, the air was cold and damp. Torches lined the walls, their waxy remains suggesting recent use. A crude altar stood at the center of the cavern, surrounded by symbols carved into the stone floor.

“There’s something about this place.. it feels eerie,” Zhang Liang muttered.

On the altar lay large bones, their size and shape unfamiliar. Beside them were tattered scrolls covered in strange script. Li Wei carefully examined the bones, his eyes widening. “These aren’t dragon bones,” he said. “They’re fossils. Dinosaurs. Creatures that lived long before us.”

Zhang Liang’s voice was low. “So the dragons are connected to these ancient beasts?”

“Perhaps,” Li Wei replied, “but why summon them? And for what purpose?”

The group exchanged uneasy glances. The symbols on the altar hinted at something dark—a ceremony not meant for mortal eyes.

“We need answers,” Tai Peng said, sheathing his sword.

“No,” Li Wei said, clutching the jewelry. “We need to warn the emperor. If Prince Qinzong is involved, this goes deeper than we thought.”

Without another word, they began their descent.

### **Chapter 6: The Capital in Turmoil**

The capital was a city on edge. Guards lined the streets, their armor gleaming under the midday sun. Whispers of invasion rippled through the markets, and messengers darted between the palace gates.

Li Wei, General Tai Peng, Mu Lin, and Zhang Liang were ushered into the throne room. Emperor Xuanzong sat stiffly, his face grave as the party bowed low before him.

“Speak,” Xuanzong commanded, his voice firm despite the tension in the air.

Li Wei stepped forward, presenting the jade jewelry. “Your Majesty, this belonged to Prince Qinzong. We found it among the dragon remains.”

The court gasped. Xuanzong’s hands tightened on the arms of his throne.

“Dragons are real,” Zhang Liang said, his voice cutting through the stunned silence. “We saw them. Fought them.”

Tai Peng nodded. “They are a weapon. A threat unlike anything we’ve faced. And if Prince Qinzong is involved, this treachery endangers the entire empire.”

The emperor’s expression darkened. He rose. “My own brother,” he muttered, more to himself than anyone else.

He turned to his ministers. “Mobilize the armies. Fortify the capital. Prepare the provinces for war.”

The room erupted into a cacophony of voices as commands were shouted. The emperor’s gaze swept over the group, his expression stern yet approving. ‘You have done well,’ he said, his voice cutting through the chaos. ‘But this is only the beginning.’

### **Chapter 7: The Calm Before Chaos**

The chamber was shrouded in shadow, lit only by flickering lanterns. Prince Qinzong stood before an ancient table, its surface carved with cryptic runes. His crooked smile deepened as he watched the leader of the northern tribes kneel before him.

“In three days,” the prince said, his voice low but charged with malice, “the stars will align. A night of destiny. We strike then, and the capital will fall.” His laughter echoed off the cold stone walls, sending shivers through even the most hardened warrior.

Meanwhile, in the emperor's grand study, Li Wei unfurled an old scroll, pointing to the night sky map. "Your Majesty," he said, "in three days, the stars will collide—a rare celestial event. Prophecies speak of transformative change during such times."

The emperor's jaw tightened. "Then we must prepare for it."

### Chapter 8: Final Encounter

Flames engulfed the outer walls. Dragons circled overhead, their roars deafening. The defenders screamed orders, their voices barely audible over the chaos. General Tai Peng stood at the gates, barking commands. His armor was scorched, his sword slick with blood.

"Hold the line!" he roared, driving his blade into an enemy soldier. "Keep those ballistae firing!"

Above, a dragon swooped low, spewing fire. The heat singed Tai Peng's face as archers released a volley of bolts. One struck true, piercing the dragon's eye. It shrieked and crashed into the battlements, crushing men and stone alike.

On the wall, Zhang Liang aimed carefully, his bowstring taut. "Aim for the wings!" he shouted to his men. His arrow flew, tearing through the thin membrane of a dragon's wing. The beast spiraled down, smashing into its own forces below.

At the command center, Li Wei pored over a map. "Shift the catapults west," he told a lieutenant. "Focus on the largest cluster of invaders." He paused, watching the stars above. "The dragons are weakening. Their coordination is faltering."

The tide of battle turned. The invaders fell back as the defenders pushed forward, but the cost was steep. The city lay in ruins, its streets littered with the dead.

A trumpet sounded. On the wall's highest point, Prince Qin zong stood, his armor gleaming in the firelight. "Xuanzong!" he bellowed. "Face me, brother! End this here!"

The emperor climbed the steps, his robes billowing. His face was grim. "Qinzong," he said, his voice heavy. "You've betrayed your family. Your people."

"You never understood me," Qin zong spat. "You've always looked down on me, always the perfect ruler. While I was nothing."

"You were my brother," Xuanzong replied. "You still are. Surrender. We can end this madness."

"No." Qin zong unsheathed his blade. "It ends with blood."

Their swords clashed. Qin zong fought with raw fury, his strikes wild but powerful. "Do you know what it's like to live in your shadow?" he shouted, slashing at Xuanzong's shoulder.

Xuanzong parried, his movements measured. "Do you know what it's like to carry the weight of an empire?" he countered. "You think this was easy? That I wanted it?"

The fight raged. Xuanzong slipped, and Qin zong's blade nicked his cheek. Blood dripped down his face. "Yield!" Qin zong snarled, pressing forward.

Xuanzong's gaze hardened. He stepped aside, disarming Qin zong with a swift strike. His sword hovered at his brother's throat.

"Do it," Qin zong hissed.

Xuanzong hesitated. His hand trembled. Then he stepped back. "You are defeated, brother. But I will not kill you."

Guards rushed in, seizing Qin zong. The last dragon fell from the sky, its massive body hitting the ground with a final, earth-shaking crash.

Xuanzong turned to the city below. Fires still burned, and cries of the wounded echoed. Victory tasted bitter.

"Is it over?" Li Wei asked, stepping beside him.  
"No," Xuanzong said, his voice hollow. "Not yet."

### Chapter 9: The Empire's Legacy

Emperor Xuanzong sat alone in the throne room, the weight of his crown heavier than ever.

The doors creaked open. Li Wei, General Tai Peng, and Zhang Liang entered, their faces solemn.

"The city is secure," Tai Peng reported. "The remaining invaders have fled."

"And the people?" Xuanzong asked without lifting his head.

"Rebuilding will take years," Li Wei said. "But they will endure."

Xuanzong nodded slowly. "And my brother?"

"In the dungeons," Zhang Liang said, his tone measured. "Awaiting your judgment."

The emperor rose, his figure shadowed by the faint light of dawn. "I will speak to him. Alone."

In the dim cell, Qinzong sat slumped against the wall, chains rattling as he moved. Xuanzong stepped inside, his expression unreadable.

"Come to gloat?" Qinzong muttered.

"No," Xuanzong said softly. "I came to understand."

Qinzong laughed bitterly. "What is there to understand? I wanted what you had. Power. Respect. Freedom from the shadows."

Xuanzong stared at him for a long moment. "You were never in my shadow, Qinzong. You put yourself there."

Qinzong looked away, his pride crumbling.

Outside, the first light of dawn crept over the horizon. Xuanzong emerged from the dungeons, his face hard but his eyes filled with quiet resolve. He turned to his companions.

"We rebuild," Xuanzong said, his voice steady. "Not just the city, but the trust that was lost. For our people. For our future."

Li Wei stepped forward hesitantly. "Your Majesty, there's one matter left. The dinosaur fossils we discovered in the northern village—what should we do with them?"

The emperor paused, his gaze distant, as if seeing the bones and the creatures they once belonged to. "Return them," he said finally. "To the earth. To the creatures who owned them. Let them rest where they belong."

The room fell silent, the weight of the emperor's words settling over them. The group bowed and departed, leaving Xuanzong alone to watch the first rays of sunlight break over the city.

A thousand years later, archaeologists unearthed rare dinosaur fossils--Sinosauropelta and new Titanosaur species--in a remote Chinese village. Their discovery sparked wonder, but the bones carried with them a story long forgotten, buried beneath earth and history for centuries.

# Fiction – Group 6

## WINNER

### Caesar and Olivia

*St. Paul's College, Lim, Yi Xian Elias – 12*

Once upon a time in a forest, there was a village which was full of dinosaurs. Caesar, a Gandititan Cavocaudatus, was the leader of the village. His mate, Olivia, had a hatchling, called Fred. Under the leadership of Caesar, everyone was living peacefully and safely.

One fateful day, dark clouds filled all over the place. A fierce conflict had risen between their herd and their rival, T-Rex. The T-Rex were known for their sharp teeth, swift attack and their cunning tactics. Caesar knew it was impossible for now to escape, so he armed himself and prepared for the war.

As the war erupted, the ground was trembled with the roaring dinosaurs and the clash of horns. Caesar valiantly fought for his country and his family as the T-Rex was attacking vigorously.

As the war raged on, Olivia sensed that Fred was gone. By following the footsteps, she found that Fred was tied to the tree and guarded by the T-Rex.

“Caesar! We must get Fred to safety!” Olivia shouted with a panicked voice.

“I won’t let that happen,” Caesar replied, showing determination on his face.

But at the same time, Olivia knew that if she wanted to protect her family, she had to make a difficult choice. “You must take back Fred and run!” she insisted. “I will hold them off.”

Although Caesar kept protesting, Olivia had already determined. “I love you both, and I will always protect you. You have to survive!” After Olivia finished her last words, she stood in front of the T-Rex and attracted them to follow her to a cave. At that time, Caesar was in dread and didn’t know what to do. But not a while, he awoke, and untied Fred in a face-paced movement.

On Olivia’s side, she committed self-immolation with the T-Rex. Caesar sighed, “she is a true hero,” his voice filled with sorrow and guilt.

Days passed, Caesar knew that Olivia’s sacrifice had given them a chance to live. Though their family was forever changed, the love and courage she displayed would remain in their hearts.

As Fred grew up, they learned the importance of family, strength, and sacrifice. And in the face of danger, they carried forward the spirit of their brave mother, ensuring that her love would never be forgotten.

## Fiction – Group 7 WINNER

# Don't Envy, Your Feathers Grow

*Korean International School Springboard, Kwan, Jordan – 18*

On a stormy day in the Thirtieth Century the year of the fox, there was a family of four feathered dinosaurs living in a remote area in Jiangxi, China. Their house was near the lake connecting to the Pacific Ocean, covered as big as a tennis court. It was hard to find their house if they were not there as there were no door signs or street numbers. The family loved to live near the lake because they enjoyed the reflection of the moonlight shining like spotlights on the lake on beautiful nights.

The most giant dinosaur has a 4-meter neck, moving above the lake and searching for food for his daddy to catch. “Daddy, Daddy, there is a salmon swimming in the lake!” the baby brother, Timothy shouted. Shortly after, the daddy dinosaur, Lee, ran like a flying leopard and jumped into the lake to catch the salmon. Although Daddy had purple wings, he never used his wings to fly because he ran thirty times faster than a fox.

There was a turquoise dinosaur with short turquoise hair, who was eating grass with her mother near the lake. She has a purple body with creamy dots. Her name is called Envy. “Mommy, the fresh grass is so yummy!” Envy happily commented. Envy kept eating the fresh grass and walking up the cliff. Mommy dinosaur harvested fresh grass and gave it to the giant Timothy, Envy and Lee. A huge and strong typhoon blew up Daddy the Lee and destroyed their house and grass. “Arrrr....DADDY is in the sky!” Timothy shouted and immediately stretched his long neck up to 8 meters to wrap Daddy the Lee back to the ground. Their home was flooded because of the heavy rain and all the grass and trees were destroyed. They had to start swimming as the pouring rain continued his anger for another month the lake connected to the east coast of China. Timothy has carried his parents on his back and swam with Envy for three months.

They had fish for breakfast and dinner. Mommy had sharp teeth like the tyrannosaurus can cut the bones of the fish. They reached the East China Sea and continued swimming in the North Pacific Ocean. They swam and passed the Mexico Islands. They had so much tuna in the Atlantic Ocean. Timothy started growing bright purple feathers on its legs as well as its arms. Timothy screamed excitedly as lots of tall buildings on top of an island were in front of the family, such as the Empire State Building. The island was surrounded by the Ocean. The Dinosaurs continued climbing the mountains and found the Catskill Mountains. Timothy and Envy started growing more feathers on their legs and arms. Their feathers were shining in the clouds between the dangerous mountains. They helped to build their new home in a mysterious cave.

# Non-Fiction – Group 1

## WINNER

### China-saur?

German Swiss International School, Lai, Caspar – 7

No way, of course there is no such thing – but have you heard of China's dinosaurs?

In recent decades palaeontologists have discovered dozens of important fossils in China. From the over 6 metres in length, long-necked, marine Dinocephalosaurus to the duck-sized Fujianvenator Prodigiosus, there have been a huge variety of discoveries.

#### **But what is a fossil?**

A Fossil is the preserved remains of plants and animals; they are formed when a carcass or dead plant is buried in sediment, preserving the skeleton. Over time the sediment is turned into rock, due to heat and pressure. The most common fossils are bones and teeth, however, in general fossils are very rare. Not all fossils are dinosaurs. For example, there are many fossils of Cephalopods such as Ammonites and Arthropods like Trilobites. Some fossils are as big as double decker buses. Some dinosaurs eat meat like T-rex, some eat vegetables like Dinocephalosaurus, some eat both like Deinocheirus.

#### **How do palaeontologists find fossils?**

Palaeontologists dig up fossils by carefully using brushes, forks, spoons, rock hammers, knives, shovels and sometimes pickaxes. Palaeontologists find fossils by using these tools and clues on the ground, such as footprints, swim traces, burrows, dens and trackways.

You could also feel the shape, size, pattern on the ground. They use very tiny and delicate tools like brushes, dental picks and sometimes use water. This is because they have to be careful not to break them. You could also use acid but with lots and lots of patience.

#### **What kind of dinosaur fossils have they found then?**

There was a dinosaur fossil found in China. It was a bird-like creature with very long lower legs. This dinosaur's name is Fujianvenator Prodigiosus and they lived during the late Jurassic period. Another scientist discovered a fossil of a rainbow-coloured, bird-like dinosaur about the size of a duck. It lived in the Jurassic period which is 161 million years ago; it has been named Caihong jiji.

One dinosaur called Mamenchisaurus Sinocanadorum is 18 metres – that's larger than a double decker bus! It is a sauropod; this is a group of dinosaur species that had long necks and were herbivores. It was found in the northwest of China. They were very intimidating and potentially dangerous because they were enormous, however, like with most herbivores only the trees had to watch out! He was alive in the Late Jurassic era.

For example, around 240 million years ago, a serpent-like reptile named Dinocephalosaurus roamed the earth v. The Dinocephalosaurus had a very long neck researchers recently described that Dinocephalosaurus is a giant. That Dinosaur was found in southern China and was believed to be a marine animal and probably used its long neck to hunt along with its fang-like teeth to catch prey.

The reason why China has a lot of fossils is because of the huge area China covers

# Creative Writing: Non-Fiction – Group 1 WINNER

## The Land Before Time in China

*Shanghai Singapore International School, Lui, Bi Jun Dash – 9*

Jurassic Park is one of the world's most famous dinosaur movies, and it's also my favorite! Whenever I watched it, it makes me wonder what is it like during the Jurassic times or during millions of years ago? Are the dinosaurs, pterosaurs and plesiosaurs back then stepping on the same land that I am stepping today in China, where I am currently living in?

It made me curious, so I wanted to dig deeper to find out if dinosaurs ever lived in China!

Not surprisingly, China being a large country with varied geology had discovered more than 90 species of prehistoric animals till date. Some of the dinosaurs and pterosaurs discovered are Sinosauropteryx, Yunnanosaurus, Dinocephalosaurus and many more.

One of the smallest dinosaurs in the world was actually found in China. This tiny dinosaur is called Minisauripus, discovered in Gansu province. The five three-toed fossil footprints found was measured to be between only 1cm and 3cm across (even smaller than a chicken's feet which is around 12cm). These footprints are believed to belong to one of the smallest dinosaurs ever.

A long snake-like mythical Chinese dragon was also one of the interesting dinosaur found in China. This dinosaur found was dated back to 240 million years ago from the Triassic period. It was a 16-foot-long aquatic reptile, called Dinocephalosaurus orientalis. It has 32 separate neck vertebrae, an extremely long neck. The fossil of Dinocephalosaurus orientalis has a snake-like appearance and flippers and was found in the Guizhou Province of southern China. This appearance makes people think that it looks like a Chinese dragon. With it's long neck and sharp teeth, it is easier for this dinosaur to grab fishes and prevent them from escaping.

Most recently, on just October 17 2024, there was a discovery of a new type of dinosaur egg fossils in east China's Jiangxi Province. This dinosaur egg fossils are merely 29mm in length, the smallest ever found globally. These eggs discovered are dated back to late Cretaceous period, over 80 million years ago. For researchers, this discovery expands the diversity of dinosaur eggs from the Late Cretaceous period, it gives new valuable insights into new possibilities and more species that could exist during that period.

These discoveries are so fascinating, and I believe that China will find even more species in the near future. These new species could be discovered any time soon and even near us, and who knows, we might find amazing fossils that are in action like in a mid-fight or hunting for food. Imagine finding fossils while playing in a field, with the dinosaur's mouth open wide, it will be both a scary but amazing sight. Looking forward to more discoveries! Who knows, one day I might be able to find some fossils with my friends while playing at the school field...

## Non-Fiction – Group 2 WINNER

# Unearthing the Mysteries of China's Dinosaurs

*St. Joseph's Primary School, Ng, Daryl – 9*

Ever since I was a child, the colossal shadows of dinosaurs have loomed large in my imagination. I would spend hours pouring over picture books, watching documentaries, and piecing together plastic models, dreaming of a world where these magnificent creatures roamed the Earth. My fascination was not just with their size or their fearsome appearance, but with the mysteries they left behind – fossils that whispered secrets of a bygone era.

One ordinary evening, while I was reading my dinosaur encyclopedia, I heard the most amazing news on television. They found dinosaur fossils right here in Hong Kong, the bustling city where I live in! My heart started pounding with excitement. Dinosaurs, the same ones I read about and watched in movies, were actually discovered in the place where I grow up. It was like a dream coming true. Seeing something so ancient and legendary right in our busy city with all its tall skyscrapers and glitzy LED lights – it felt like venturing a real-life adventure story that needed to be shared with everyone.

This discovery sparked my curiosity about China's rich paleontological history. The first fossil was found on a peaceful and balmy day in the 1990s, where a farmer in Liaoning Province was tilting his fields when he stumbled upon the extraordinary fossil. The fossilised remains of a creature that would revolutionise our understanding of dinosaurs – a *Sinosauropelta*, the first feathered dinosaur discovered that wasn't directly related to birds. This small carnivorous theropod ate small animals, including mammals and lizards. This "China dragon bird" shows that dinosaurs are not just scaly reptiles, but some are also feathered and some can even glide! The fossils from Liaoning have provided crucial insights into the origins of flight.

The remarkable discovery of the *Sinosauropelta* led to many excavations in Liaoning, leading the discovery of more than 40 species of dinosaurs! Liaoning, with its rich fossil beds, is no doubt a treasure trove for palaeontologists. The region's unique geological conditions have preserved a wide display of prehistoric life. Each fossil unearthed added a piece to the puzzle of Earth's past.

Further discoveries continued to paint a vivid picture of prehistoric China. In the lush landscapes of Jiangxi Province, another groundbreaking discovery was made! Palaeontologists discovered a new species of *Titanosaurus*, a huge herbivorous dinosaur that roamed the Earth a few million years ago. These gentle giants with their long necks and large bodies offer a glimpse into the diverse life of China's dinosaurs. The Jiangxi *Titanosaurus* is an example of the hidden wonders within China's fossil sites.

Among these discoveries, one of the most astonishing finds was the Yi Qi found in Hebei Province. Its name means “strange wing” in Chinese, which hints at its unique features. This small, pigeon-sized dinosaur lived around 160 million years ago during the Jurassic period. What makes the Yi Qi particularly intriguing is its bat-like wings, supported by a long bony rod extending from its wrist. This extraordinary creature showcased an example of convergent evolution, where the Yi Qi evolved wings similar to those of bats and flying squirrels, despite being a dinosaur. The implications of this discovery are profound, as it expands our understanding of the diversity of dinosaur adaptations and evolutionary paths. The Yi Qi’s unique wing structure suggests that dinosaurs explored various modes of flight long before the emergence of birds, highlighting the complexity of their evolutionary history.

Recently, Hong Kong has also made significant dinosaur discoveries. About 30 rocks containing dinosaur fossils were found on Port Island in the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark. These fossils, believed to date back to the Cretaceous period, were unearthed by experts from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The collaboration between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese experts, as well as international researchers, fosters a spirit of cooperation and knowledge-sharing. This can lead to more comprehensive and globally relevant scientific studies.

The process of uncovering these ancient secrets is as fascinating as the discoveries themselves! Palaeontologists carefully dig sites, using modern tools and techniques to reveal the stories that the fossils tell. Technologies like CT scans and 3D printing allow scientists to study the fossils, piecing together the unfinished pieces of the puzzle of the lives of ancient creatures that roamed the Earth 65 million years ago. The sheer number of fossils and new species discoveries showcases the advancements in Chinese dinosaur research.

China’s fossil-rich regions hold countless untold stories, waiting to be discovered. As paleontologists continue to explore these areas, each new fossil unearthed enriches our knowledge of prehistoric life and inspires future generations. The world of dinosaurs is enormous and full of wonders, and the tale of China’s dinosaurs is far from over. With every new discovery, we gain a deeper understanding of the amazing diversity of life that once thrived on our planet. As we look to the future, the excitement of uncovering what lies buried beneath the soil continues to captivate and inspire us. Let’s stay curious and keep learning – who knows what incredible discoveries we might be part of in the future!

# Creative Writing: Non-Fiction – Group 2 WINNER

## New Tales of China's Dinosaurs

*Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Tang, Jin Hei Jace – 11*

### **The Paleontological Revolution in Jiangxi**

In the remote mountains of southern China, where lush valleys intertwine with winding rivers, a paleontological revolution is taking center stage. While many regions around the world have been extensively explored, the hidden valleys of Jiangxi remain largely uncharted, concealing the secrets of a distant past. The recent discovery of a new dinosaur species, *Jiangxiaurus rex*, has set the scientific community abuzz with anticipation and opportunity.

In the summer of 2013, a dedicated team of paleontologists embarked on an ambitious mission to uncover Jiangxi's geological treasures. Led by Dr. Mei Chen, a renowned paleontologist with a passion for uncovering ancient mysteries, the team comprised geologists, biologists and graduate students eager to make their mark in the world of paleontology. Armed with geological maps and an insatiable curiosity, they combed through fossil-rich deposits nestled within dense forests and steep cliffs.

After weeks of diligent searching under the sweltering sun and amidst the symphony of chirping cicadas, they uncovered a fossilized bone protruding from a rocky outcrop near the *Jiangxiaurus rex* site. The bone was larger than any they had encountered, sparking excitement among the team. As they excavated further, they stumbled on a remarkable find: the remains of a previously unknown theropod.

### **The Discovery of Kangaraurus rex**

The highlight of their discovery was *Kangaraurus rex*—a dinosaur that redefines our understanding of theropods. This impressive creature, estimated to be around 40 feet long, featured a striking crest atop its head, likely used for display or communication. Its powerful legs hinted at incredible speed, essential for both hunting prey and evading larger predators.

What truly set *Kangaraurus rex* apart were its elaborate, peacock feather-like structures, suggesting a fascinating role in mating rituals or rival intimidation. The vibrant colors of these feathers, preserved in the fossil record, painted a picture of a dinosaur that was not just a fearsome predator but also a creature of beauty. Even more intriguing, *Kangaraurus rex* possessed a pouch reminiscent of a kangaroo's, allowing it to carry and nurse its young while remaining agile—a potential game-changer in our understanding of dinosaur behavior.

This discovery adds depth to our understanding of the evolutionary adaptations of dinosaurs in ancient ecosystems. The presence of such a unique theropod in the late Cretaceous Period implies a diverse range of ecological niches, where different species evolved to exploit various resources in their environment.

## A Vibrant Ecosystem

The late Cretaceous Period, when *Kangaraurus rex* roamed, was characterized by a vibrant ecosystem. Fossil evidence indicates that Jiangxi was once a lush landscape teeming with life, filled with conifers, ferns and flowering plants that supported a variety of herbivores, which in turn sustained apex predators like *Kangaraurus rex*. Researchers theorize that the interactions among these species crafted a dynamic web of life, shaped by both competition and cooperation.

Alongside *Kangaraurus rex*, the team uncovered fossils of large herbivores such as *Jiangxiaurus* and smaller, nimble dinosaurs that likely served as prey. The fossilized remains of ancient plants revealed a rich habitat, suggesting that the area was once a thriving sanctuary for diverse species. This intricate web of life underscores the importance of ecological balance and diversity, themes that resonate with modern conservation efforts.

## The Ongoing Adventure

The saga of *Kangaraurus rex* is just the beginning of this thrilling adventure. As Jiangxi evolves into a pivotal site for paleontological research, it promises to shed light on the intricate world of dinosaurs. Each fossil unearthed serves as a powerful reminder of life's interconnectedness, evolution and the passage of time.

Dr. Kylie Yoyo and her team knew they were on the brink of something monumental. They continued their work, meticulously documenting each find and collaborating with experts worldwide. Their enthusiasm was contagious, attracting attention from universities and research institutions eager to be part of Jiangxi's unfolding story.

The future of paleontological research in Jiangxi is bright. With advancements in technology, such as 3D imaging and molecular analysis, the team is poised to make even more groundbreaking discoveries. Each fossil not only tells a story of the past but also raises new questions about evolution, adaptation and survival.

As the team prepared for their next expedition, a sense of anticipation filled the air. The Jiangxi mountains whispered secrets of the past, and the promise of new discoveries lay just beneath the surface. The journey of discovery has only just begun, and it holds the potential to transform our understanding of the past and enrich the future.

In the heart of Jiangxi, the legacy of *Kangaraurus rex* and its companions continue to inspire awe and wonder. The adventure is far from over, and as each new chapter unfolds, the world watches with bated breath, eager to see what other secrets the ancient earth.

## Non-Fiction – Group 3 WINNER

# Metamorphosis of Paleontology in China

*St. Stephen's College, Lam, Sai Ka Ethan – 12*

“Mother, I want to be a paleontologist when I grow up! Nǐ juédé zěnme yàng?”

This would have been quite unheard of in China only a few decades ago, but not today!

According to the American Museum of Natural History, paleontology is defined as ‘the study of ancient life, from dinosaurs to prehistoric plants, mammals, fish, insects, fungi, and even microbes.’ For most laymen, when we hear the word ‘paleontology’, we immediately think about dinosaurs, Jurassic Park movies, and US national parks where lots of dinosaur fossils have been unearthed. And when we review the list of the top seven archaeological sites with dinosaur footprints compiled by EnVols, a global travel media platform, we see countries such as USA, Scotland, Spain, Australia, and Bolivia included, but not China. There are two major reasons: first, the slow entry of China into dinosaur research, and second, a misconception of the absence of dinosaurs and other prehistoric life in China. To understand why, we need to examine a brief history of paleontology in China, the rise of paleontology prompted by the extensive discovery of dinosaur fossils in recent times, and the future of China’s role globally in the study of dinosaurs et al.

Only about a century ago was paleontology established in China as a modern scientific discipline; whereas the field emerged as a scientific discipline in Europe as early as the late 18th century. The Paleontological Society of China was established in 1929, compared with the oldest founded in London in 1847. In other words, China lagged behind other players by a significant 82 years, long enough to send a rocket to the moon! In the decades after, as China attempted to play catchup, there were records of collaborated studies and discoveries between Chinese paleontologists and their international counterparts that had resulted in an exchange of knowledge, technology, and skills, but the scale remained small. Unfortunately, the scholars experienced another setback during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, which disrupted paleontology research and isolated the Chinese paleontology community from their western peers. In fact, the real growth of paleontology in China would be traced back to 1978, when Deng Xiaoping became the paramount leader of the People’s Republic of China. Under his leadership, China began to pursue an open-door policy, which has since greatly transformed China economically and sociologically. China’s economic success, in turn, has helped to usher in a golden age of paleontology domestically for three key reasons: a supportive funding climate for paleontological research, young talent attracted to the field, and a good rush of dinosaur fossil discoveries all over the country. In fewer than 50 years, the paleontology community in China has

accomplished what it had taken their western counterparts almost two centuries to attain. How did China achieve that?

First and foremost, the Chinese government has substantially increased its funding to support paleontological research following its economic miracle in the late 20th century. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the field of paleontology in China suffered from poor funding. The policy changed following the government's decision to increase its 'investment' in basic scientific research, including paleontology. The National Natural Science Foundation established in 1986 showed the ambition and determination of the central government to promote this field of study. The scale of funding began to increase from 2000, along with a reform of China's funding system. Research promotion, talent fostering, and infrastructure construction were all blooming. In 2022, China's funding budget reached 33 billion yuan, a phenomenal increase over that only a few decades ago. In fact, paleontological research is now one of the major beneficiaries of this unprecedented commitment. The research grants have enabled numerous projects, large and small, to be conducted all over China. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration with disciplines such as geosciences and evolutionary biology is enhancing the quality and results of their research efforts. As a preeminent scholastic field, paleontology has helped the country catch up and make significant achievements marvelled globally. For example, the types and numbers of dinosaur fossils discovered in China to-date is ranked first in the world, as showcased in a dinosaur fossil exhibition titled "Dinosaur Unearthed—200 Million Years of Earth's History" in Beijing in September 2024. This proves that China's success in paleontology can drive the country's reputation.

Moreover, a supply of young talent has been instrumental in its success. In the 1950s and 1960s, China started training paleontologists to meet the demand for expertise in national geological mapping and survey of natural resources. Nowadays, the country is nurturing a supply of new talent from the younger generation. On one hand, Chinese students educated in the west have returned to China where they can receive grants to conduct research. On the other hand, students educated in China are recruited by prestigious organizations such as the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Paleontology or the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology. An additional advantage is these talents' proficiency in English allows them to learn new technology and methods and enables them to collaborate with their counterparts in the western world to increase the visibility of China's achievement in the field. As a result, many Chinese paleontologists have emerged as global leaders in the field today. For example, Xu Xing, who was born in 1969 and educated in Beijing, is known internationally for having named more dinosaurs than any other living paleontologist. He is China's "dinosaur king". In addition, Xing Lida, a millennial, specializes in archosaur tracks, anatomy, and the relationship between. On top of that, he is famous for being the first universally to have found fossils showing footprints of a dinosaur that made a U-turn maneuver and to have identified tracks of a swimming theropod in China. Led by these new and enthusiastic scholars, the future of the country's studies of dinosaurs is promising.

Thirdly, the Gobi Desert has been a gold mine of dinosaur bones in the past few decades that has led to important discoveries and new theories. A notable find was a site where remains of a herd of young birdlike dinosaurs were excavated in 1978. It provided grounds for a new theory on herd composition and behaviour: how immature youths defended themselves while adults focussed on nesting or brooding. However, an influential discovery about feathered dinosaurs was probably the most significant breakthrough in Chinese paleontology. The feathered dinosaur fossils of the *Sinosauropelta* and the Chinese Dragon Bird discovered in Lianing, China, in 1996, provided firm support for the idea of dinosaurs

evolving into birds. As a result, the industry of Chinese paleontology quickly developed into a crucial subfield of global paleontology. In fact, since the 1980s, Chinese paleontologists have actively participated in the editing of the Treatise on Invertebrate Paleontology and published many books about their systematic work on dinosaur research. As success breeds success, China's breakthroughs have become widely appreciated around the world. This has been imperative for the industry in attracting more funding and entering a new chapter of paleontology.

Despite the significant progress made in the field of paleontology, particularly in the past few decades, China must overcome a few challenges to become a true powerhouse in its work on dinosaurs. About twenty years ago, a scandal broke about fake fossils in China after specialists and collectors complained that a flood of "improved" and "reconfigured" specimens had conned the world. In subsequent years, China adopted new regulations to bring order and integrity to the system through a single administrative body. However, for a country as large and diverse as China, problems such as illegal digging and trafficking of fossils by unskilled and untrained locals persist. This can lead to many problems, such as a disruption to the research effort due to improper preservation. Scholastically, the development of fundamental scientific research is being hampered by the philosophy of Chinese traditions. For example, some students might choose the study of paleontology not because of personal interest, but because of a beneficial profession. As in the past, funding might tend to focus on institutionally arranged activities, rather than off-the-beaten track projects born out of curiosity that has often led to development of new theories. Moreover, for historical and traditional reasons, Chinese paleontologists are more hesitant to create new hypotheses, preferring to apply their paleontological evidence to the existing theory of evolution.

Despite the potential risks highlighted above, the future of paleontology in China looks promising. Led by a younger, well-trained generation of paleontologists and supported by the nation's funding, the Chinese paleontological community will continue to deliver more exciting studies and discoveries in the research of dinosaurs and other areas. It is hopeful their work will further contribute to the global understanding of the evolution of life on earth.

So, to all you dinosaur-philes out there, next time someone asks you what you want to be when you grow up, do not rule out paleontologist! The potential archeological opportunities available in our motherland are limitless. The surface has only been scratched. Who knows, maybe you can be the next "dinosaur king", too!

---

## Bibliography

Where in the world can you see dinosaur footprints? (24 May 2023)

Nature: China's dinosaur hunter – the Ground Breaker (10 Sept 2012)

The Rising of Paleontology in China: A Century-Long Road (25 July 2022)

Palaeontological Society of China

The Great Chinese Dinosaur Boom (May 2018)

China's science foundation ups research budget to 33 bn yuan (25 March 2022)

Dinosaur fossil exhibition showcases China's paleontological research (19 Sept 2024)

History of paleontology (30 Sept 2024)

Xu Xing (paleontologist) (30 Sept 2024)

Feature: A Chinese dinosaur hunter (28 Feb 2021)

China's Gobi Desert – source of rare dinosaur (16 March 2009)

Young dinosaurs roamed together, died together (16 March 2009)

Science with Boundaries: Yang Zhongjian and Vertebrate Paleontology in Republican China, 1919–1950 (July 2021)

Altering the Past: China's Faked Fossils Problem (24 Dec 2010)

# Creative Writing: Non-Fiction – Group 3 WINNER

## China: The Global Epicenter of Fossil-Hunting Over the Decades

HKMA David Li Kwok Po College, Parmar, Kush Jignesh – 13

### Introduction

China, a country with vast and diverse landscapes has become a treasure trove for palaeontologists and dinosaur enthusiasts alike. As a rich region for dinosaur fossil-hunting where there are numerous fossils that have been found since the discovery of the first Chinese dinosaur *Sauornithoides* in 1923, China gives palaeontologists a glimpse about how the world was like millions of years ago which reshaped the understanding of palaeontologists in terms of diversity of species in the Mesozoic Era, geological context and evolutionary development of various species not only in China but also in other parts of the world. From the towering sauropods of the Jurassic to the feathered theropods of the Cretaceous, the discovery of Chinese dinosaurs which have a significant impact on both the public and the media, is as remarkable as it is essential to provide a nuanced view of China's natural history.

### Key Discoveries

Since the discovery of the first Chinese dinosaur *Sauornithoides* in 1923, an uncountable number of dinosaur fossils have been unearthed by palaeontologists in major fossil sites such as Liaoning Province and Shandong. Listed below are some of the most significant discoveries of Chinese dinosaurs. All of which have profoundly influenced how paleontologists understand the ecological dynamics, dinosaur evolution, geographic distribution, environmental conditions and ecosystems of prehistoric China during the Mesozoic Era. This enhances our comprehension of the intricate relationships between species and their habitats in ancient ecosystems.

#### 1. *Sinosauroptryx*

The discovery of *Sinosauroptryx*, also known as 'The China Dragon Bird' was amongst one of the most important breakthroughs in Paleontology. At just 1.1 meters long, *Sinosauroptryx* was a relatively small feathered meat-eating theropod. However, despite its diminutive size, its agility allowed it to catch prey more efficiently. Notably, *Sinosauroptryx* was the first non-avian dinosaur with proof of having feathers on its body despite the fact that it was not directly related to birds and *Sinosauroptryx* had the longest tail of any known theropod relative to its body size.

Additionally, this discovery allowed scientists to infer the colour pattern of other dinosaurs and *Sinosauroptryx* itself for the first time as the fossils of this dinosaur are well preserved under layers of volcanic ash, hence, preserving minute details showing the details of its soft tissues like the skin along with other physical characteristics of the dinosaur. After research and studies done by scientists, it was proven that the short and slender filaments or feathers of *Sinosauroptryx* were reddish-brown in colour with a striped tail. Such characteristics might have helped it camouflage effectively in the environment that it inhabited, making it less vulnerable to larger predators that lived during the same time period such as the Chinese Tyrannosaur; *Yutyrannus* while also keeping the dinosaur warm.

Discoveries of dinosaur fossils preserving such minute and precise details are extremely rare, thus making its discovery amongst one of the most important landmark achievements made in the history of paleontology.

## **2. *Shantungosaurus***

*Shantungosaurus* (meaning Shandong Lizard) was a genus of a very large hadrosaurid dinosaur. Measuring at around 15 to 17 meters in length with the skull alone 2 meters long and weighing upto 14 to 18 short tons, *Shantungosaurus* is the largest known ornithischian dinosaur. *Shantungosaurus* most likely inhabited lush, floodplain environments feeding on a large amount of vegetation including leaves and shrubs with the help of its large duck-billed snout.

This dinosaur was discovered in 1973 by paleontologist Hu Chengzhi and later on classified as similar to another hadrosaurid ; *Edmontosaurus*, by Chinese scientist Xing Xu. This magnificent beast rivaled even large theropods such as the *Tyrannosaurus-Rex* in sheer size. Which made it a dominant herbivore in its ecosystem. This showcased the diversity of dinosaur evolution along with the hadrosaur diversity and ecological dynamics of prehistoric Asia during the late Cretaceous period.

## **3. *Gandititan***

*Gandititan* is a genus of titanosaurian sauropod dinosaur from the late Cretaceous of China. *Gandititan* measured at around 14 meters in length while its weight is yet to be confirmed. The fossils were unearthed at a construction site in Ganzhou , East China's Jiangxi province , in June 2021 by the Geological Museum of Jiangxi province which collaborated with the China University of Geosciences in Wuhan to restore and research the bones. This partnership highlights the importance of interdisciplinary efforts in paleontological research. Paleontologists' understanding of dinosaur fossils can be significantly enhanced through collaboration among multiple organizations and institutions that contribute to fossil research and study.

Although *Gandititan* couldn't compete with other titanosaurs such as *Argentinasaurus* and *Patagotitan* in terms of size, *Gandititan* adds to our understanding of the evolution of sauropods, particularly, in Asia where the fossil record is still being explored. Additionally, *Gandititan* also allows paleontologists to gain deeper insights on the sauropod diversity in Cretaceous Asia.

Such a discovery enhances scientists' understanding of the geographic distribution of dinosaurs, environmental conditions and ecosystems in prehistoric China during the Cretaceous period.

## **Impact of Discoveries on Global Paleontology**

### **Evolutionary Development**

As more fossils are being unearthed by scientists and paleontologists in China, our understanding of the presence of various dinosaur species along with their evolutionary development is constantly changing. Fossils from China have helped clarify the evolutionary relationships among different dinosaur groups. Liaoning is a well-preserved site for fossil-hunting where many fossils have been found belonging to various species of prehistoric animals such as fishes, birds, insects and most importantly; dinosaurs. Many fossil discoveries that have been made at this site resulted in a significant impact on how paleontologists understand dinosaur species today as most of the specimens collected from Liaoning are well-preserved, preserving minute details and showcasing transitional features between different dinosaur groups and various anatomical features such as skull size, limb structures, dental arrangements along with their respiratory organs. This helps scientists better understand the physical characteristics of dinosaurs and how various species were related to each other while also indicating common ancestry or evolutionary adaptations. Thus, improving scientist's understanding of dinosaur evolution, leading to a clearer understanding of how different lineages diverged and evolved over time and sometimes even prompting revisions to existing classifications of dinosaurs. In summary, the fossils uncovered in China have significantly contributed to our understanding of the evolutionary relationships among dinosaur groups.

### **Diversity of Species**

As more fossils are being unearthed by scientists and paleontologists in China, our understanding of the presence of various dinosaur species along with their diversity and geographical distribution is constantly changing. These fossils include a variety of theropods, herbivores, and other species, showcasing a broader range of forms and adaptations of dinosaur species.

Through these fossils, paleontologists gain deeper insights of the various dinosaur sizes, forms and their habitats in prehistoric China during the Mesozoic Era. This helps paleontologists trace the evolutionary development of key features of dinosaurs such as their body size, dietary adaptations and locomotion (*movement or the ability to move from one place to another*) along with their geographic distribution.

The discovery of Chinese dinosaurs has also significantly impacted scientists' understanding of the diversity of dinosaur species in several important ways which reassess their views on dinosaur diversity, allowing them to make more considerations regarding dinosaur species and diverse lineages (*a sequence of species each of which is considered to have evolved from its predecessor*) globally. This not only increases the diversity of dinosaur discoveries made in China but also enriches and enhances the overall understanding of dinosaurs and their place in the history of life on Earth.

All of which provides us with a broader understanding of how dinosaurs evolved over time, painting a more comprehensive picture of their ecological roles and adaptations in ancient environments.

## **Public Engagement, Museums and Cultural Significance**

### **Public Interest, Media and Culture**

As Chinese dinosaur fossil discoveries are becoming increasingly frequent, interest in prehistoric life and paleontology is soaring, captivating the public imagination across

all age groups. Thus, growing fascination is reflected through various means such as documentaries, comic books and films. Establishing dinosaurs as cultural icons and inspiring future generations to learn more about them.

#### Exhibitions and Museums

Many museums and exhibitions around the world prominently display fossils showcasing Chinese dinosaur discoveries. These museums display a variety of exhibits including interactive dinosaur models and displays, life-sized replicas, stuffed preserved animals and detailed plaster copies of skeletons. This makes learning about dinosaurs accessible and engaging for visitors. Sparking curiosity and encouraging the public to explore the mysteries of the past together. By presenting cutting-edge research alongside fascinating artifacts, museums not only celebrate the diversity of dinosaur species but also inspire a love for science and history in the next generation.

In conclusion, the discovery of Chinese dinosaurs has significantly enhanced public engagement with paleontology, enriched museum exhibits, and established dinosaurs as important cultural symbols. These developments not only promote scientific understanding but also foster a greater appreciation for the history of life on Earth.

# Non-Fiction – Group 4

## WINNER

# A Dive into The Excavations of Dinosaurs in China

*King's College, Chiu, Ching Yu Adrian – 15*

### **Introduction:**

Beneath the rampant layers of rocks and sediment of China, there lies volumes of mysteries waiting to be discovered. The fossils of these ancient creatures known as dinosaurs have been formed over the course of hundreds of millions of years, undergoing fossilization and decomposition. The repeated eruptions of volcanos throughout prehistoric times have created many layers of fossil beds spanning millions of years, burying and preserving the remains of dinosaurs.

Approximately 250 million years ago starting from the Triassic Period, dinosaurs reigned supreme throughout the Earth. There had been a point in time in which all the continental plates merged and formed the supercontinent Pangea, granting creatures the ability to traverse between continents by land and to find settlements all around the world. Millenniums of the evolution of these creatures trying to adapt to their environment gave different regions their unique dinosaurs. China is of course no exception. From the Himalayan Mountains to the Gobi Desert, and the Manchurian Plains, the heterogeneity of these beasts stands clear.

After the Triassic Period came the Jurassic (~200–145 million years ago) and the Cretaceous (~145–66 million years ago) Periods. The era of these exotic creatures ended when the Chicxulub impactor, an asteroid the size of a city crashed into Earth 66 million years ago, at the end of the Cretaceous period. With such a considerable amount of time passed after the extinction of dinosaurs, some fragments of history inevitably are forever lost in the sands of time. Yet, researchers continue with unwavering passion the uncover what is left buried deep in the crust of our beloved planet.

Now, China is among the most important countries in palaeontology research, attracting the masses of scientists and archaeologists alike. The accumulation of knowledge from research and digging through the collaborative efforts of these people has resulted in our broader understanding of the Mesozoic Era, unveiling new tales from the prehistoric world. Despite this, China is still considered a less-explored country by palaeontologists, having just started its extensive excavation of fossils in the 1990s. Just three years ago in the Ganxian district of Jiangxi, the fossils of *Gandititan cavocaudatus*, a species of titanosaur was unveiled, showing us that there are many more secrets of the ancient world yet to be uncovered.

### **A Brief History:**

In the 1920s, scientists from the American Museum of Natural History first discovered dinosaurs in Central Asia. Amidst the Gobi Desert of Mongolia, evidence of dinosaur deposits was found. Lamentably, the political state of the region squashed further expeditions in palaeontology, delaying the chance for mass excavation and discovery until stability had been reached. However, it would foreshadow the 'Dinosaur Boom' of China several decades later.

Long before the golden age of palaeontology in China commenced, however, excavations of dinosaur fossils had already been ongoing. Though limited by the political tension during the two World Wars, as well as the Cold War, the pursuit of fossils could not come to prominence, and thus the business of palaeontology was unable to prosper. In the 1930s Yang Zhongjian led the excavation of the *Lufengosaurus*, one of China's first scientifically recognised dinosaur discoveries. Yang was dubbed the 'Father of Chinese Palaeontology' and founded the Institute of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Palaeoanthropology (IVPP) in Beijing, laying the foundation for future dinosaur research in China. As of now, this organization has built 5,788 museums throughout China.

A remarkable Chinese palaeontologist, Dong Zhiming, crowned the 'Dinosaur King of China', was also laying the groundwork for fossil-hunting in this organisation. His work spanned decades of researching the vast fossil beds of China, and through relentless hard work he stood among not only the leading figures of the IVPP, but also the whole of Chinese palaeontology. His work on sauropods was especially extensive, shedding light on the enormous long-necked herbivores, like the *Yangchuanosaurus* and the *Shunosaurus*. He described the Shaximiao Formation in Xichuan, as well as more than 42 species of dinosaurs, 27 of which are valid today, ranking first in the world in terms of the number of names he gave these creatures. He is regarded as one of the most important figures in palaeontology for his unparalleled efforts in these fields.

Had scientists continued their voyages in Central Asia, perhaps more dinosaurs would have been discovered in Northern China. However, the golden age in fossil excavations wouldn't be until seven decades later, when the farmer, Li Yumin reopened the gates for the unearthing of dinosaurs in Asia, albeit in a different region.

It has only been less than three decades since dinosaurs started being unearthed en masse from the vast lands of China, when a farmer had stumbled upon the fossils of a *Sinosauroptryx*, the world's first feathered dinosaur. In August of 1996, Li Yumin had gotten his hands on two slabs of siltstone in the province of Liaoning. Yumin, a part-time fossil hunter, at once recognised the significance of these seemingly stale slabs and sold them to the National Geological Museum in Beijing and the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, earning a great sum of money.

And thus began the gold rush for fossils in Liaoning, China. Palaeontologists scrambled to get a piece of the bones of these ancient creatures. To date, this province alone has seen the emergence of more than 40 species of dinosaurs previously unknown to the world. It can be said unanimously that Liaoning has contributed to the discovery of dinosaurs globally and has become a global epicentre for fossil hunting.

The increase in the quantity of dinosaur excavation activities was of course not without improvements in the quality of fossil hunting techniques and technologies. Innovations such as precision excavation tools, ground-penetrating radar, and 3D mapping technologies have revolutionized the way fossils are uncovered, ensuring minimal damage to delicate specimens. Sophisticated imaging techniques, including synchrotron radiation and CT scanning, allow

researchers to study fossilized structures in incredible detail, revealing new attributes and appearances of dinosaurs, all the while contributing to the studies of DNA and biotechnology. China has been seen vigorously attempting to push the boundaries of palaeontological research, uncovering groundbreaking findings with each excavation with assistance from cutting-edge tools.

### **Major finds:**

One of China's first found dinosaurs, the *Lufengosaurus* was named after the area in which it was discovered, namely near Lufeng in Yunnan. There are currently two known species of this dinosaur, namely the '*L. huenei*' and the '*L. magnus*', with the latter one implying its large size, meaning 'larger one' in Latin. It stands at 6 meters in length which makes it a rather small sauropod (long-necked dinosaur) and weighs 2.3 tonnes. It lived about 195 million years ago during the early Jurassic Period. It was seen with sharp claws and teeth and is speculated to be partially omnivorous. This dinosaur first demonstrated the potential of palaeontology in China, perhaps laying the groundwork for the future of fossil findings there.

In addition, as found by Li Yumin, the *Sinosauropteryx* is undoubtedly one of the most significant finds. Its name is particularly unique and fitting, with the meaning of 'Chinese reptilian wing'. So far only one species of this dinosaur has been named – the *S. prima*, meaning 'first', serving as a nod to the fact that it is the first feathered non-avian species ever discovered. It is among the 'compsognathidae' family of dinosaurs, which refers to small carnivores with a conservative countenance (long body and legs with short arms). Being the first ever reportedly feathered dinosaur, it has become a symbol for the golden age of Chinese palaeontology. It was a small theropod, with the longest known specimen being a mere 1.07 metres in length, with an estimated weight of 0.55 kilograms. Its feathers are assumed to be mostly a red-brown colour with alternating dark and light bands on its tail. It lived during the Early Cretaceous Period. This creature has made massive contributions to the study of evolution, fulfilling the role of a major piece of evidence for the link between dinosaurs and birds.

Most recently the newest species of the Titanosaur emerged from the soil of a construction site in Ganzhou, Jiangxi. The *Gandititan* cavocaudatu stands at a small stature of 14 meters in length, relative to that of titanosaurs. In the name 'Gandititan', 'Gan' refers to the place where the fossils of the sauropod were found, and 'di', means geology in Chinese. It is believed to have existed in the mid-Cretaceous Period and is speculated to be part of a unique clade with connections to the South American species of titanosaurs. This link is perhaps formed because of the supercontinent Pangea. This species might also hint at a previously unrecognised group of titanosaurs in East Asia. One could only imagine what lies beyond these implications.

### **Major fossil sites:**

As already established, the Liaoning province is a region of paramount importance in palaeontology. Since 1996 when potentially the most notable finding of dinosaur fossils in China took place in Liaoning, numerous sites for fossil hunting have surfaced. The sheer number of volcanic eruptions gathered throughout the years in the Manchurian Mountains had given a pristine state for the preservation of fossils, thus the abundance of excavations and sites. This region contains many *Jehol Biota* fossils, which include dinosaurs from the Early Cretaceous period.

The Yixian Formation stands as the most renowned site in Liaoning, contributing to many of the first discoveries of dinosaurs in China. It was formed in a lacustrine environment with periodic volcanic activity. It is known for its rich reserves of feathered dinosaurs, like the *Sinosauropelta* and the *Microraptor*. This provided compelling evidence for the evolutionary link between dinosaurs of feather and birds, revolutionizing our understanding of prehistoric life. It has transformed the scientific views on the origin of flight, the development of feathers and early ecosystem dynamics. Another fossil site in this province is the Jiufotang Formation, which has contributed similarly to palaeontology as the Yixian Formation.

In South-Western China, besides the Himalayan mountains of Tibet, the province of Yunnan also holds some notable sites, among them the Lufeng Fossil beds, which are of the utmost significance. It became famous for hosting China's first dinosaur discoveries -- the *Lufengosaurus*, one of the earliest living sauropods that Dong Zhiming had helped find. This site consists of creatures from the Late Triassic to Early Jurassic Periods. It could also be said that this site symbolizes China's rich palaeontological heritage, as it is considered the starting place of Chinese palaeontology.

Inner Mongolia, being a large part of the Gobi Desert also contains many dinosaurs. The region is diverse in terrain, with vast stretches of arid desert, rocky outcrops, grasslands, and semi-arid regions, making it a hotspot for paleontological discoveries. Famous examples of sites here include the Iren Dabasu Formation and the Bayan Mandahu Formation, both burying the remains of dinosaurs from the Late Cretaceous Period. The variety of species found in this region proves that diverse Cretaceous ecosystems exist in arid and semi-arid lands. The Bayan Mandahu Formation is especially well known for its copious amounts of dinosaur eggs coupled with findings of the esteemed *Velociraptor*. Thus dinosaur lovers in China glimmer with anticipation towards the legendary findings of these vast lands.

### **Conclusion:**

Since the 1990s China has been undergoing rapid development in countless fields, upholding its dominance in the world. With the advancements in technology, combined with its sheer manpower and size, China has rightfully gained its ground as one of the most important countries in palaeontology. With 1.4 billion people residents, as well as diverse sites spanning the entire country, it has consistently provided key evidence and findings to unravel the secrets of the Mesozoic Era.

These achievements highlight the rich history of East Asia and the peoples' curiosity and appreciation for nature. As China continues to explore its fossil-rich landscapes, it may as well stay undisputed as a global leader in paleontological research. As of now, there are still many unknowns concealed underground, awaiting discovery. In time we shall discover what remains beneath the earth, and decipher the tales of China's ancient dinosaurs.

# Creative Writing: Non-Fiction – Group 4 WINNER

## The Unveiled Mystery of China's Fossils

*Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College, Wong, Yik Chun – 18*

China has emerged as a significant player in the field of paleontology, contributing to our understanding of the history of life on Earth through its remarkable fossil discoveries. The history of paleontological research in China dates back to the late 19th century, with early explorations often led by foreign scientists who recognized the country's potential for yielding significant fossils. However, it wasn't until the late 20th century and into the 21st century that Chinese paleontologists began to make substantial contributions, uncovering fossils that have reshaped our understanding of evolutionary history and provided insights into the diversity of life during the Mesozoic era.

This transformation is particularly evident in regions like Liaoning Province, which has yielded exceptional fossils from the Jehol Biota, a biodiversity hotspot from the Early Cretaceous period. The Jehol Biota is renowned for its well-preserved fossils, including feathered dinosaurs, early birds, and various plants, providing a glimpse into the ecosystem of that era. The discoveries made in this region have profoundly influenced the scientific community's understanding of the evolution of birds and the relationship between dinosaurs and their avian descendants. For instance, the discovery of **\*Archaeopteryx\*** in Germany had long been considered the pivotal link between dinosaurs and birds. However, the findings in China, such as **\*Microraptor\***, which exhibited both feathers and primitive wings, suggested a more complex evolutionary pathway. These fossils not only demonstrated that feathers likely evolved for purposes other than flight, such as insulation or display, but they also indicated that the origin of birds was likely more intricate than previously thought.

In addition to feathered dinosaurs, China has also produced a wealth of fossils from other groups, including mammals and reptiles. The fossil beds in Shanxi Province, for example, have revealed a diverse array of early mammals that lived alongside dinosaurs. These discoveries have provided crucial insights into the evolution of mammals, showing how they adapted to the changing environments after the mass extinction event that wiped out the dinosaurs. The fossil record indicates that while dinosaurs dominated the Mesozoic era, mammals were quietly evolving, laying the groundwork for the diversity we see today. This has led paleontologists to reconsider the narrative of mammal evolution, which was once thought to be a tale of survival in the shadows of dinosaurs. The emergence of various mammalian lineages in China, including early primate ancestors, has added depth to our understanding of how mammals diversified and adapted in the wake of the dinosaur extinction.

Moreover, the discovery of dinosaur eggs and nests in China has provided valuable information about the reproductive behaviors of these ancient creatures. The findings suggest that some species exhibited parental care, indicating complex social behaviors that were previously unrecognized. The sites in Henan Province, where numerous dinosaur eggs have been found, have become important for understanding the life cycles and reproductive strategies of these animals. Such discoveries highlight the importance of fossils in reconstructing not only physical attributes but also behavioral patterns of extinct species. The presence of large nesting colonies, where multiple species laid their eggs, suggests that these dinosaurs may have engaged in communal nesting, further indicating a level of social organization that challenges previous assumptions about dinosaur behavior.

China's paleontological contributions extend beyond terrestrial findings, as marine fossils have also unveiled the rich history of life in ancient oceans. The limestone formations in Guangxi Province have yielded an abundance of marine reptiles, including the well-known *\*Nothosaurus\** and *\*Mamenchisaurus\**. These fossils have provided insights into the adaptations of marine reptiles, demonstrating how they evolved to thrive in aquatic environments. The presence of diverse marine life during the Mesozoic era emphasizes the interconnectedness of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, offering a broader perspective on the evolution of life. Marine fossils have also revealed the existence of various cephalopods, bony fishes, and prehistoric sharks, illustrating the biodiversity that thrived in oceans millions of years ago.

The collaboration between Chinese and international paleontologists has been instrumental in advancing the field. Joint research projects have facilitated knowledge exchange and fostered a deeper understanding of fossils from both local and global perspectives. This collaboration is evident in the numerous conferences and symposiums held in China, where researchers from around the world gather to share their findings and discuss the latest developments in paleontology. Such interactions have not only enriched the scientific community but have also positioned China as a leader in the field. The establishment of research institutions dedicated to paleontology, such as the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology in Beijing, has played a crucial role in training the next generation of paleontologists and fostering a vibrant research environment.

As paleontological research in China continues to flourish, the role of technology has become increasingly prominent. Advanced imaging techniques, such as CT scanning and 3D printing, have revolutionized the way fossils are studied. These technologies allow researchers to examine internal structures without damaging the specimens, providing new insights into the biology and anatomy of extinct species. For instance, the use of CT scans has enabled scientists to reconstruct the skulls of ancient reptiles and birds, revealing details that were previously hidden. This technological advancement has not only enhanced our understanding of fossils but has also opened new avenues for research. The ability to create 3D models of fossils allows for detailed analysis and comparison, enabling researchers to test hypotheses about evolutionary relationships and functional morphology.

China's paleontological landscape is also shaped by its rich cultural heritage. The country's long-standing fascination with fossils can be traced back to traditional Chinese medicine, where certain fossilized materials were believed to possess healing properties. This cultural backdrop has fostered a sense of pride in paleontological discoveries, with many local communities actively participating in fossil hunting. The enthusiasm for fossils has led to the establishment of numerous fossil parks and museums, which serve as educational platforms for the public and inspire future generations of paleontologists. These institutions not only showcase the fossil heritage of China but also engage the public in the scientific process, fostering a greater appreciation for the natural world.

In recent years, the Chinese government has recognized the importance of paleontology for scientific research and tourism. Initiatives to protect fossil sites and promote paleontological tourism have gained momentum, attracting visitors from around the globe. This not only boosts local economies but also raises awareness about the significance of paleontology in understanding Earth's history. Museums dedicated to paleontology, such as the Beijing Museum of Natural History, showcase the rich fossil heritage of China, providing an opportunity for the public to engage with the past. These museums often feature interactive exhibits, allowing visitors to participate in hands-on learning experiences that highlight the scientific principles underlying paleontological research.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in the field of paleontology in China. The rapid pace of development and urbanization poses a threat to fossil sites, with many being destroyed or damaged in the name of progress. The need for sustainable practices and conservation efforts has become increasingly urgent to ensure that future generations can study and appreciate these invaluable resources. Advocacy for the protection of fossil heritage is essential, as it not only preserves scientific knowledge but also honors the cultural significance of paleontological discoveries. Collaborative efforts between scientists, policymakers, and local communities are crucial in balancing development and conservation, ensuring that the fossil record is safeguarded for future research.

The future of paleontology in China looks promising, with ongoing research efforts and a growing community of scientists dedicated to the study of fossils. The possibilities for new discoveries are vast, as many regions remain underexplored. The combination of traditional fossil hunting and modern scientific techniques has the potential to yield groundbreaking findings that could reshape our understanding of evolutionary history. As the field continues to evolve, the contributions of Chinese paleontologists will undoubtedly play a crucial role in unraveling the mysteries of the past. Ongoing excavation projects in remote areas, where fossils have yet to be discovered, hold the promise of unveiling new species and expanding our knowledge of prehistoric life.

In addition to traditional fossil sites, the rise of citizen science initiatives has empowered amateur fossil hunters to contribute to paleontological research. These grassroots movements encourage local communities to participate in fossil collecting and documentation, fostering a sense of stewardship over their natural heritage. By providing training and resources, paleontologists can engage the public in scientific research, allowing for the discovery of previously unknown fossils and enhancing the overall understanding of the fossil record. This collaborative approach not only enriches the field but also builds a strong connection between scientists and the communities that cherish their fossil heritage.

In conclusion, China's journey in paleontology has transformed it into a global leader in the field. The remarkable fossil discoveries, coupled with advancements in technology and collaborative efforts, have enriched our understanding of the history of life on Earth. From feathered dinosaurs to early mammals, China's fossil record offers a window into the past, revealing the complex interplay of evolution. As the nation continues to invest in research and conservation, the future holds immense potential for further discoveries that will continue to illuminate the story of life on our planet. The legacy of paleontological research in China is not just in the fossils unearthed, but also in the inspiration it provides for generations to come. As more young scientists are drawn to the field, the ongoing exploration of China's rich fossil heritage promises to keep the narrative of paleontology vibrant and evolving. The commitment to understanding and preserving this heritage will ensure that the story of life on Earth continues to be told, one fossil at a time.

## Non-fiction – Group 5 WINNER

### Us and the Fossils

*Hong Kong International School, Chau, Christine – 16*

Nestled in the hills of northeastern China is a remote village, Sihetun. Despite its unassuming rural farmhouses and vast fields of cornstalks, beneath the Earth were the remnants of the ancient reptiles that once walked on the same ground as us. Within the hillsides of this village, such was discovered by the farmer Li Yumin during the summer of 1996 when he found two halves of a rocky slab containing the marked fossils of a *Sinosauroptryx*. This was the world's first known feathered dinosaur, its curiously small size a clear contrast to the massive, reconstructed skeletons of T-rexes found in museums. It was the initial puzzle piece connecting the evolutionary relationship between dinosaurs and modern birds, unraveling an entirely unknown part of the ancient world for paleontologists. Li's encounter with the fossil of the *Sinosauroptryx* illustrated that its feathers were part of a broader evolutionary narrative, and it would go on to bridge the gap between these prehistoric reptiles and their avian descendants with its exceptionally preserved impressions of feathers and tissues. Eventually dubbed the "China dragon bird", this myth-like discovery was the start of a Renaissance within Chinese paleontology, eventually spreading past the dusty village.

What is just as prominent as the discovery of the *Sinosauroptryx*? Arguably, it could be the fact that the Yixian Formation of Liaoning preserves a world that has long been left behind by the hands of time. Its fine-grained sedimentary rocks captured fossils in surprising detail, making it a crucial discovery ground for more than 40 dinosaur species, including 24 other winged pterosaurs. The Yixian Formation is a storybook in terraform, beginning in the late Jurassic period, when these small, feathered dinosaurs gradually hollowed their bones and reshaped their forelimbs to reach the tantalizing possibility of flight over millions of years. It entombed the very period when birds as a species separated from dinosaurs, evolving into new, aerial creatures that entered the next chapter of the Cretaceous period—in place of the dinosaurs who were bound to the Earth, came the new lineage of early birds who could soar through the heavens.

With such a rich fossil record, China has emerged as a pivotal player in the field of paleontology, particularly through its remarkable discoveries of feathered dinosaurs that yielded some of the most significant findings in the study of dinosaur evolution (especially regarding the origins of avian flight). To mention one of the most notable examples, the *Microraptor zhaoianus* was a small, feathered theropod dinosaur that captivated scientists and the public alike when it was discovered in 2000. This dinosaur, measuring about 55 cm in length, is known for its unique anatomical features, including its four wings—two on its arms and two on its legs. The well-preserved fossils demonstrate that the *Microraptor* had long feathers on its limbs and tail, suggesting it was adapted for gliding or possibly powered flight.

This challenges earlier notions that only small dinosaurs could achieve aerial capabilities and introduces the idea that larger species could have developed similar traits. Interestingly, the feather structures found in the *Microraptor* share many similarities with modern birds, indicating that the evolutionary lineage leading to avians was more complex than previously understood. This is also highlighted by the presence of features such as hollow bones and nesting behaviors, which are characteristic of modern birds as well.

Another significant discovery is the *Changyuraptor yangi*, which was found in 2014. This dinosaur is believed to be the largest known four-winged dinosaur, with a complete skeleton featuring long tail feathers measuring up to 30 cm. The discovery of the *Changyuraptor*, which lived approximately 125 million years ago, adds to the narrative that flight adaptations were not limited to small dinosaurs. Its structure and feather arrangement suggest that it may have used its long tail for enhanced control during flight, helping it to slow down for safe landings—a critical adaptation for aerial locomotion. The implications of these discoveries resonate deeply within the scientific community, and China's importance in the realm of paleontology is vividly illustrated by its treasure trove of these prehistoric, winged creatures, illuminating the evolutionary narrative of flight. As excavations persist to bring these ancient fossils back to life, China's role in paleontology is poised to flourish, offering more threads to weave into the massive web of our history on Earth.

However, China's newfound paleontological resources have attracted not only scientists but also opportunists looking to capitalize on the fossil trade. The commercialization of fossils has surged, driven by a long-standing tradition of collecting "dragon bone" for traditional medicines and a recent boom in museum construction. This commercialization became increasingly detrimental to the work of researchers, as financial incentives led to unethical practices, including the forgery of fossils. Reports suggest that farmers, in search of profit, may lack the discerning eye needed to identify authentic specimens from forgeries, leading to the market being flooded with crude plaster among ancient bones. Amid this commercialized landscape, paleontologists face the challenge of balancing the thrill of new discoveries with the necessity of scientific integrity. The fissures created by the fossil trade not only jeopardize the authenticity of specimens but also endanger the future of Chinese paleontology. While the influx of fossils has propelled a new generation of paleontologists into the limelight, it has simultaneously raised questions about whether or not their discoveries align with the stories that the existing, authentic fossils write for us.

Despite these setbacks, China is still rapidly emerging as a hub for fossil-hunting and paleontological research, illustrated by even more recent discoveries that highlight its rich heritage. In Nanchang, Jiangxi, the discovery of a new species of dinosaur in 2021, the *Gandititan cavocaudatus*, or the *Titanosaur*, has opened exciting avenues for research. Found at a construction site, these fossils, which date back approximately 90 million years, include around 40% of the dinosaur's skeleton. This finding suggests the existence of a previously unknown group of titanosaurs in eastern Asia, indicating a potential link between Asian and South American dinosaur populations during the mid-Cretaceous period. As these discoveries accumulate—ranging from feathered dinosaurs to ancient fossils—Chinese paleontology contributes significantly to a global narrative about evolution. This shared pursuit of knowledge fosters international collaboration, inviting people from around the world to explore the interconnectedness of life through the lens of paleontology. In doing so, we are not only enhancing its scientific standing but also reinforcing a universal truth: all living beings are linked through a shared history. With each new fossil unearthed, we are reminded that, despite geographical and cultural differences, we are all part of a larger story of existence.

The very existence of the *Sinosauropelta* in China, along with countless other fossil findings everywhere else is not just a significant advancement for paleontology; it serves as a timeless story of how we are connected across time and space. What else has remained constant throughout the billions of years that have gone by on Earth? What is better proof of there being a universal us than the fact that all living things born on here Earth—from legendary, prehistoric dinosaurs to delicate, airborne birds—will remain here together, long enough for their descendants to find and know and love, even after millenniums?

# Creative Writing: Non-Fiction – Group 5 WINNER

## Mysterious Discovery

*Jiaxing British Columbia Offshore School, Song, Haoyang Sean*

Through the long history of Earth, the dinosaur era has hidden mystery and darkness, the discovery of dinosaur fossils in China has also had a huge impact and contribution to the world. China has some of the richest dinosaur fossil resources in the world, especially in Liaoning province, where there are many important dinosaur fossils. These discoveries not only rewrote the history of dinosaur evolution, but also attracted widespread attention worldwide. In China, the discovery of dinosaur fossils not only has significant impact in history, but also has important impact in the fields of economy and culture. Firstly, the dinosaur fossil history and its effects in the world. Secondly, dinosaur effects on economic development, particularly in the tourism industry. And, the effect of Chinese dinosaur fossils on cultural development.

The discovery of dinosaur fossils in China is crucial for our understanding of biodiversity, during the dinosaur era. Its history started billions of years ago, but today, it still makes people want to explore it, has provided a wealth of information on species diversity, evolutionary links, and ecological roles. In these types of information, this also has significantly contributed to the fields of paleontology and our comprehension of life's history in the world. For example, "the discovery of feathered dinosaur fossils for the first time, Chinese *Longornithosaurus* was discovered in Liaoning province in 1995." (Morgan Gutierrez), "and the discovery and research of the Dashanpu dinosaur fossil group in Zigong, Sichuan in the 1970s filled the gap in the world's mid-Jurassic dinosaur fossil scarcity and sparked a new wave of dinosaur research in China, Zigong is still considered to be the place in the world where the largest number of Jurassic dinosaur fossil species have been discovered and the best preserved" this discovery shocked the international paleontology community, because it was the first time that humans found a definite feathered dinosaur fossil. It is also a significance for understanding the evolutionary relationship between dinosaurs and modern birds, overturning our original understanding of dinosaurs, it provides that feathers are not exclusive to birds, but have already appeared in dinosaurs. Of course, the examples and the discovery not only develop in the scientific implications, but also have a positive impact on education and public interest in science. They have attracted people interested in paleontology and science development. The history, discovery, and effects of world both are important, it has decisive elements in the development of world archaeology, also provides some process of dinosaur evolution that people can understand and apply more comfortably and deeply in their life.

Nor is this all, the diversity of dinosaur fossils has had a positive impact on Chinese economy. Fossil sites become tourism attractions, many domestic and foreign tourists to promote the development of local tourism industry. In addition, the dinosaur fossil exhibitions related to employment opportunities for the local people, the development of

tourism not only bring benefits and economic income to the GDP to the local area and citizens but also promotes the growth of related with hotels, catering and transportation services. Like, “the biggest dinosaur fossils free open hall within the domestic that is in Jiangsu, which as the core ad Saul of china dinosaur part, it provides many technology facilities to play and enjoy, they can use 3D movies to enjoy the combining of art cultural about dinosaur evolution.” (GabbyLi) it also attracts the attention of international paleontologists, brought economic benefits to the local area. It impacts the discovery of dinosaur fossil has many different types influence and positive road for looking forward, provides many chance to the public and growth the economic in the world, by creating employment opportunities and promoting the development of related industrial, made many contributions to the diversified development of the social economy.

Of course, as a earliest country to discovery the fossil of dinosaur, it must had a profound cultural impact, but that not only enhance national pride and confident but also become important tools for science popularization and education. The discovery of dinosaur fossil make many culture elements increase, the most crucial points are about science knowledge transmit, to let more and more young people realize the china is a powerful country and scientific achievements. The dinosaur fossils in the museums and exhibitions have attracted many large audiences, especially young people, inspiring their interest in dinosaur. For example, “the Zigong dinosaur museum was built on site at the world-renowned Dashanpu dinosaur fossil site, and the houses tens of thousands of fossil specimens from nearly 300 individual dinosaur and other vertebrates.” (Neal) through spread, the discovery of dinosaur fossil, helps to enhance public science skills and promote the knowledge or proud of china increase, museums are not only important bases for popular science education, but also have developed a series of public education activity brands and promotes multiple activities, playing an important role in improving the local cultural education level. Our Chinese pride can be gradually built up through these great discoveries of dinosaurs, so that we can learn more extensive knowledge in class or daily life.

In conclusion, the discovery of dinosaur fossils can make many great effects in the world, such as history, which is always mention people should not forget, it memories many valuable things, the financial development in the local area, it also represents a power of a country to use recourses, and the cultural pride also is significant, it also shows Chinese heart is an unit and red blood always flow in our daily life, these discoveries not only enrich our understanding of the paleontological world, but also give economic development and scientific popularization, demonstrating China’s role in the field of dinosaur fossil finding place.

# Non-fiction – Group 6

## WINNER

### Dinosaurs

*Korean International School Springboard, Robin, Asher – 11*

Dinosaurs lived 65 million years until they went extinct when a giant rock crashed into the earth. For today, we are going to talk about stegosaurus which is a type of dinosaur. Stegosaurus swings its heavy tail when one of its enemies is there to steal their eggs.

The paleontologist who first discovered a Stegosaurus fossil on the mud realized that the fossils came from its back like a turtle's shell. Scientists thought that they used to attract mates, similar to Triceratops. Others think the plates protected Stegosaurus from attacking predators or absorbed heat from the sun to help warm the animal.

One early paleontologist believed that Stegosaurus had a second brain in its tail because the expert noticed a cavity like those where the brain would be in its rump.

Stegosaurus lived about 145 million years ago during the Jurassic period

It was the same size of a double decker bus and weighed almost 12,000 pounds. But this enormous animal had a brain that was only slightly even larger than a coconut.

# Poetry – Group 1 WINNER

## Chinese Dragons

*St. Joseph's Primary School, Cheung, Shun Yin Trustin – 8*

From Dinocephalosaurus limestones  
To Gandititan bones,  
From fossil fuels  
To offshore drills,  
A land of hidden treasures  
Awaiting boundless ventures.

From Triassic claws  
To the Great Wall,  
From gunpowder balls  
To the Qing fall,  
Descendants of the dragon  
Awakened to defend their nation.

From Sinosauropteryx  
To Chang'e-6,  
From dazzling drone shows  
To the three Shenzhou heroes,  
Discoveries looming in the sky  
With ambitions soaring high.

From reptilian evolution  
To the Cultural Revolution,  
From adversity  
To prosperity,  
Oh dragons! You unearthed your powers  
And mesmerized the world with your wonders.

# Creative Writing: Poetry – Group 1 WINNER

## Dinosaurs of China

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Kwan, Cheuk Him Brian – 7*

In the Ancient lands where mountains grow,  
Dinosaurs roamed long ago.  
From quick little raptors that sprinted by,  
To enormous creatures with heads held high.  
In the core of the earth, fossils buried deep,  
Legends of a time, when the creatures would sleep.  
The mountains and rivers, they witnessed it all,  
As beasts of splendour answered the call.  
The fierce Pterodactyl, wings so bright,  
Flew through the jungle, a fabulous sight.  
While the long-neck Brachiosaurus stood tall,  
With elegance like a dancer, it conquered them all.  
From the deserts of Gale to mountains of snow,  
The tales of dinosaurs still brightly glow.  
In museums today, their bones boldly stand,  
A link to the past in this great, wondrous land.  
So listen to the creatures, both fierce and serene,  
In China's rich history, they've always been keen.  
With each fossil uncovered, a sight we might find,  
Of the age of the dinosaurs, forever lined.

## Poetry – Group 2 WINNER

### Guardians of the Ancient

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Cheung, Chin Yui Trevor – 9*

In eras when dinosaurs ruled the earth,  
Five tales from China's past unearthed,  
From fliers in sky to titans on land,  
the mythical legends etched in sand.

First, the microraptor, the Small Little Thief.  
Graceful and quick, it glided through leaves,  
Four wings at the side, it snatches for its meal,  
Swift like the shadows, its secret to steal.

Sinosauropelta, the Chinese Lizard Wing,  
With red-brown hues and stripes like king,  
Venomous body, it lurks under the light,  
A predator's last meal, a lizard's final plight.

Sinovenator, the Chinese Hunter,  
Hunts as a team, with force like thunder,  
A master of stealth, stalking its sight,  
Razor claws strike, in the dead of night.

Mamenchisaurus, the Long Necked Giant,  
Strangely built, and science-defiant,  
It reached for the sky, where treetops could not hide,  
It stretches its neck, in glory and pride.

Dilong, the Emperor Dragon,  
With deadly talons that hunts with passion,  
A tiny T-rex with a regal name,  
Its legacy in China, forever in fame.

Guardians of the Ancient, their stories live on,  
Whispers of the fossils, bringing time long gone,  
Roamed across ancient China, their footprints carved in bones,  
An echo of evolution, a symphony of the unknown.

## Creative Writing: Poetry – Group 2 WINNER

### New Tales of China's Dinosaurs

*Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Gaikwad, Yatika – 10*

In China, quiet and vast,  
Fossils hide from the past.  
In the '90s, a farmer found,  
A feathered dino in the ground.

Sinosauropelta, the name it bears,  
The "China dragon bird" in layers.  
In Liaoning, more bones appear,  
Forty species, oh so dear.

Pterosaurs flew in the skies,  
Winged reptiles, a great surprise.  
In Jiangxi, a titanosaur's trace,  
New wonders in this ancient place.

With paleontologists eager to explore,  
What stories will these fossils store?  
Excitement grows with each new find,  
The ancient world, a treasure to unwind.

# Poetry – Group 3

## WINNER

### Extinction

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lui-Schville, Tristan – 14*

In a scorched earth and decayed land,  
each movement made with careful hands.  
The diggers were persistent, clawing at the sands,  
reaching for what lay beneath.

Sand becomes stone, then stone became  
bone, old bones.  
Warped by heat and buried with time,  
Pieces of history from long before human hands arrived,  
now all was seared to ash...  
Crushed beneath the weight of a falling sun.

A shattered ribcage,  
A skull deformed  
there a once great creature lay, broken, blameless

The Chinese Dragon Bird  
was the name they chose for this creature  
And now they rested

How long would it be, they thought,  
before their own bones would be discovered  
Or would they be obscured by a new calamity,  
But this time of their own making.

# Creative Writing: Poetry – Group 3 WINNER

## Sonder (Neologism in the Dead of Night)

*Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, Bian, Angelina – 13*

the subject is the object renown— (unbeknownst to them)  
in irises of color, neither blossom nor sight; entire lives thrive

tucked underground, for none to see and all to seek;  
scattered stellar remnants, where the dearth of gravestones is gracing  
coffins mustn't confine; death's supposedly freeing.

behold nature's own terracotta army; preserved bones rather than clay  
hats slipped off to each sacrificial demise; footprints of a necrosis-like stray of mind  
all condemning one another to eternal incarceration underground.

(deep  
deep  
deep.)

sparse shadowy figures in the bokeh; perpetually clouded in wreath-cocoons of backgrounds,  
characters and stories  
forever metamorphizing; an endless journey from the first step to the thousandth mile

sunglasses and microscopes, oh what a pity; one disclaiming the beaming smile of sun, the  
other looking across lands but not under their nose, both shaded in the befuddlement  
cast by naked eyes.  
what a juxtaposition.

they say one's something until the others forget—then one's nothing  
but what if  
the others aren't something, they're nothing  
then what are you, Nothing?  
are you still Something?  
(and if Nothing is forgotten by Nothing but then found by Something, is Nothing not Something?)

cemetery sediments silence the echoes inside and outside of my mind;  
shadowy bokeh embers igniting,  
metamorphized stories unfurling their wings.  
how can one not be nostalgic of the future?

(in the future, will one have a future?)  
(in the future, will one's grave be brought to light?)

# Poetry – Group 4

## WINNER

### Skeletal Echoes

*ESF Island School, Tsang, Chun Yin Chris – 14*

Dust jumps off the rusted spade  
Onto the ancient layered rock below.  
Simple farmers like myself,  
born long before the dinosaur boom,  
Whilst the scores of other miners on the other side,  
Clouded with fantasies of fortune and splendour  
Carve out mountains  
And the heavens itself, it seems  
For piles of old bones worth millions.

*Clink, dink, dink*  
*Clink, dink, dink*  
*Chock.*  
The spade hammers again  
But the same empty, hollow sound follows.  
I crouch and examine the beaten rock,  
A dark, rusted brown hue jutting out amongst the sea of beige,  
Curved smoothly like the crescent of the moon.  
Eyes widen as I realise  
I have done  
what the money blinded fools eagerly digging on the other side  
Could not.

“The scale, the size of this fossil-  
I don't believe you know how valuable this is!”

The museum director  
Eyes glued on the ground  
Splutters to me in ecstasy  
While groups of men  
In baggy uniforms coloured frost white  
Trod and stomp on my fields of corn and  
Chip away at my findings.

I do know, director,  
And I do not care.

A skull  
Curving to form a beak-like mouth  
Emerges slowly  
Contorted in agony.  
Rows of ribs  
Laden with cracks and fractures  
Hide in the rock.

Radios buzz and  
The televisions blare only one thing—  
The humble farmer's discovery of a dinosaur fossil in the Yixian formation,  
Larger than even the first.  
I do not know how they even have my full name,  
Pictures of my farmland - now  
With government officials and workers galore,  
Even pictures of my childhood  
Thought lost to the sands of time.  
The hordes of people in the back of my land  
Finally dissipate, leaving  
Behind a gaping crater  
Which they could not be bothered to fill.  
A hole bored into the skin of my land that will soon  
Be swarming with infectious bacteria.

“Could we get an exclusive interview with you?”  
“You are the one that found the fossil, right?”  
“Do you have a moment to talk, sir?”  
“Excuse me sir do you have tim-”  
“What are your thoug-”  
“How will you rea-”  
“Can we als-”  
“Please co-”  
“He-”

Flashes from cameras  
Shouts coming from the gates  
Letters flooding my mailbox  
Reporters mashing their faces  
Against my windows,  
Hoping for that one  
Special interview  
I will not give it to them.

Vans clad in midnight black  
 Screech up to my driveway,  
 Men in suits costing  
 More than what I make in a year,  
 Wait outside my home.  
 Mining corporations  
 Museums  
 News channels  
 Grappling with each other  
 For my attention.

Half a million yuan for my land  
 A million yuan  
 Two million  
 Four million  
 Name a price, please sir.

I will not entertain you, gentlemen,  
 I will not name a price,  
 I will not give an exclusive interview,  
 I will not tell my wondrous story  
 I will not sell my land,  
 My life,  
 Away.

Fathers,  
 Grandfathers,  
 Forefathers,  
 Blood of a bloodline,  
 Spilt over these meagre acres of crops.  
 Fighting the Gaoli soldiers  
 Fighting the Yangren soldiers  
 Fighting the Kuomintang soldiers.  
 Faded tracks from artillery carriages  
 Chipped edges of battle axes embedded in the rock  
 Specks of inky black gunpowder littering the porch  
 Impact craters in the sides of the concrete walls  
 Worn down with decades of neglect.

Yet  
 The prospect of  
 Money, of fortune, of riches  
 Blinds people to tradition  
 Wipes away all sentiment, heritage and legacies  
 In favour of the golden coloured reverie.

Let  
The hollow world thirst  
For hollow skeletons,  
Let them chase  
the echoes of long-lost roars,  
Let them bask in the glory  
And revel in the parades and discoveries.  
Let them chase for the shadows.

While  
I stand firm in my place,  
Defending my legacy,  
While I turn down  
The seven-figure numbers  
In favour of actual riches.

While  
I cultivate the future,  
Rooted in the present  
And not the past,  
A place where true wealth lies  
Not in what is taken,  
But in what is grown.

In the legacy of life,  
In the soil beneath my feet.

# Creative Writing: Poetry – Group 4

## WINNER

### Guidraco Venator, Dragon Ghost Hunter

*Shanghai High School International Division, Hsieh, Chloe – 15*

I spread my wings to touch the edges of the world;  
my feathers were the first  
(and parting) gift from my mother  
who soared at the momentary sight  
of my delayed hatching,  
teeth snapping to taste the bitter winds of  
freedom at the first chance she received;

huddling in the nest, bodies  
sticky from uncleaned albumen and chalazae  
(a second gift?)  
we wailed against the stifling silence  
until cold forms slumped against us, and  
we mustered up the courage to jump;

and they named me and my siblings:  
Guidraco, dragon ghost  
for our pale, slender bodies that waltzed  
through cracks and crevices  
unnoticed, uncared for, in which they saw  
their last glimpse of my mother in us;

but others called me  
(and me alone): Venator, hunter  
for my wandering soul still  
searching for my mother's ghost  
in the mourning woods of my stillborn siblings  
and her absent motherhood.

# Poetry – Group 5 WINNER

## Rebirth

*St. Joseph's College, Chang, Shun Man Crisp – 17*

Clink and clank the chisels chip  
The tombs of long-slumbering dragons  
Hidden below the lands untouched,  
Be reborn soon the bones of legends.  
Scavenge and interrogate our fragile bodies  
The brushes and forceps, dance and prance  
Wantonly on the fallen myths.

Woken from my peaceful rest greeted,  
By their ever-hungry desire  
To dig up as many brothers and sisters  
With feathered and scaled wings and tails,  
And place them in a brand-new world  
Full of suppression, deceit and disease  
Claimed to be the best of times.

Too, I was once a child held dear,  
By a mother, who picked the freshest of leaves,  
And a father, who fought the fiercest of beasts;  
Too, I was once a friend of many,  
Sky soarers, land dwellers, sea drifters alike;  
Too, I was once a fanatic lover,  
Sworn to sacrifice for the supreme.

If only they cared to ask...  
Silenced in isolation,  
Trapped in a tiny grand hall,  
Put on eternal display  
Amidst a chattering crowd —  
The awaited rebirth  
Of history unearthed.

# Creative Writing: Poetry – Group 5 WINNER

## Elegy to the Legend of Dinosauria – An Ode to Never Forgetting

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Wong, Jeremy – 17*

Never forget our bygone brethren,  
Never forget the sins etched deep beneath our feet,  
Never forget the Legend of those came before.

I live amongst youth who corral around the feet of giants:  
Those who supersede innovation and ingenuity.  
They are mesmerized by transience, following in the deep-seeded footprints of those long gone in devout worship. Age touches my palm, though I glimpse into the cataclysm of your demise and feel minuscule worthlessness.

The question is why:  
Why is it that we mingle tirelessly in yonder lands,  
enraptured by an empire whispered through stone and intrigue?

Why does one discover,  
if not to gaze into the gaping canyon of birth,  
the nursery of dreams and unsettling despair?

It is You who makes me come alive with reverence,  
the sole remnant of that wondrous speck of imagination of what happened;  
the mystery which wracks the back of my mind  
till dawn breaks and the stars align.

Survival of the fittest:  
the plague of civilization and structure.  
Through conflict and disparagement we lose  
the essence of will, blinded by earthly matters as we turn a blind eye to the looming universe.

Your generosity had been scorched in earnest sacrifice long before the Earth turned its back on you. Nature makes its lessons clear. Betrayal of value is the ultimate sin; punished indiscriminately by the weeping children

of motherhood. You were stripped clean in an instant  
like the flesh you sowed; only then, shall mammalian parenthood carry on in  
sunlit duty. The ash of indecency and regret stains  
the gnashing, grungy skeleton of the kingdom's grandeur,  
and I am left, alive to ponder succession.

None shall enter,  
and none shall leave  
The forbidden lands  
where vultures grieve.

You are lament incarnate,  
smotherer of communal compassion and collective morale;  
the withering stem of the Tree of Life  
bows in despair to unforeseeable visions.

Prone to folly and mistake, I glance backwards at You like I  
trail behind the flickering memories I worked so hard to create.  
Despite Your faults, Your blunders, Your misshapen ideologies,  
no soul who wandered the Earth could challenge  
the notions of You.

You are the prime experiment:  
Your trials prove Yourself worthy of the adoration  
my kind has long melded around Your absence.

Your Legend is immaculate and intricate,  
born of Godly thunder and Earthly dominion,  
Atop the *Mamenchisaurus*' observatory  
Your established trials to conquer are made apparent.  
Plucking the feathers of young *Microraptor*,  
Your expansion upon this unified world has  
endowed Your memory with an airy lightness that lingers  
Within the desperate mind.

Humanity must be grateful: for our future looks back  
upon Your efforts and Your works; You bear the immeasurable  
weight of the hopes and dreams of rousing fans from lands beyond.  
From the shadow of Your enigmatic figure, They shall  
grow under the beacon of history,  
painted with the monocles of hindsight and foresight.

Yet the stars align regardless of the painstaking efforts of  
all; fate barrels towards sensual thought,  
and romance descends into calamity.

Though dignity is a rarity amongst our kind,  
it is inexcusable.

Virtuous reverence for the varied individual shall come  
to the forefront of our times. To treasure those who We  
never bothered to glance at, like the  
banded tail of the *Sinosauropteryx*,

we shall abandon the indiscriminate tyranny You instated.

Truth lies just below the surface of the frozen lake of wandering ecstasy,  
and by no means are You free of fault;  
but it only through Your progress that we shall carry on  
the will of civilization.

Only a fool could oblige themselves to look past it:  
the filthiness of human indecency,  
and the perceived vengeance on Mother Nature itself;  
to think too highly of oneself,  
to proclaim something,  
anything,  
is too mighty to fall,  
is the gravest mistake of all.

My innocence dreams of the flamboyant glamour  
of the spectacular *Yutyrannus*; its teeth second to its voraciousness,  
picked apart by whiskers and paws.

Timid, then triumphant.

The mighty falls without the bustling applause or sorrow  
of an audience.

The sacred sanctum is silent with regret.  
That is why we shall never forget.

Never forget! Oh, lovely premonition!  
Spite the scattered remains left behind by the cruel dust;  
to be whisked away to Heavens beyond,  
to fall prey to the darkness of hallowed abyss,  
and I shall delight at the sight of it.

No matter how brittle,  
unwise or ignorant,  
experience is a ceramic blessing.

We shall harness the falling stars of improbable opportunity, for Fate has  
ensured us conscience.

I do not...

I will not...

I shall never...

My mind runs blank with fearless distaste for stasis and mortal suffering.  
Children of the World!  
Seize this temporal present and rejoice, for we are alive and well!  
Look past those unholy riches sitting in your grasp and  
Unburden yourself with revitalized perspective!  
Look past the barred walls that stretch between us and  
The wastes *Dinosauria* has neglected,  
and bask in the light of Now.

Nostalgia is an unbridled pain –  
the culmination of generational mortality,  
the object of abstract suffering and dementia,  
but it is our transience that makes us precious.

*Dinosauria*,  
know that we are worthy of succession, and  
rest in serenity among the clearing dust of human  
questioning and existence; You ran so we could  
fly. Our freedom awaits, and the liberation of dynasty begins.  
Never forget the Legend of *Dinosauria*.

## Poetry – Group 6 WINNER

### Feathered Sinosauroptryx

*Korean International School Springboard, Lau, Yu Yan Ian – 13*

Feathers in the dust,  
China's past hidden gem,  
Now discovered,  
Life's a great mystery.

# New Tales of China's Dinosaurs

*Korean International School Springboard, Tsui, Yau Yau Claire Summer – 10*

There was once a dinosaur named Gary  
that enjoyed hundreds of ice cream daily.  
He has 6 friends,  
Ababa,  
Zirari,  
Elon,  
Akika,  
Tobios  
and his bestie, best, bestest friend Nicky

Now, Nicky, who was a vegetarian dinosaur.  
hanging out with Gary from time to time;  
Roar Cafe;  
The Turtle Petting Zoos;  
The Glacier Ice (no-cream) shop;  
The Water park;  
And more!

However, this is one little problem,  
Nicky is a popular dinosaur  
Nicky has more friends than Gary;  
Waaaaaaaaaaaaay more  
Like 20.

And so Nicky, feeling sorry,  
Had to cancel their fun time.  
Sad, lonely Gary  
found other friends in a frenzy of jealousy.

Until,  
A Paleoontologist found two sets of dinosaur bones  
One jealous and sad  
One friendly  
Forever trying to be friends again.

## Poetry – Group 7 WINNER

### China's Fossil

*Hong Kong Red Cross Princess Alexandra School, Lam, Tsz Ki Jason – 14*

Suddenly,  
the excavator dug up  
a dinosaur fossil!  
A construction worker greets it:  
“Ni Hao!”

### Legacy

*Korean International School Springboard, Lowther, Jessica – 18*

Dinosaurs roamed in ancient days, Across China's lands, in countless ways.  
Feathered giants, both great and small,  
Once ruled the earth before their fall.

# Sinosauroptryx – Wonder

*Korean International School Springboard, Choi, Mattea Abbey – 16*

Curiosity  
Everywhere within China:  
Extinct Dinosaurs  
Waiting for you to find them!

Sinosauroptryx—wha?  
How do I really say it?  
It's hard to pronounce;  
As if it's a tongue-twister.

Running ever free:  
A winged bird-like dinosaur  
In Ancient China  
And the Hauterivian Age.

Featherly and small.  
Fluffy like a teddy bear.  
Eagle-eyed like me  
And speedy like the Velo (Note: Velo is short for Velociraptor).

China dragon bird  
vs. The giant T-rex.  
It's a dino sprint!  
Who will achieve victory?

Not only can it fly,  
It can also go extremely fast.  
Isn't it awesome?  
Applause to the Sinosaur!

# Chinese Poetry – Group 1 WINNER

## 恐龙与龙的故事

*YK Pao School, Ju, Qin Yan – 7*

据说山海经中有十四种龙，  
虺五百年化为蛟，蛟千年化为龙。  
这是在告诉今天的我们龙是怎么长大的么？

青龙，白虎，朱雀，玄武，  
他们说青龙代表东方，是春天花草萌芽的样子，  
所谓二月二，龙抬头。  
虎雀龟蛇都是现实存在的生物，  
那么青龙呢？  
五千年前的人们是怎么想象到了你呢？

小时候学英文，  
龙是dragon，恐龙是dinosaur。  
我想问问扬子鳄，  
他们的祖先是不是见过恐龙呢？  
我也想问问始祖鸟，  
它是不是也见过恐龙呢？

可是他们不能回答我，  
今天的扬子鳄已经不是两亿年前的那只，  
博物馆里的始祖鸟只能沉默不言，  
也许有一天，我们终将知道答案，  
就像给地球录一个视频，给几亿年后的谁看。

# Chinese Poetry – Group 2 WINNER

## 恐龍歷險記

*Chinese International School, Wang, Alexandra – 11*

咁喎！

熱河的冰層裂開，  
探出兩個小腦袋，  
一隻是舞龍，  
一隻迅猛龍！

掙脫冰層束縛，  
忽然飛向天際，  
越飛越高，越飛越遠！  
好奇地俯瞰大地，  
他們究竟要去向何方？

看啊！

雕梁畫棟的宮殿，  
金碧輝煌的龍椅，  
處處可見的畫像，  
數之不盡的廳堂，  
遊人如織好熱鬧！

兩隻恐龍面面相覷，  
心中浮現團團問題：  
為何長相不同？  
為何衣著各異？  
是他們太古老，  
還是我們太現代？

啊！

天空突然昏黃一片，  
沙塵漫天飛舞。  
前路漫漫無際，  
藍天已不可見。  
快快離開這裡！

飛啊飛啊飛啊飛.....  
藍綠交織是何方？  
青山綠水真美麗！  
高樓大廈衝雲霄。

夜景如詩如畫，  
霓虹燈光照徹天際！  
突然口渴難耐，  
飛向最近的沙灘。

海水卻渾濁不堪，  
魚兒都消失不見。  
海面漂浮斑斑點點，  
塑料垃圾遍布四方。

不好！  
舞龍被困住了，  
迅猛龍快逃走！  
善良的迅猛龍啊，  
奮力相救不放棄！

別碰塑料袋！  
當心再被困！  
若無好兄弟，  
後果不敢想！

回家吧！  
熱河最安全。  
世上若無熱河，  
恐龍退出歷史的舞台。

# Chinese Poetry – Group 2

## WINNER

### 三角龙寻家记

*YK Pao School, Hua, Ruby – 12*

在那遥远的白垩纪，  
三角龙“小如”，心怀壮志。  
离开家园，踏上征途，  
寻找新的栖息地。

晨曦初露，它迎着朝阳，  
脚步坚定，不曾彷徨。  
穿越森林，跨过河流，  
风雨无阻，勇往直前。

高山峻岭，它攀登而上，  
峡谷幽深，它谨慎渡过。  
每一步，都充满挑战，  
每一程，都历经艰难。

遇见暴风雨，它不退缩；  
面对猛兽群，它不畏惧。  
凭借智慧与勇气的力量，  
它一次次化险为夷。

终于，在一个宁静的黄昏，  
它来到中国的一片广袤草原。  
这里绿草如茵、花香四溢，  
湖水清澈映出绚丽的天空。

三角龙“小如”欢呼雀跃：  
“这是我梦中的新家园！”  
它用心感受这片土地的温暖，  
找到了属于自己的安身之所。

哦，小小三角龙，  
你的寻家记，  
是那样动人心弦！

你的故事告诉我们：只要坚定信念、勇敢追求，  
无论多么遥远、多么艰辛，  
终会找到属于自己的幸福天地。

# Chinese Poetry – Group 3

## WINNER

### 化石

*Yew Chung International School of Shanghai (Puxi), Cai, Junzhe – 11*

在遥远的时代，  
山高水长的地球上，  
掠过一个个巨大的身影。  
一只只恐龙仰天长啸，  
好似震耳欲聋的雷声翻滚！  
一转眼，  
斗转星移。  
如今恐龙早已消失不见，  
只留下一堆化石散落在大地上。  
诉说着他们曾经的存在。

# Chinese Poetry – Group 4 WINNER

## 中國恐龍

*St. Paul's Convent School, Tse, Cheuk Tung Cloris – 15*

光陰似箭 日月如梭  
時間無情地把過去抹掉  
它們的故事成了死寂的化石

高聳的大廈  
繁華的街道  
穿梭的人群  
滄海桑田 卻仍然尋覓它們的痕跡  
古老的巨獸在化石裏吶喊著  
彷彿回到昔日它們輝煌的歲月

巨獸在大地上漫遊着  
細長的頸椎穿破雲霄  
蒼穹下  
陽光打在龐大的身軀上  
它低吼著  
露出獠牙  
彷如讚美着眼前如詩如畫的景色  
彷如訴說着自己的威風凜凜  
又彷如感嘆着自己即將逝去的不捨

時光飛逝 世事變遷  
如今一切彷如過眼雲煙  
化作一縷煙消失在歷史中的長河中

## Chinese Poetry – Group 5 WINNER

### New Tales of China's Dinosaurs

*CNEC Lau Wing Sang Secondary School, Lo, Ho Lung – 16*

你曾是這片土地的霸主，  
可一枚天外來客，  
火光沖天，  
生靈塗炭，  
你又曾遺憾那段輝煌的時光嗎？

你靜靜沉睡在華夏土地裡，  
這一覺，  
睡了一年又一年，  
直到被歷史的土壤掩埋，  
以至於未曾被炎黃子孫所發現。  
可不見天日的你，  
也和我們見證了中華的歷史：

三皇五帝始，堯舜禹相傳。  
夏商與西周，東周分兩段。  
春秋和戰國，一統秦兩漢。  
三分魏蜀吳，兩晉前後延。  
南北朝並立，隋唐五代傳。  
宋元明清後，王朝至此完。

一統天下的英姿，  
也見過三國鼎立，  
英雄人物風光的傳奇時代；  
你也看過大唐盛世的繁榮景象，  
也知道鄭和下西洋，  
把中華民族的名字傳遍歐亞大陸，  
威震天下。

你或許不是神話裡，  
那些上天下海的龍。  
但你在這片土地的重見天日，  
告訴了世界上的每一個人，  
你—中國恐龍，  
從古至今，  
保佑了華夏文明。

恐龍、恐龍，  
現在，  
你驕傲地重新踏上大地，  
仰天長嘯。

## Chinese Calligraphy – Group 2 WINNER



S.T.F.A. Wu Siu Kui Memorial Primary School, Yu, Chung Hin – 10

## Chinese Calligraphy – Group 3 WINNER

遠古山動雄偉證言  
代現龍青  
蒼龍萬歲  
姿容春秋  
春姿萬歲

龍騰盛世  
龍柏書

Stamford American School Hong Kong, Tan, Botao – 13

## Chinese Calligraphy – Group 4 WINNER



Shanghai American School Pudong Campus, Lu, Anne – 14

# Chinese Calligraphy – Group 5 WINNER

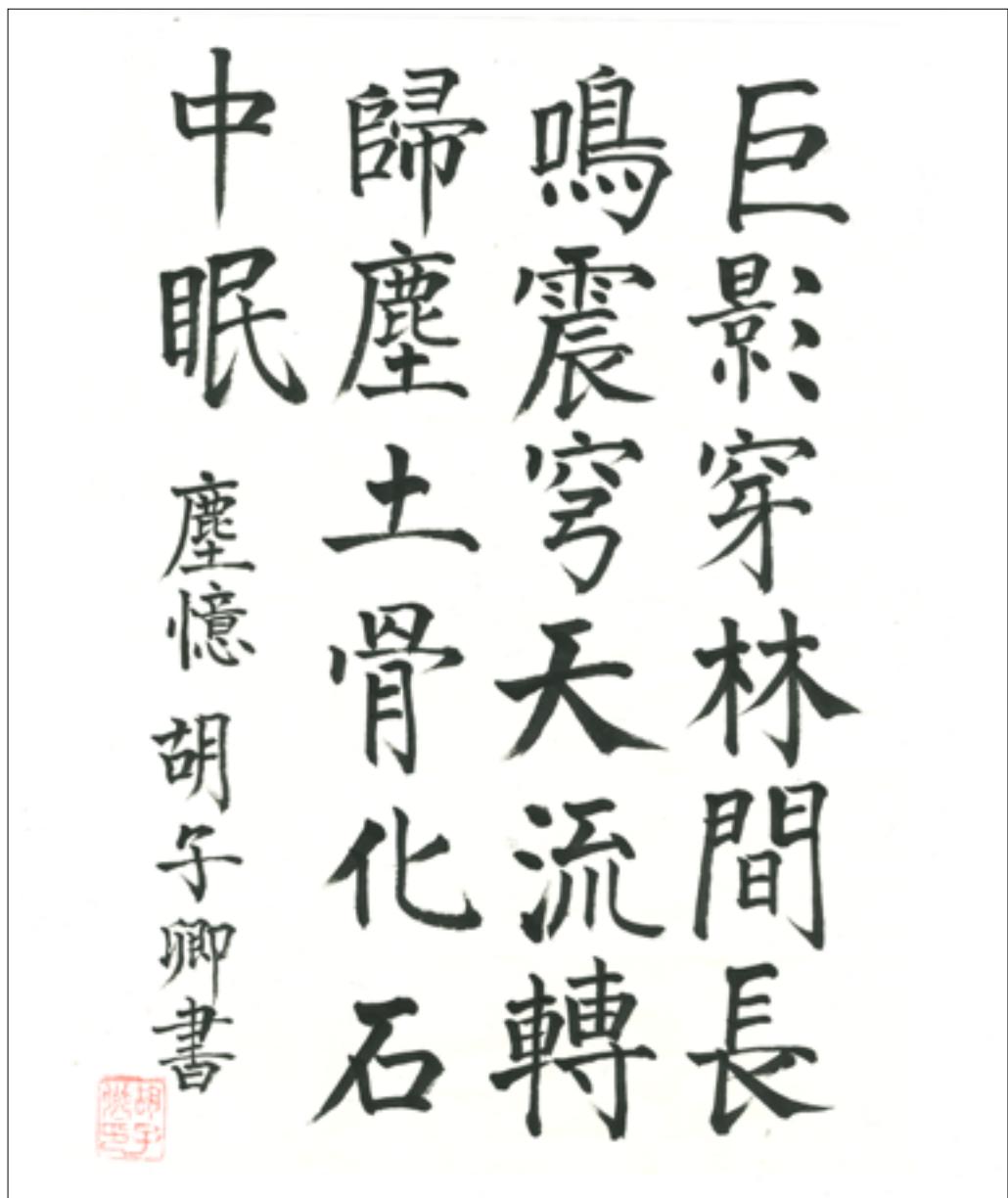
白堊山河湮滅地諸龍曳翼  
已埋香披沙枉送嘉陰骨異  
國魂消影杳茫

謹此  
李東芳撰並書



St. Paul's Convent School, Li, Dong Fang Daisy – 16

## Chinese Calligraphy – Group 5 WINNER



*Stamford American School Hong Kong, Hu, Ziqing – 16*