



Poetry

Group 1

Mogao Cave

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Chen, Ryan – 8

Lonely sandbar flowing with blue sky and fluffy clouds

Golden temples covered by mysterious and strange arts

1700 years ago

Beautiful cave paintings carved by hand

Largest collection of Buddhist arts hanging in the cave and temples

Walls and ceilings decorated by murals

Colorful sculpture standing straight in each transcendental cave

Long-hidden legends remain to be discovered

The cave lay forgotten for hundreds of years

Yet , Mogao Cave, forever legend!

My Final Destination

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Ponnappa, Leela – 8

As I've reached my final destination,
an ancient cave takes my attention,
I've reached the Mogao Cave,
It's dragging me in like a tidal wave.

The cave is filled with hidden treasures,
Beautiful, tall Buddhas difficult to measure,
Their stunning robes filled with lotus flowers,
I can't describe their magnanimous powers.

I feel so peaceful reading Buddhist scriptures,
I'm surrounded by lavish pictures,
Gently I close my eyes, go deep into meditation,
I've finally reached my final destination.

Mogao Grottoes

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Shek, Sophie – 8

When I was in China,
I found a cave,
With different drawing and different arts,
But I was afraid I might see a grave.

I saw cracks on the wall,
I saw rolls of scrolls in the library,
I saw golden coins everywhere,
I also saw a painting that tells a story.

The cave was interesting,
The cave smelled like mangoes,
That was a great day in China
And the cave was call Mogao Grottoes!

Mogao Caves

International Christian School, Chen, Kylie – 8

Centuries, decades, years ago
The monks made a show
And they want you to know
The caves were as colossal as a fossil,
They were historical and categorical.
The monks meditation and cooperation
Was made to declaration
Of the Mogao caves.

It took a lot of days
But they just had to ride the waves.
It was so mysterious
They just had to take it serious
Even without all their imperious
It soon turned to disappearance,
A few centuries later it was time for appearance
But what now can we discover?
Because now we still have stuff undiscovered,
In the Mogao caves.

The Magnificent Mogao Caves

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Wong, Chi Man Claudia – 6

Once dug for Buddhist worship and meditation,
By a Monk filled with inspiration.
At a crossroad of trade along the Silk Road,
Where traders and pilgrims once rode.
As centuries and dynasties passed,
Paintings, sculptures and art amassed.
Travellers crossed other trails,
And many forgot about the caves magnificent tales.
But the legendary caves were found again by explorers,
And the tunnels were unlocked for history adorers.
Now they enter this portal into ancient civilizations,
Mesmerized by the endless decorations.

Mogao, Monk and Meditate

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Wong, Hiu Wai Elizabeth – 9

O Mogao Grottoes, Mogao Grottoes,
The thousand Buddhas' caves;
Hiding in the Dunhuang's toes,
Burying in the Silk Road's graves.

Pilgriming for austerity,
Tens of thousands monks seek you there;
Enlightening with spirituality,
Paintings and sculptures are not rare.

Why have you caused to be forsaken?
That make all the nations sorrow;
Million literatures have been forgotten,
Civilization needs tomorrow.

Trekking across the dusty land,
Explorers discovers the treasures;
Unearthed secrets are now in hand,
All the riches are without measures.

Wondering on such splendid legacy,
I meditate through the tunnel of time;
If I had been with that destiny,
I would advocate to the world such prime.

A Poetry for the Magao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Du, Zhuoxuan - 9

I am Mogao
I am a pearl
Although after a thousand years
like ever
Shine on the Silk Road
I'm a fortress
The toughness of soft rock walls was built with yellow sand
Standing in the Gobi Yellow Sands
I'm a time recorder.
Bodhisattva gave me immortal faith.
I use it as an axe.
Engraved with the gods and Buddhas in the paradise of the Western Heaven
Look
Thousands of real Buddhas here for me
Standing still
Incarnate mudstone engraving on the wall of the cave
Leaving the truth of Buddha.
Look
Nine-coloured deer here for me
Come in nine-coloured auspicious clouds
Running speedily
The goodness of leaving Buddha
Look
Luo Shen is here for me
Come in graceshan yu is dacing
Sow the beauty of Buddha.

The Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Lin, Baihao - 9

A monk found the caves on this way.
Thousands of statues are on display.
Some buddhas sit or lay.
Some of them stand and pray.
There are many old paintings to survey.
People on the frescoes dance and play.
Some of them seem to have something to say.
There are some caves for monks to stay in.
Hundreds of people visit there every day.
It is a very famous place nowadays.

New Tales of the Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Shi, Wenqi – 8

Walk into Dunhuang Grottoes,
It's like we're reading a book.
The color of the Mogao Grottoes is thick,
Because
It has experienced more than
a thousand years of accumulation.
Mogao Grottoes is a poem
With profound meaning.
Mogao Grottoes is a long swing
of ancient music.

The Amazing Grottoes

St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary & Primary School, Ng, Colin – 8

Mogao Grottoes are the greatest treasure.
Over a thousand years they survive the forces of nature.
Go into the caves you can see lots of wonder.
Amazing view of a thousand Buddhas.
Ordinary caves become extraordinary temples today.
Grottoes Grottoes please show us the way
to the countless mysteries you are hiding away.

A Magic Adventure to Dunhuang: Sharing is Caring

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Wan, Yeuk Lai – 6

The Mongao Caves in the Duhuang District,
where every literature was handpicked.
These caves made me so curious;
visiting them made me nervous.

In the cave was a secret taxi stand
that nobody could really understand.
I jumped into the taxi excitedly,
and pressed on a button accidentally.

WIZZLE, DAZZLE, TWINKLE, SPRINKLES!
I was brought to the old Dunhuang full of miracles!
I found some famous statues, Buddhist art and writings on the wall,
This place was the most spectacular of all!

This had to be one of the best adventures,
where I was inspired to write books and draw pictures.
Then I saw one famous painting on the wall.
I asked a man who was wise and tall.

“What is this painting all about?”
He answered me without a doubt,
“This is Kong Rong’s painting,”
I wonder what Kong Rong was thinking.

The old, wise man was a chatterer:
“Kong Rong had four older brothers,
He decided to take one of the smallest pears,
It is a way to respect the elders.
Kong Rong also had a younger brother.
Shouldn’t the younger brother take the smallest pear?
Kong Rong explained that it was a way to show love and care.”
Ah-ha, I learnt that we should always share!

Meanwhile, I found a radio in my pocket.
This button on it would bring me home in a rocket.
I time-travelled again to the Dunhuang in 2021,
I guessed my magical journey was done.

But wait a minute! Back home, I found a pear in my other pocket.
Share it with my younger brother and there won’t be tears in his eye socket.

The Mysterious Mogao Grottoes

St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Chan, Caitlyn – 7

A monk came to my dream last night,
He said I'll bring you to see some sights.
I'm a little nervous but I'm curious,
So I follow him to the place so mysterious.

We cross the desert and climb the cliffs,
Good thing I brought some fishy chips.
I brave the wind and march on the sand,
I travel to a far away land.

The monk told me this is Silk Road,
Where so many stories are told.
Let's see if there's any treasure.
Who knows? Let's go and have an adventure!

We arrived at Mogao Grottoes,
I am surprised the caves are not broken after so many battles.
Hidden in the mystic marvelous mountains,
A Thousand Buddhas sitting underneath the glowing lanterns.

The cave is like a tunnel to a lost world,
All those art are like precious pearls.
There I find a hidden library full of treasures,
The cave is full of secret, sacred sculptures.

Suddenly the monk disappeared with a BOOM!
I found myself woke up in my bedroom.
I thought the monk want to teach me about the past.
I learned a lot of history at last.

Mogao Caves – A Fairy’s Fun Adventure

St. Stephen’s College Preparatory School, Chan, Melanie – 6

Thousands of years ago in the Mogao Caves,
a fairy wanted to come and play.
The caves looked gloomy and were made of clay.
Having found it dull,
she decided to change it in her own way.

First, she sculptured statues of her Buddha friends,
making them look like the greatest men.
Some were big, some were tall.
Some were sleeping by the wall.

Next thing she did was paint a wall.
She liked to use vibrant colours of fall.
There were actions of people dancing and prancing,
and it looked absolutely fantastic!

Lastly, the fairy wanted to build a grand entrance,
she used her magic wand to start her creation.
“Abracadabra! There” she said.
A majestic entrance was what she had.

Feeling happy with what she had done,
The fairy thought she had enough fun.
She looked at the sky and flew up high.
It was time to go home and say goodbye!

Many years later,
a monk walked by.
He discovered the caves by surprise.
“For heaven’s sake! What’s this?”
“These are treasures for my peeps!”
Off he went to share the news,
everybody was amused.
After digging for days and days,
they finally found the Mogao Caves!

The Thousand Year Caves

St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Hung, Dominic – 8

There was an old monk that found a cave.
He went inside because he was brave.

Inside the cave he found nothing.
So he prayed and prayed until spring.

Other people came, and the caves they saw
Were empty, but they wanted to draw.

More people made secret caves to go around.
A lot of people left books on the ground.

A thousand years later, explorers found the caves
and saw sculptures and art, and they were amazed.

I wish I were there a thousand years ago
To draw in those caves, and to my family show.

The Day the Empress Inspected the Town

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Nakamura, Coco – 8

The black holes of the Mogao Grottos hit Cheng Zhao's eyes like dark stars
Welcoming him to go inside
The air got cold but strangely he still felt warm.
As he came face to face with the treasures of the Library Room.

Welcoming him to go inside
An ancient book lay open with a picture of the day Empress Wu Zetian inspected the town
He sees one of the most important treasures of the library room close up.
The page glows, slowly growing in brightness and Cheng Zhao suddenly feels a force pulling him inside.

The ancient open lay open with a picture of the Empress' visit
And transports him back to when the town was alive.
The page's glow and pulling force takes Cheng Zhao through a tunnel of stone Buddhas, tapestries and silk paintings
that flash before his wide eyes.
Where does the tunnel end? When will I get there? Cheng Zhao lands in the middle of the town square with
merchants and monks and the smell of old all around.

Transported back to when the town was alive
The caves look like cheese holes in the cliff, blinking with silk flags and tapestry banners
The town is dressed and ready for the arrival of the Empress.
In the busy, excited square the town's talk is only about one thing.

The cheese hole caves in the cliff blink their silk flags and tapestry banners
Waving and cheering as the Empress rides by and inspects
But in the busy square the town's excited talk quickly changes to fear
The Empress's horse falls on an uneven stone.

The waves and cheers from the caves become silent as the Empress heads to the ground.
Cheng Zhao sees the next few minutes in slow motion so he runs to her rescue,
The horses fall on the uneven stone sees the Empress in danger with 100 horses behind her.
Cheng Zhao stretches out his arms like an eagle to shield her from 100 falling domino horses.

In slow motion running to her rescue
The guards think Cheng Zhao wants to attack the Empress and seize Cheng Zhao.
With his arms stretched out like an eagle, shielding the Empress from the domino horses,
There is no escape for Cheng Zhao from the Guard's charge whose swords are raised in the air ready to strike.

As the guards seize Cheng Zhao,
Cheng Zhao looks to the sky for help
Where a forest of swords point down to where he lays
But the swords quickly part revealing a cloud staircase that leads to the sky.

Cheng Zhao looked to the sky for help
And the sky responded with thanks
Cheng Zhao climbs the cloud staircase leading to the sky and the same Library room images flash by his eyes
At the top of the stairs, Cheng Zhao is portalled back to the Library room face to face once again with the glowing
page of the day the Empress came to town.

The sky responded with thanks
And so did the Empress

Face to face with the same glowing page,

But this time the Empress' face now turns directly to Cheng Hao and bows long and low.

To Guards of Mogao Caves

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Zha, Eason - 8

In the middle of the Silk Road,
In the quietness of the temple,
Is the warm-hearted Chan Shuhaung and his hard-working group of 18.
One person painting, one sketching.
One exploring, one discovering.
One studying, one grinding wheat.....
In the middle of the Silk Road,
On the hill slope facing the grottoes,
Filled with pale-yellow sand and dust,
Is the tomb of Chan Shuhuang.
In life, he gave everything to Dunhuang.
In Death, his spirit lovingly stands guard.
He did his best to help restore the Mogao Grottoes.
He gave everything to help restore Dunhuang culture.
Let's thank him to the bottom of our hearts!



Poetry

Group 2

Mogao Grottoes Poem

Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Kwok, Audrey – 10

The Mogao Grottoes is a weird thing to say,
Although it's a significant building,
It still embraces the day.

Even if we didn't see it in person,
It still reflects on the ocean.

You see,
Even though you might not see it in person,
Someday you will,
When your life goes to heaven.

A Journey Through Time into the Mogao Grottoes

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

Two thousand years ago,
The Mogao Caves were born.
In the Thousand Buddha Grottoes,
Five hundred temples formed.
Travelling monks on the Silk Road
Trading silk, spices, ivory trunks
Needed a place to lighten their load,
And the first cave was dug by monks.
Building the Caves as temples,
The scorching sand rose to their knees.
Painting clay sculptures and murals,
The sand still flew over their cheeks.

As the days turned into years,
To the oasis, crowds came.
The caves were full of cheers,
Igniting a raging flame.
Inside the Mogao Grottoes,
Walls of colourful murals
With minerals, earth, metal,
Ancient art sparkled like pearls.
Stucco statues with eyes and legs
Might be guarding the Mogao Caves.
Careful, lest you break like an egg.
All's silent because of their faith.

Ten centuries later,
Less footprints on the Silk Road.
Fewer and fewer remember
A time before the caves erode.
People were now using boats,
Traders were sailing on the sea.
No one travelled on the Silk Road,
The caves would never be seen.
The Mogao Grottoes were worried,
Abandoned and lonely.
They thought they were buried
Existing with darkness only.

In the late nineteenth century,
Western archaeologists came
With key documentary,
Digging tools and raging flame.
The Mogao Caves were blocked by sand.
New explorers, strong and brave,
Started researching the land,
Discovered the Library Cave.
They found cultural sculptures,
Buddhist artifacts and murals.
Dunhuang, the greatest art treasure,
Was famous all over the world.

In this year, Twenty-Two,
These Caves are a special place.
We know these stories to be true,
But there are answers we still chase.
A site of Buddhist history
Expressing itself in its own way,

Full of secrets, still a mystery,
So go there on a special day.
Follow the pathways of pilgrims,
Walk to the innermost cave.
Your own golden vision will come,
All this knowledge can be saved.

Buddhi

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chan, Hay Yee Jessy – 10

Miles of vigorous dunes
Ceiled by earthy aurelian
Up above and down below

Tunnels of timeless runes
Engraved by deific semblance
Up above and down below

Bodhi Buddha
Days of yore awaken
Bodhi Buddha
Days of old enliven

Storeys of archaic aura
Embodied by dreamlike rouge
Up above and down below

Towers of fulgid annals,
Sheltered by archaic spires,
Up above and down below

Bodhi Buddha
Days of yore awaken
Bodhi Buddha
Days of old enliven

Echoes of mythic tune
Circled by awakening tone
Up above and down below

Dreams of deep reverie
Whirled by numinous verity
Up above and down below

Bodhi Buddha
Chants of soul awaken
Bodhi Buddha
Chants of mind enliven

Showers of lucent blessings
Enveloped by gracious smiles
Up above and down below

Vespers of praising chorale
Crooned by orotund whispers
Up above and down below

Bodhi Buddha
Chants of soul awaken
Bodhi Buddha
Chants of mind enliven

No withering, no death, no end

Bodhi Svaha

Bodhi Svaha

Bodhi Svaha

Caves of the Past

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Choi, Shi Yin Reagan – 11

The folds of gold, the sandy dunes of the desert.
The scorching sun glaring, sizzling and scorching.
Embedded in the stony face, the entrances stand.
Faded paint etches on stone, once vibrant now faint.

One after another, the levels stretch to the sky.
Still statues sit in caves, intricately carved.
Flushes of orange come and pass,
Shadows dropping listlessly.

Gilded faces of the worshipped,
Their wisdom freely offered
To those who seek it
Willingly.

No sign of life in the plains,
The environment unwelcoming.
Yet none can stop those
Who believe and trust.

A place for reflection,
Seeking those willing to open up.
Hidden in the endless stretch of gold,
The cave's uniqueness rarely noticed.

Those called to come,
Feel a tug and purpose.
Peerless and undeniable,
A portal back in time.

Lost in the maze of thousands,
Fragments of history stored there.
Stories inscribed into its walls,
Waiting soundlessly.

The past lingers in caves,
Away from the surging present.
Sealed and protected,
These secrets are waiting to be found.

Wander in the Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Doo, Charlene Hayden – 12

In the deserted land of Dunhuang,
Past the great Silk Road,
Where aged paintings are being adored
By every descendant abroad,
The historical artworks flourish
Into thousands of legends,
And countless dynasties nourish
Our nation's heritage.

In the great cave stood the Buddha,
Standing there so bright,
Hundreds of others worship
Their goodful and trustworthy heroine.
Buddhists from all around
Come to this very cave,
To see and worship Buddha together
With each other forever.

Ancient caves were bringing
Joy to every nation,
The Mogao bells were ringing,
As if the sun had been away.
The hymns are rejoicing,
Cave-like stones are following
Wherever the tune goes flowing,
When the moons were singing.

While the moments awaited,
The desert filled with misty air,
Covering the wondrous view,
In between ages of destiny.
Mist made everyone fall asleep,
While the sandy stretch of land,
Covering the whole world,
Waited until the hundreds were discovered.

History of Library Cave, Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Ho, Sum Yin – 9

Thousands of years in the past,
Appeared this mysterious place.
It showed many cultural relics,
From all over the place.

It happened around the Silk Road,
An oasis in a desert.
So many peculiar cultures,
As much of garden's dirt.

Once, a little monk saw a beam of light
Shown upon a Buddha stone statue.
When he saw the shaft of light,
Inspired he was to dig into the statue.

Dug, dug and dug,
Library Cave, he discovered.
Filled with precious treasures,
Dust, amazing treasures were all covered.

Although the monk didn't know much,
For he had never gone to school.
People claimed him to watch over the cave,
And he knew nothing as he ruled.

One day, the wise men came,
And asked the monk to trade the beloved things.
The monk wasn't educated enough to know,
That the treasures were indeed valuable.

So the monk exchanged the dear treasures:
Paintings, manuscripts and sculptures,
With money, gold
And some lies that were told.

But after the wise men said goodbye,
They kept the precious treasures,
Went back to their own countries
And conserved our ancient cultures.

These cultural relics are at other places,
and significant heritage is preserved by them.
But as China is growing more dominant,
Its historic legacy is now alive with us!

An Unusual Escape

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Lam, On Tung Adelynn – 11

I was a young maiden in a mural in the Mogao Grottoes —
A mural that illustrated meaningful community mottos
Of love and peace, created in 336 A.D by a wonderful artist
Who was acknowledged as one of the world's smartest.
Up on the walls I was doing my light-footed dance
When I saw a potion on the ground — would that be a chance...?

Just then, water shot out of the colourful vase beside me,
And it was surging and plunging like a waterfall, as I could see.
Splish! Splash! Splosh!
Then I thought I was lost, my gosh! My gosh!
Suddenly, the potion tilted, fell and mixed with the water,
I was no longer in the painting with my dear daughter.

I woke up to the sounds of heavy footsteps approaching,
Did they belong to people engaged in illegal poaching?
I looked around, gasped in horror and cried like a mourner!
That's when I noticed I was in a distant corner!
I heard some scratching, laughing, barking and tapping.
I saw two people holding a cage, and inside was a bird.

The archaeologists who saw me looked bemused
And tried to solve the mystery which made them confused.
They asked me tons of questions as if they were my teachers.
Reluctantly, I answered them, trying to please these creatures.
They thanked me politely and said they would continue exploring.
With their voices sincere and their faces imploring.
After that weird commotion, I saw the bottle of potion again.
Everything was so strange and I wondered if I could stay sane.
I really missed my brilliant life in the painting —
Compared to that of the humans, mine was indeed amazing.
Before drinking the potion, I said "Goodbye!"
Then to my world I returned without any ungrateful sighs.

Seeds of Bodhi at the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Lee, Nok Ching Chloe – 12

Deep down the roots of the Bodhi Tree
Sat the seeds of Buddhist *Chi*.
Ripening figs grown from blossoming buds,
Dispersing seeds drifted through the gusts.

Falling into Danchuan River along the oasis,
Crossing the Crescent Lake beside Dunhuang mesas.
Desolate desert turned spiritually sacred groves,
Buddhism flourishes in Mogao Grottoes.

Caves of Thousand Buddhas carved in cliffs,
Preaching through rock art beauty its beliefs
Crossover of art, culture, style, and traditions
Amongst the Ancient Chinese, Indian, Turks, and Tibetans.

Manuscript scrolls, carvings, and murals,
Display traces of ancient oriental morals.
The beauty of enlightenment wore gowns of *prana*,
The master of awakening bestowed *prajna*.

From the bustling Silk Route with passing traders,
To the hallowed *vihara* filled with devoted worshippers.
Centuries of time witnessed its highs and lows.
Once lost but found its secret untold.

The Eastern Jewel shines forth its light.
Imparting vision through statues and wall paintings in sight.
The sealed chamber couldn't hold its awe,
Hidden wonder of civilization unearthed as a jigsaw.

When nomadic saints heard the divine call,
Possession forsaken to live humbly above all.
Buddha's teaching and the heavenly sounds
Purify the hearts, and souls abound.

Earnest seekers joined in meditation
Quietly undertaking the important mission
Follow the monks' footsteps over a millennium
Zealously pursue the truth for freedom

Can you not smell its spirit-awakening scent?
Incense of prayers to quest or to thank
Tranquillity overflows corners of the caves
Transcending peace overcomes the troubled saves.

Blessings and affliction, peace and strife.
Seasons of growth, adding flavours to life.
Reaping what you sow. *Karma* to *Samsara*.
Cycles of rebirth recur in the endless era.

Hot sand, harsh rock, dry wind in the wilderness
Transforming solitude into mightiness
Touching manifold, a thousand years
Lonesome sanctuary turned legacy heritage into cheers!

Amazing journey at the oriental crossroad of trade.
Tiny seeds of faith give meaning to despair and raid.
Respect life. Avoid evil. Be good and kind.
Awaken. Enlightened. *Nirvana* you shall find.

Journey of the Mind

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Sung, Zhi Yin – 11

Why indulge in hatred,
When you can surround yourself with love?
Why act on impulse,
When you can act with wisdom?
Why perpetuate evils and conflicts,
When you can spread peace and love?

Map, masks—
Sandals for the camel saddles.
Sunscreen, sunglasses—
My eyes widened.
Hands on handles, feet on pedals—
A sandy journey to a boundless desert.

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack—
A scent of train oil wafted into my nose.
Hopping on, hopping off—
Curiosity shot from head to toe.
'Next station, Dunhuang.'
'Deserts, temples, sculptures— here I go!'

Standing on the Silk Road,
I peeped into a melting pot of cultures—
China, Central Asia and Europe.
Ancient manuscripts, wall paintings and silk banners—
Gold embroideries and rare textiles—
A vivid picture of life in medieval China.

Sculpted out of sandstone cliffs over ten dynasties.
Constructed by monks to serve as shrines for eternity.
In these caves of giant murals,
I meditated.
Paintings, writings, carvings—
An experience of Buddhist beliefs and stories.
Oh! How I am enlightened!

The goddess of mercy,
A calming Buddha Smile surrounded me,
Bringing inner tranquility.
An elegant lady floating on clouds,
A content figure projecting peace,
Speaking truth, speaking love,
Speaking serenity.

Yellow, red, brown,
Spirited paintings, stucco sculptures,
Gold, silver, black,
Woody smell, a floral note, hints of spice,
Amber, scarlet, hazel,
Red railings, rusty metal,
Rich and bright.

Soaring freely
Over the golden desert land,
The Spirit whispered and sang, gently.
Finding the courage to let go,
I breathed in and out, deeply.
Drip, drip, drip,
Tears trickled down my cheeks, slowly.

In Search of the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Tong, Sui Ting – 11

Flying coach on a stormy evening from Venice,
6,604 miles, 10.4 hours and 42,000 feet in altitude.

Silently I sat in excitement.

Embraced by loneliness and curiosity
Prepared to embark on a journey that will forever change my life,
Dunhuang – the Mogao Grottoes, you call for me.

Overwhelmed by exhaustion and hunger,
A good half an hour of ferocious bus ride till I reached the renowned Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel,
Rain shower, gloominess, and cruel humidity welcomed my arrival to this enigmatic land,
Yet, my heart was filled with eagerness.

Awaiting me was an upsetting, ordinary, unflattering room,
Dust and dirt gracefully covered the surface of every seen object,
Luggage unloaded, I explored diverse options to combat my extreme starvation.

Loaded myself with countless tourist pamphlets,
Scrutinized alternative travelling routes,
Submerged into the curious legends of the great Mogao Grottoes, better known as the Thousand Buddha Caves
Le Zun, blessed with the view of Maitreya Buddha, dug the first cave,
Fa Liang, with an equal vision, claimed the second one,
Where shall my pilgrimage begin? I pondered

Arrived at ten with a bus, blessed with sunshine.
All alone so lonely and lonesome.

Suddenly astonished, startled and touched

Marvelled by the five levels built in various dynasties totalling 735 caves
Stepping inside gazing admiringly at the seas of murals and sculptures created by gifted artists.
Red, green, yellow, brown and orange coloured the caves
There are some boards written in Chinese introducing the masterpieces.
Each one with its uniqueness, style and history
'How gorgeous this is!'

I exclaimed. A must-visit is the eye-catching Library Cave,
A memorial cave for the wealthy Hongbian monk following his death
Loaded with manuscripts, scrolls, books, short texts and figurines of Buddhas
Sacred sanctuary for poetry, philosophy, law, music, medicine, economics and art.

Moved by the endless, magnificent and invaluable Buddhist arts,
I just couldn't stop admiring the cleverness, ingenuity and inventiveness of the past.
The splendid Mogao Grottoes – once forgotten, now revived and heavily protected as the World Heritage Site,
History must not be buried

A long visit of five hours, conquered by extreme tiredness and starvation
I promised a tour to the Dunhuang Shazhou Night Market
Hundreds of well-organized stalls promoting local cuisine
I awarded myself with the most delectable meal
Needless to say, it ought to be the trip of a lifetime.

A Historical Treasure House

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Wong, Hei Lam – 11

On the edge of the Gobi Desert,
Lies a place of pilgrimage,
Considered as one of the treasure houses in China.

The Mogao Caves is a major channel
Along the ancient Silk Road,
Connecting the bond between China and the West,
Witnessing the evolution of Buddhist art,
Bearing such a heavy load.

Its rough walls are like the gentle hands of a mother,
Sheltering all her children inside her palms—
Coarse yet protective forever.
Stairs crawl everywhere like lines of ants,
As though walking in a convoluted maze.
Countless doors are the golden keys to the mysterious treasures.

A vision it should be,
Which inspired a monk named Yuezun to excavate the caves.
What treasures did he unveil, that
Even calm the whispering waves?

The kaleidoscope of murals mingles with
Not only the style of one race.
Those fair ladies wore elegant dresses with crystals,
Some danced in grace,
Some played pipas on their shoulders.

Atypical and anomalous dragons—
With the horns of a bull,
The claws of a hawk,
The wings of a butterfly,
The leg of a man,
The perfect combination of delicacy and ferocity.
All displaying the exquisite craftsmanship of China.

The 'living' buddha statues sat cross-legged with solemnity.
Disciples greeted and knelt to their masters with stiff formality.
Earning a reputation of "Thousand Buddhas Caves".
Heavenly kings sat on almighty thrones with dignity.
Servants bow low before them with civility.
All seemingly formidable.

The Mogao Grottoes capture every event
In the Buddhism history book.
Suffering every natural and man disaster which I resent,
They remain intact everywhere I look.
However,
Many threats have been brought to light,
When unlimited tourists visit like water flowing forever.
Under top-level protection and regarded as a World Heritage Site,
I believe the Mogao Grottoes will be well-preserved.

What are you still sitting here for?
Embark on a journey to the treasure house,
To see for yourself the priceless treasures they contain!

Caves of Gold

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Yip, Kristen Ho Yan – 10

In a desert long forgotten,
lies a cave, sleeping in silence,
accompanied by age-old murals.
Nothing but pure darkness in sight,
a blaze of bleak black, void of white.
An undefiled imbalance.

No longer are the caves of gold,
just whispers from lost stories told.
Standing still, it has strayed off its way.
but will it come, the promised dawn?
Or are the caves forever gone,
forever gone, gone, gone, gone.

Soon, the days grew dark, hard and long,
and the time gradually went on.
Once a beloved and rare treasure,
a crown of gold beyond measure –
now but a remnant of the past,
its golden days having long passed.

Until that so marvelous day,
Western light shone upon the way.
After many hard times spent alone,
how wondrous it feels to be known!
Years hidden away, lost and gone
now to see the long-promised dawn.

Arise! A jewel from barren lands.
Created from such crafty hands.
a golden treasure, a masterpiece.
Beauty to last unendingly,
admired for eternity,
cherished by all humanity.

History is not times gone by,
nor simply ancient stories told.
It's a way to learn, to live and grow,
like our ancestors long ago.
Masters of art long, long ago,
created centuries of gold.

New Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Preparatory School, Ng, Ho Yin – 11

On the Silk Road of China
There are some giant caves,
Inside are ancient sculptures,
And a lot of staves.

Lots of people came to stay,
And made several paintings.
The sculptures that the people made
Took lots of time creating.

The caves survived war and nature
For fifteen hundred years.
Although it is really old,
Its end is still not near.

When the caves were rediscovered,
People found many sculptures.
They also read literature
To learn ancient people's cultures.

The cave may teach us religion,
Economics and ancient art.
The awesome sight of the Mogao Caves
Will stay in everyone's hearts.

The Mogao Grottoes

Diocesan Preparatory School, Yeung, Pok Him Ethan – 11

The Mogao Grottoes,
Ancient, precious and awesome,
A Chinese treasure.

Bats by The Bay

ESF Glenealy School, Leung, Chriselle – 10

As the stunning sunrise fills the summer sky,

A flock of humble birds soar up high.

Heaps of stones litter the burning ground,

Dozens of majestic creatures fly around.

The caves of China stand magnificent and plump,

With the whistling wind blowing past the sandy bumps.

The flickering and beaming sun sets too soon,

Suddenly, the sky is filled with the one and only moon.

Diligent bats are awakened by the shadow of the night,

Countless are ready to fight, yet a handful have frights.

A courageous and bold bat snatches the job,

Gingerly darting through the musty spiderweb cobs.

At last, they stumble back home, into their immaculate cave,

Children ecstatically swing up and down, seeming to forget about being behaved.

Millions of gleeful grins fill the room, everyone scrambling for more and more food,

A once glumful cave transforms into a delightful mood.

As the spirit of Autumn starts to kick in,

Everyone is ready for the fun to begin.

The Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, Huang, Sylvia – 9

Facing more challenges than ever,
With injuries so severe,
Sleeping in dark caves,
Leaving the secrets that now fades.

Feeling horribly faint,
Faces covered with red, sticky paint,
Walking feebly along the path,
Not taking a single bath.

Selling silk that shines,
Selling spices so fine,
Selling different foods,
So many things to choose.

Then shouting with glee,
With the silver they see,
With smiles on their face,
Going home at a quick pace.

The caves, so dark and dense,
Shielding rain, like a fence,
As old as time,
Before Mozart was even nine.

Millions of years ago,
In the caves all sorts of plants could have grown.
There could have been toads,
But no cars and no roads.

Gradually, the people began to add,
To this beautiful cave Earth had,
Painting artwork worth ninety thousand and four,
Writing poetry better than anything before.

Today, all has changed,
Everything is rearranged!
Fascinating artwork to see,
Unknown poems to read.

What could the future caves hold?
Will it become a place where ancient stories are told?
Will it become an office for men?
Or a shop that sells only pens?

Will it become a classroom?
Or a women's bathroom?
Will it become a garden full of roses?
Who knows? It might become a museum of chopped-off robot noses!

The Mogao Grottoes Poem

ESF Kennedy School, Lee, George – 8

Magical, mysterious Mogao caves were discovered at a fabulous oasis that stretched along the boiling hot desert on the brilliant Silk Road in China.

Omnipotent literature, colourful paintings and fantastic sculptures made by Monks were unlocked by scholars who were searching for the secrets of the timeless, sacred Buddhist art.

Gansu Province soon became the hidden gem of the originally old, dusty place in west, central China because thousands of desperate pilgrims rediscovered more sandy caves and the breathtaking secrets of the long-lost culture.

Amazing, awe-inspiring, ancient caves were the loyal guardians of the oldest dated, printed books in the world.

Oh, old silk road, you were the pathway to a legendary lost world and the courageous camels were your messengers who brought thousands of strong believers to the Mogao Grottoes

Graceful, glorious and grand buddhas were storytellers of the Silk Road traditions.

Representing the religious wonders of the world, countless hand carved stories, decorated art on the towering ceilings and Buddhist artefacts were kept safely in the deep dark caves.

Oh, Mogao Grottoes, you were the dusty protector of the ancient manuscripts, wonderful silk banners and paintings, precious silk embroideries and unique textiles.

Time was preserved because you did your best to retell the prehistoric cultures and traditions.

Time became endless because archaeologists from all around the world found the key to unlock the Buddhist secret!

Oh, Mogao Grottoes, luckily your stories were buried under the sand and rediscovered by the world.

Eternal Buddhist beliefs were spread to every single continent like a fireball.

Sshhh, let's keep the secret of the Mogao Grottoes alive!

Mogao Grottoes

ESF Kennedy School, Lin, Declan – 10

The Silk Road was used by East and West,
On the road, trading is best,
After all those years, It became a tourist attraction,
You can see tombs, temples and Buddhist Grottoes!
The tombs and the temples might be worn down,
But still a magnificent sight to see!

The Silk Road stretched for tons of miles,
They traded silk, gold, spices and tiles,
East and West trade goods for goods,
They both come back with new goods or food,
They both come back on a daily basis,
I'm not so sure how they don't get sick of it!

The Silk Road looks a bit rusty,
But it's nothing that Neosporin can't fix!
It looks like it needs minor repairs,
But it's still a great place to visit,
(You sussy people might not agree)

The Mogao Grottoes look traditional,
I think the detail is quite additional,
Tourists visit this place all the time,
They say, "This is a top-notch place to see"
Looking at the Buddha made of stone,
The decorations are as bright as the sun,
Maybe a bit too bright to handle!

Mogao Grottoes were decorated in gold and silk,
The Buddha stands proud and tall,
The caves might be home to anything
Pandas, Dragons or a random thing!
That random thing could be arrogant or modest,
From the Zodiac Animals to a sussy bunch of monks!
You might think "he's going insane!" but I'm not!

No one lives in the Mogao Caves right now,
But it looks like a comfy place,
Any moment now, someone might move in,
An Omicron victim, or a COVID victim,
Maybe to quarantine for a thousand years!

Before people came to the Mogao Caves,
They were spiky, musty and smelled like dirt,
The Chinese slowly began to trickle in,
And made the caves into ol' fashioned gold 'n silk.
It seems a bit additional though (*groans*).

After all that gold and silk,
They slowly lost their appeal,
The Chinese walked past them without a glance,
Someone should comfort those poor caves!

Enchanted Encounter

ESF Kennedy School, Yip, Heather – 9

Slowly the monk entered the cave,
Old memories started popping in his head.
He reached out to some ornaments,
Figures like werewolves looking dead.
Jaw-dropping features,
Mythological creatures.

An enchanting voice whispered “come near...”
He can't help exploring more and more.
Curiosity was leading him,
Some dangerous items unexplored.
On the walls were floating lanterns,
Swirls, curls, dazzling patterns.

A step and another,
Eventually appeared a glamouring box of Pandora.
Reaching it with a shivering hand,
He thought the world was coming to an end.
Was he really correct?
“Leave now and you will miss everything instead.”
The secret voice was creating suspense,
The monk wondered if all these made sense.

The monk decided to open and *JUST* take a look,
But the Pandora box shook.
First out came just a chocolate brown thing,
Turning to be a dire beast stood tall like a king.
The beast opened its mouth,
Like a blackhole desiring to engulf.
Instead it spitted the words “please, stay...”
“...I, I, am really afraid”.

The monk hesitated, yet
His sympathetic heart led him to stay.
The whole cave suddenly rumbled,
Down came rocks tumbled.
No one knows what happened to the monk,
The story left waiting to be unfolded.

Maybe, by another daring monk.

The Heart of the Mogao Grottoes

ESF Quarry Bay School, Wong, Angie – 8

O! I open my craggy mouth to speak
of an underworld of things unheard,
unknown to man—

Listen! Listen!

Long long ago, a monk
heard me on the slopes:
stopped by my oasis of spittle,
peered through my stony lips,
passed my tongued stalagmites,
stalactites, and took shelter
in my throat.

He slept in the dark depths of me,
and in his sleep he heard, a voice—
that could be my own—singing
through the dark shapes of his mind.

As I swallowed his sleep,
as he rested where I felt
my vocal cords should be:
curled foetal as a baby.

In the morning he awoke,
and unleashed his knife, dazzling my eyes;
carving the face of Buddha, right on my chin,
carving Buddha's teachings, stroke by stroke,
carving his art deep into my skin,
carvings of inspiration to provoke
the others he would welcome in.

The monk proclaimed me as a sacred place:
and the people came and came,
tiptoeing over my petrified face,
creeping inside my gritted cheeks,
decorating my jagged teeth with trinkets,
offerings of food and flowers for me to eat.

Good! Good!

How lovely to have company!
How wonderful to be somebody!
My face lit up by their candles:
I adored their attention—
I adored being adored.

But then!
Sounds of crashing and smashing,
dust rising, polluting my air,
clogging my mouth, my breath,
making me choke,
voices coughing through my throat.

Workers' sweat dripping on my tongue:
salty taste overpowering my mouth,
making me wish I could vomit:

Sick! Sick!

Cracking colossal holes in my heart,
breaking me apart,
as a hammer shattering through glass,
banging and booming me over.

Shall pilgrims dig thousands of caves,
but fail to listen to the mystery I contain?

After a while the pilgrims became bored:
they failed to find the secret that I stored.
They stopped coming by.
They stopped bringing me gifts.
They stopped remembering my ancient face.
For centuries, now, I've been forgot,
left lonely and abandoned.

Would I be lost in the world forever, again?
Or could I rediscovered and made famous?
Visited for my greatness?

Look past your tower blocks,
your cars, your roads, concreteness, rigidity,
and come, come, come, to find me.
Pause your work,
your industry, technology,
and unlock my secretive theology.

Come! Come!

And hear my heart.

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Tsang, Julian - 9

More than half a millennium ago,
A monk found a very special cave
Which pilgrims came to work and stay,
But that just couldn't be the same.
Thousand years later,
Advanced civilization broke off,
Leaving the caves in delay.
Now, we come to see,
We finally realise our blunder,
Of the wonder, we grieved.
So, now we go,
To uncover more things,
And ring our hearts with content.

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Final Effort

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Ip, Mya – 10

At the foot of the sandy grottoes, stood a man.
Let's call him Ganji, shall we?
Although he was very young, he only had one goal.
Ganji always conceived the world as empty, like a husk.
Waiting to be painted with creativity and pride.
Although it may be a daunting task, he knew that it would be worth it.
That it would finally give him peace.
He decided to complete what nature has started– the grottoes along the cliffs.

He planned to add some flair and zest to the grottoes.
Not just some drawings and stickers, art that people would look forward to admiring– real art;
that would normally take a lot of time.
But there was nothing to worry about, Ganji had all of the time in the world.
So, he started to create his soon to become masterpiece.

Ever since Ganji was a child, he loved literature.
He promised his mother that he would one day write enough scrolls and books to fill a library.

“Mommy, I promise I can do it!!” He declared.

“Well that's gonna be very hard, but mommy believes in you.”

But she's gone.
Gone now.
And Ganji didn't know why,
but she's gone.
Ganji couldn't do anything to undo this.
The birds on the wire.
They promised to stay together.
Carefree, without a worry.
And yet she flew away.
Leaving him behind.
How could Ganji keep his promise if she wasn't there by his side anymore?

“I'm sure mommy will be proud. I'll make sure she will be.”

The art of literature in Ganji's opinion was quite delicate, in his own words.
He believed that originality was what made literature so special.
His hands were already ready.
Holding a brush in one hand and his confidence in another,
Ganji started to work.
Each character was unique, and that was why Ganji loved writing.
He also believed that every writer has a voice of their own.
Just as his mother told him.
He finished writing in no time,
because of his creative and imaginative ideas overflowing his head.
And so, he finally fulfilled his promise.

Ganji had an eye for art. Especially sculptures and murals. His friend would always say that they had a special something to them and Ganji couldn't agree more. Their never-ending passion for art was one of the many things that kept their friendship going.

"Come on!" Ganji exclaimed

"I'm tired," he replied.

And that's how their friendship quickly turned to dust.
The two birds of a feather.
His attitude completely changed.
Another bird flew away from his wire.
And now their pledge of "brotherhood" was broken.
Time faded away.
Ganji truly felt like he was being dragged into a cage.
What happened to the boy who once taught him to fly?

Ganji remembered the murals that his "friend" and he drew at the side of the alleyways.
He yearned for the long lost nostalgia.
Being quite artistic by blood,
He imagined how the walls would look if he added some creativity to them.
So Ganji started painting.
It had been quite a while after his last mural,
he recalled each step to preparing the pigments.
As he dipped the brush into the bowl, he slowly but surely remembered how he drew the murals.
His hand obtained a mind of itself.
For every stroke of the brush,
streams of power and imagination flowed through his body.
The world was filled with a million colours.

Well, that took a while.
Now we just have the sculptures left.

As he tapped the chisel firmly on the stiff stone, spurts of confidence were gushing through his body as if he was being electrocuted (in a good way of course).
While Ganji carved out the people's expressions, he had made the expressions too.
It was as if he could empathize with the sculptures.
Feel ecstatic when the sculptures were happy and cheerful,
and feel pity and sorrow when the sculptures were sad and miserable.
Just how he felt when his friend had left him.

And so, after decades of hard work, he was ultimately done.
He didn't believe it at first, but he was finally complete.
The world was complete.
His sacrifices were definitely worth it.
So as he took his final breath
Recalled his last memories
He closed his eyes
And whispered to the world
"Goodbye."

The Discovery of the Mogao Caves

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yan, Mary – 10

One day a monk went to pray,
And found some caves far, far away.
They were broad, narrow, thick and thin,
But they were collapsing in the wind.

Some pilgrims came and decided to stay,
And began digging more and more caves.
They built, sculpt and painted the walls,
And made buddhas as tall as clouds.

As years came by the caves progressed,
Because more travellers wanted to come and rest.
They carried on creating sacred art,
Until one day the caves were done.

That special day came to a close,
Because travellers started to go through other roads.
So now these caves faded away,
And became just a dusty tale.

The Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yang, Eva – 10

The Silk Road has a lot of routes
for people to trade many goods.
Along the road stands a colossal cave
which does not weather with age.

The cavern is old as history
and all numbered caves are filled with mystery.
The paintings look like that they will come to life
but cave 148 is a brilliant sight

It all started with a priest named Le Zun
who was a devout Buddhist monk
and he built and drew his own creations
in a temple which caused awe and elations.

Soon after more monks came
and created their own masterpieces;
tunnels and tunnels filled with arts,
full of mythical and divine parts.

The temple was used for meditation
but mostly used to pray for luck.
Many crossed the road of peril and danger
to seek the rumored treasure.

But then the Grottoes faded into darkness,
covered in a blanket of dust.
The gates were closed and lights dimmed,
to stop the unwanted intruders

Soon a priest named Wang Yuanlu
stumbled upon the invisible passage
to the forgotten antique land
so they could see the light of day.

At last the Grottoes are famous again,
untouched by time's invisible hands.
Flocks of tourist pay their homage,
to the mighty Buddha which remains.

But are all the mysteries found,
across the sands which stretch far away?
Will all the unseen tunnels be discovered,
or will they be kept forever... a shambles?

The Great Temples of Mogao

Hong Kong Adventist Academy, Leung, Torres – 10

Located around the Chinese Hills
Situated on the Silk Road
The caves are huge
Then a euphoria comes in
You'll fathom at the art designs
As well as the architecture
Five hundred were decorated
But the other five hundred is unknown
This is also known as Qianfodong
But I would say temples instead
Dim as the night
Many beings will come to life if you look
And you'll be in awe
Great Buddha is inside cave 130
Surrounded by artwork
Exhibitioners love to hold tours
As you might join the tour guide
Then you get going on the silk road
As you enjoy the view
High above the mountains
It must be scary
But it's also fun!

The Wisdom of the Mogao Caves

Hong Kong International School, Wenn, Isaac Samuel – 9

At the crossroads on the Silk Road
A road for trading fabrics
Teas
Ideas
A gateway to the West

The Mogao Caves
“None higher”
“Peerless”
A well of mysteries and treasures
An oasis in a barren desolate land
An inspiration for
Believers
Travelers
Philosophers

Le Zun
A Buddhist monk with a vision
A vision of a thousand Buddhas
Incandescent
Iridescent
Gleaming
Glowing
Rays of light dancing

He built a cave
A cave in Dunhuang in the 4th Century
To inspire hope
Beauty
Devotion
Meditation
“Ohmmmmmm”

More monks answered the call
A call to meditate
Practice mindfulness
Reach enlightenment

More grottoes were built
More treasures were kept
More people were inspired
Inspired to create
Learn
Believe
A thriving religious community flourished
For a millennium

But the caves were forgotten
Abandoned
Neglected
“Poof” into thin air
It disappeared like a dream
It became a legend

Centuries later
A guardian emerges
Wang Yuanlu
A protector of the hidden treasures

What were these treasures?
Treasures of Buddhist
Art
Sculptures
Murals
Scrolls of scholarly works
A library so great
So great to rival the Library of Alexandria

What wisdom do they contain?
It provides a roadmap
A roadmap for
Enlightenment
Inner peace and wisdom
Morality and tolerance
Important virtues

Four Noble Truths
The truth of suffering
The truth of the cause of suffering
The truth of the end of suffering
The truth of the path that frees us from suffering

Follow the Eightfold Path for
Right understanding
Right thought
Right speech
Right action
Right livelihood
Right effort
Right mindfulness
Right concentration

And you can reach
Inner peace
Enlightenment
Nirvana

Teachings for a chaotic world
Hope for the believer
An inspiration for many
Treasures for eternity

Hidden Secrets of Mogao Grottoes

International Christian School, Lo, Ava – 11

The bright sun was up
as if it missed the welkin
and was glowing when
it reached out the heaven

The desert was warm
and light colored, golden brown
as wide as a tunnel
and always enduring down

The weeks of travel
the weeks of enervation
we have finally reached
at the famed destination.

The damp walls of caves
made from mud, reed to lime paste
are filled with detailed art
some already been erased

Murals of hamlets
of ancient Chinese temples
of tall mountains and hills
the opposite of simple

Sculptures of Buddhas
some enormous some small
found in every vast cavern
like a great gallery hall

Into the grottoes
means back into history
means into new stories
means unfolding mysteries

To touch the gray walls
is to feel the unjust past
is to perceive journeys
an experience that lasts

Oh, Mogao Grottoes!
Splendid secrets you reveal
getting to explore you
is positively surreal

Legends of the Caves

Kingston International School, Fung, Derek – 9

366 AD

Miles and miles of rugged terrain I passed without rest
On my pilgrimage as I advanced towards the west
I travelled the wild and wandered through barren wasteland
Crossing the desertscape, the Dunes of the Singing Sands

Journeying endlessly and overcoming obstacles
Trudging on dry sand littered with skulls
Oh what perilous trouble I was in for
I trembled from the reverberations of the desert storm's roar

I reached the Precipice of the Immortals at last
The peak of a mountain with a sight that was vast
Sunlight glinted off crystalline water in the desert oasis
The magnificent vista seemed forever timeless

Suddenly I collapsed exhausted on the floor
My eyes were closed and yet I saw
It came to me in the depths of my dreams
I envisioned golden light dazzling in beams
A thousand buddhas surrounded me
A vision of ecstasy
Revealing my destiny

I awoke breathless, heart pounding in my chest
Overtaken by an urge to fulfil my holy quest
Memories of the vision lashed into my mind
To carve a cave that would keep the truth forever enshrined

I grabbed my chiselling tools and began to create
Working in the dry desert air from early to late
I carved out a space in the cliffside
With a hidden entrance to reach the inside

I engraved thousands of Buddha statues in the stone
And depicted masterpieces of all that I have known
Maidens peacefully playing musical instruments
All with calm and gentle temperaments

I painted on raw walls creating heavenly murals
To tell the tales of bygone parables
I portrayed vibrant illustrations of sutras here
To remind myself that my life would contain no fear

As soon as I finished I sat down and meditated
Relaxed calmly in the lotus position finally liberated
Hoping the Buddha would be grateful for my monument
Two legs folded and two hands closed seeking enlightenment

556 AD

The locals passed the secret of the silk down to me
You'll need silkworm larvae to make this luxury
Feeding them the leaves of the mulberry tree

These larvae spin their cocoons after moulting

Which are then dropped into water that is boiling
The filament is extracted from cocoons through brushing

This raw silk is carefully woven and knitted
A material so elegant and exquisite is created
The Chinese Emperor keeps the secret closely guarded

Sharing this secret might be my last word
Condemned to death and never again to be heard
Though risking my life I am not deterred

I traveled with my silk fabrication supply
Bringing to Constantinople what they yearned to buy
Crossing rivers vast and mountains high

My camel was laden with the load as I rode my horse
We trotted for miles along an extensive course
Taking the precious cargo far away from the source

The menacing desert wind blew and caused a storm
I still headed forwards and guided my horse in crooked form
Until I found a cave to take shelter and be warm

I built a fire and gasped in shock
At the illuminated artwork on the cave rock
A secret art gallery that made me gawk

I slowly fingered a Buddha on the wall
Clasping my cane that was thin but tall
Containing a payload so precious and small

When the storm calmed I headed on my way
Leaving the mystical cave without delay
To meet Justinian the First here today

Romans surround me as I snap open my cane
Revealing the silkworm eggs their empire hoped to gain
Ready to bring glory and riches to Justinian's reign

2016

Equipped with my camera I plan to capture
Ancient and historical murals and sculpture
To inspire the world to do something helpful
To protect the Mogao Caves

I board the train to a faraway land
And arrive at the caves like the windblown sand
I stare horror-struck as I enter a grotto
I stare at the cavern in ruins

Precious artefacts that once shone so bright
Are faded from sandstorms and scorching sunlight
Some of the paintings are cracked and peeled
Some of the cave collapsed

I silently enter another grotto on foot
Paintings are burned and covered in soot
Vandals defaced the murals and sculptures
Vandals desecrated this shrine

I notice some missing valuable treasure
Stolen by explorers for their own pleasure
How evil that they flaunted their theft
How heartbreaking for the caves

I gasp in shock as the cave crumbles
Statues tumble down as the floor rumbles
It is time for the caves to be a real wonder
It is time for us to change

I am beckoned into a majestic grotto
To immortalise the caves shall be my motto
I take photos of the sacred art
I take the news back home

I ride the aeroplane back to my homeland
To prepare an exhibition so grand
I imagine showing the caves to the world
I imagine the caves being safe

I put my photos of the caverns on display
At the Getty Center in the heart of LA
People come by and eyes widen
People gape in awe

The great treasures of the Orient shall now be known
A legacy of conservation is set in stone
By the monumental revelation of the Mogao Caves
By the feast for artistic eyes

Mogao Caves

Korean International School, Khandelwal, Sanvi P - 8

They can be high,
They can be low,
They can survive,
Even in the snow.

This one was hidden,
Where no one could see ,
In the desert forbidden,
Far away from the sea.

They are dark in the night,
They have lots of treasure,
They are never bright,
But light gives you pleasure.

Placed along the silk route
More than 500 caves build,
They show buddhist art's root,
With sculptures and paintings on silk.

Magao caves they were named,
Preserved and protected,
In many countries they are famed,
Taken care of and perfected.

Inside there are paintings,
Around 1,000 years old,
Many people were creating,
So precious as gold.

Mogao Caves

New Territories Women & Juveniles Welfare Association Christian Remembrance of Grace Primary School, Kong, Cerise – 9

Painted life on walls
They are all Buddhist figures
Is world heritage

Mogao Caves

New Territories Women & Juveniles Welfare Association Christian Remembrance of Grace Primary School, Ng, Nathan – 9

Silk Road oasis
Collections of Buddhist art
Many fine sculptures

Mogao Caves

New Territories Women & Juveniles Welfare Association Christian Remembrance of Grace Primary School,

O'Rourke, Abigail – 9

Ancient and famous
Standing after centuries
For meditation

Mogao Caves

New Territories Women & Juveniles Welfare Association Christian Remembrance of Grace Primary School, Yung, Alice – 9

Caves filled with murals
and very pretty sculptures.
Best place in the world!

Mogao Caves

New Territories Women & Juveniles Welfare Association Christian Remembrance of Grace Primary School, Zhou, Grace – 9

Beautiful pictures
They tell the story before
In the hot desert

Mogao Grottoes Live On

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Chan, Audrey – 9

Long live the Mogao Grottoes
Carved into the cliffs above Dachuan River
Along ancient Silk Road, true treasures bestowed
From one thousand caves
Legends told and temples glowed
Centuries of memories infinitely engraved

Majestic cave temples stand tall day and night
Inspired by vision of a thousand Buddhas
Bask in streams of golden light
Surviving rain and heat leaving us in awe
From Muslim rebels to European explorers to Russian soldiers
All leaving their marks, yet the Grottoes endure

Glory to the ruling family
The Northern Wei and Northern Zhou
Constructing caves with dignity
Sites of worships and vows
Through the Sui and Tang dynasties
A sanctuary of privacy and unity

One thousand painted and sculpted Buddhas
Tell stories of medieval politics, culture, arts
From religion, ethnic relations to daily dress
Bearing witness to ancient civilizations
Han Chinese arts in full blossom

New Tales of Mogao Grottoes

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Tsang, Tsz Ling Naomi – 10

At the very centre of Dunhuang,
stands Mogao Grottoes, towering over.
There stands caves of paintings that are painted,
waiting, just to be acquainted,
and statues, weavings, stories and more,
undeniably without a bore.

Yet who would imagine that on those walls,
laid secrets hidden on those painted tales.
There, trouble and chaos befalls,
monsters and demons, both females and males,
decided to adventure out of those halls.
But fortunately, there were brave volunteers to stop those bad deeds,
to prevail, to finish, to end those actions before the wicked exceeds.

There were two sisters, one brave and one bright.
The first was valiant, courageous, strong and tall,
yet slightly too reckless, but that's mainly all.
The second was smart, with an intelligent mind,
but bashful and shy, you would most definitely find.
Though the most important thing, the one trait in common,
is that both of them are undoubtedly kind.

They lived with their greedy aunt, a woman of pride,
she was disrespectful and the good in her heart seemed to have died.
One day, to visit Mogao Grottoes, the sisters begged and pleaded,
their aunt at last gave in, and the pair's plan succeeded.

They rode on the shuttle bus to arrive at their destination,
and the trio (excluding the aunt) bounced in without hesitation.
From top to bottom, in and out, they looked at the stairs and walls,
the galleries, rooms, the small library, and the great halls.

The first sister just appreciated and admired every story,
tales, statues, paintings and more in their glory.
Yet the second sister, with her sharp witted mind,
something out of the ordinary was what she could find.

The second sister noticed that some pictures seemed odd.
There were eyes that followed and creatures that shifted and nodded.
They snickered and smirked and cackled at her.
Then the girl squinted at the paintings,
and found the creatures moving were demons for sure.

The second sister elbowed the first, to show her what she found.
The first sister realized with giant shock and gaped with no sound.
Instantly, they went to tell their grumbling aunt.

“The pictures were moving!”
“The creatures were creeping!”
“The demons were cackling!”
“The devils were teasing!”

The sisters pleaded and begged it was true,
but the cruel aunt rolled her eyes, seeming sure it was untrue.
“Nonsense,” she growled, “Don't bother my day.”
“It's already been so much worse since we've come here to stay.”

The sisters looked at each other in unison, and signed.
They didn't know how to explain what they could find.
They turned around together, but their aunt had disappeared.
The two exchanged frightened looks, and they agreed that was very weird.
They decided to search for her, through the grottoes.

The first sister yelled for their aunt, but the cold halls were deserted.
Not a single person was walking by, so the girl felt alerted.
The second sister, on the other hand, decided to just observe.
Suddenly, she heard a screaming noise, and she nearly lost her nerve.

"That sounded like my aunt." the second sister thought,
and notified her sister, as both tensed up at the thought.
They agreed on exploring this mysterious place,
and split up to discover more.
Then eventually meet up again in a space.

The first sister wandered around,
without a target, and without a sound.
She noticed a picture move and creak,
with the demons that she had to seek.

She saw it cackle, and laugh, and bounce,
and she raced towards the wall, ready to pounce.
The demon just chortled, and vanished with no trace.
The first sister looked around, and searched the walls for his face.

She caught sight of the monster, on another wall.
This time when she pounced, she guaranteed he would fall.
The demon fell out of the wall, alive and on the ground.
He snarled and told the other monsters to come out to the girl and surround.

Meanwhile, the second sister came across the library cave.
She found ancient scrolls that were precious, and leaned towards them,
but at once a demon popped out of the wall and bounced out of his grave.
Few other demons came along and tried to stop her.

The young girl faced upon demons, quite an awful lot
as she tumbled backwards and into the pile of scrolls like spice in a pot.
She fell down in many unique scrolls of every kind,
but there was one that somehow captured her mind.

She grabbed that scroll, before the red glowing hands of the demons reached her.
Clutching the scroll, she rolled to the right, and opened that crinkled paper.
On it were a few words of mystery with other parts below.
The sister recognized the language as putonghua,
and read out the words not fast nor slow.
The magic started, and the demons screeched, and vanished in mid air.
The girl smiled, as she found the weakness right there.

The second sister unraveled the rest of the scroll, with a sentence down below:
"Read the following spell and the demons will be trapped in the wall forever,
but there must be two people reciting the spell,
in the place where power is most well,
and that is what you should know."
Upon this, the young girl pocketed the scroll, and ran while shouting for her sister.

The first sister, still fighting those demons, fled down the stairs.
She backed into a corner, where the monsters had caught up, ferocious like bears.
She dodged some of their attacks, but much hope seemed lost.
The demons clawed their way to the girl, who now just had her fingers crossed.

When despair was on its edge, and gloom was nearing,
The first sister closed her eyes, yet she couldn't hear a roaring.
It was silent, for a while then she heard her sister's voice.
"E mo zou ba!" was what her second sister recited, and the demons disappeared,
Leaving the first sister, shocked yet grateful, and she happily rejoiced.

After learning what had happened, the first sister smiled in glee.
"Then why are we waiting? Let's recite the spell!" said she.
The second sister showed her the scroll, and pointed above the spell.
"We must read it in the place where power is most well."

They pondered this, thinking what to do.
Then realization struck both sisters, as they slowly knew.
The most amazing, admirable, astounding area and place,
must be one statue of the buddha with its beautiful grace.

But the question was, which?
The second sister muttered and stared at the scroll.
Suddenly, something at the bottom caught her eye,
a black arrow so clear it couldn't be a lie.

"Ah!" said the first sister, "I know what this is for!"
"It will lead us to the correct buddha on the correct floor!"
They followed the arrow, to which direction it pointed,
but the sisters didn't notice a crowd of demons sneaking out unappointed.

The duo swerved around sculptures and passed all the paintings,
sidetracked cave stories to find the great buddha.
Suddenly, they heard noises behind them,
and found demons chasing them like burglars after a gem.

They ran like the wind, still following that arrow,
yet the demons still followed them tightly through the halls that were narrow.
Some came close to those two girls, so they had to recite the first spell,
several times to make them vanish and to repel.

After running for so long, both were out of breath,
and the demons had slowly caught up and were plotting both their death.
But alas, they reached the buddha they were supposed to go,
Maitreya Buddha, crossing her feet, with such an enormous shadow.

The sisters quickly scrambled to their feet, and were amazed by this sight.
Then, they quickly stood below her and recited in the light.

"E mo zou ba,
Zou hui hua li,
Qing bie chu xian,
Yong yuan suo bi."

The magic instantly worked, and the demons vanished in mid air,
They faded back to the picture, with a furious glare.
A wall opened up, and tourists tumbled out.
The two girls spotted their aunt, and her head seemed to spin about.

"Where were we? Oh yes, stop bothering me!" their aunt yelled.
There seemed to be no difference of their aunt, she still grumbled and she smelled.
The aunt seemed to notice no difference and didn't know of the demons.
"Demons? For goodness sake, please stop your imagination.
You stupid halfwits would be in the jail right now, if I ruled the nation!"

The two girls just looked at each other, and together they smiled.
Perhaps this journey could be a secret of the secrets they piled.

The Mogao Caves

Po Leung Kuk Hong Kong Taoist Association Yuen Yuen Primary School, Lee, Hayson – 11

“Why am I in the Mogao Caves?”

A curious boy Alexis gasped and surprised.
As he walked towards the sculptures he saw
His gaze was locked in awe

He kept walking through the cave
Looking at all the paintings from 1700 years ago
It had special colours but with the same person.
They all looked strange for a lot of reason.

He saw Buddha sculptures everywhere
Mesmerized by their magnificence when he stared
No matter where he set his foot in
He held his breath and couldn't help his grin

Alexis slowed down as he looked carefully
Through every room he walked past previously
Walking back to the very beginning
Till he saw the room with no carving

It was the room with a balcony
And a staircase hidden in its journey
Alexis went in and rolled down the stairs
Landed in a place with hundreds of squares

A dark and big wall blocked his way out
He saw a square in a circle and wondered what it was about
He pressed on it and the wall broke down
He walked out of the Mogao Caves safe and sound

The Mogao Grottoes

Po Leung Kuk Hong Kong Taoist Association Yuen Yuen Primary School, Li, Renee – 11

At the end of the cliff
The magnificent grottoes stand stiff
Reaching deep into the Mogao caves
Whereas the mighty Buddha's engraved
With all the paintings far and wide
And characters are side by side

Great big statues filled in the rooms
To represent the Buddha's glory bloom
How secret they are, hidden in the ground
How great they are, when they were found
And travel from thousands of years ago
How can we not cheer for the pride they grow?

Who engraved them? Who built them?
Does anyone believe they are priceless gems?
Or maybe there's a god inside
Who would never ever die?
The Mogao Grottoes are full of mystery
They will surely go down in history

A Deer from the Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Li, Zimu – 10

Hi, boys and girls. I am a beautiful deer. I come from heaven. Now I have lived in one of the caves of Mogao Grottoes for more than a thousand years.

My fur is magic. I can change my fur's color. People say my white horns are just like a cloud and call me 'The Nine-Colored Deer.'

When my fur is red, the warmth is coming.

If my fur becomes green, you will get healthy.

If you see my blue fur, you will be the wisest man.

Maybe you like purple. The people will be noble in my purple light.

Sometimes my fur will be gray. Then you'll be a silent man.

Yellow, must be your favorite color. The universe will be covered bright.

When I become brown, you will be decisive.

If you see my silver fur, your love will be forever!

The last, my black fur means more mystery to the world.

Now I am your tour guide.

I will pass through all the caves and dynasties with my power.

Dunhuang has been where different peoples and cultures converge and exchange since ancient times. This is the famous Silk Road.

Woosh! All the Apsaras fly out of their caves. Some of them come from Tang Dynasty. Some are from the Five Dynasties Period and Song Dynasty.

Look, some are coming from the sky! Maybe they come from other countries, England, America, Japan.

Come on! Boys and girls, in one line, let's go dancing with our friends' Apsaras and enjoy the music from each dynasty. I dream these tramp Apsaras can stay here forever!

By the 61st cave, we're in the Five Dynasties Period.

Now I am on the Mount Wutai.

Today, I will visit Manjusri.

Wait, my fur is turning red!

The burned grass became alive.

The hot weather becomes cool!

There is no danger, no sadness, no anger, only happiness.

Manjusri is manifesting!

Suddenly many mythical creatures are coming from the sky. They protect the temples and take care of them.

The people communicate friendly with each other.

The ancient people or us, we'll like Manjusri, and dream she always stays with us.

I dream-sharing more tales with you. I dream all of my colorful dreams will be yours!

Mogao Grottoes is a mystery. More mystery things are waiting for you.

The Wonderful Mogao Grottoes

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Lin, Ya Qi – 11

Mogao Grottoes

A wonderful station on the Silk Road,
In the deep of the desert,
On the top of the Rattling Sand Mountain,
Priceless treasure in Dunhuang City.
More than 1000 years, snow and rain,
More than 1000 years, wind and sand,
She is still a forever a fairy tale,
Thousands of buddas,
Fabulous frescos and statues,
Full of treasure.

Mogao Grottoes

She is like an old book with a long history. I want to read.
She is like a glass fine of wine. I would like to taste.
She is like beautiful music. I would like to hear.
She is like the moon. I want to watch and ponder upon her.
How divine thou art.

The Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai Singapore International School, Kuo, Yong Yan – 10

I found myself in my parent's rusty blue car.
I heard pebbles crashing under the weight of the rusty blue car. The thunder knocked at my window.
I heard waves lapping at the beach.
Outside, the rain poured.
I remember two days ago, my mom surprised me with news to go see the Mogao Grottoes.
I nagged them for ages, begging, crying, until she finally gave in. I was excited, and we had set off.
We traveled for ages, one, two, no, maybe three hours.
I got bored on the car, asked my parents every five minutes, when will we be there, when will we be there, when will we be there.

I got off the car, the glorious sunshine soaking in my wet braids.
I ran straight to the entrance of the grotto, so big.
Giant.
I could hear laughter echoing inside the grotto.
Curious.
Nagged.
Asked "Please?".
They said "No, we cannot, there is COVID."
We had to stay in a hotel.
Hotel, bad.
Grotto, sad.
I cried, tears streaming down my face, daddy says, "tomorrow we will stay.
I have to promise to make it up."
I laughed. I cried through my laughter.
"Take a stroll. Take a stroll, take a stroll."
Mom laughed.
I was bored.
Flipped through many paintings of old artwork, laughed at the pictures.
Once colorful, now brown as a puddle.
Brown as dirt.
Brown as in melted chocolate.

Take a stroll, said mom, shooing me out the door.
Stared at the door, "why?"
Outside nighttime.
Moon bright, saw two cats.
Said to them, "How I wish to visit the Grottoes, maybe you will help me?"
Mew in response.
I played them until dark, mom calling my name.
Waved in farewell.
Mew in return.
"Goodbye," I whispered, "Make my wish come true."

Slept for two hours, tapping on the door.
Opened the door, cats again.
Petted them, played, and said goodbye, calico cat stopped me, purred, "Emily, come with us."
Stopped.
Turned around.
What?
Gray tabby whispered, "Let's visit the grotto."
I whooped, not too loud, just enough.
My wish come true.
I flew with the cats, swooping, laughing, dizzy from the height. We saw the statue, we marveled and joked.

Beside the statue was a sign.

Wang Yuanlu made the grotto, I repeated, many statues of gods, I knew the grotto was over 1600 long, and 492 caves still survive today, I told the cats, Calico and Tabby rolled on the ground. It looked familiar, where had I seen it, I don't know. Vivid statues, and exquisitely arranged lotus bricks, creating holy world of Buddhism.

Carved in 336, the first statues, dynasties of North Liang, North Wei, and many others.

I took one picture, knew that it remained over 45000 meter murals, they consult a mirror of China.

I tickled Calico until she screamed, poked Tabby until he rolled over.

Fun.

Walked along, knew artistic content of the grottoes is very rich, knew, Mogao grottoes, State Council "recognized", key under state protection.

Knew, located on Eastern slope of Mingshashan, knew, the Thousand Buddha cave, Mogao grottoes, richest treasure of Buddhist art in the world. 30 kilometers joined altogether, so long, I had said, so long, so long, so long. Told a Buddhist story to Calico, Tabby dancing around me.

"Time to go home," I said, scooping up, petting, tails wagging.

He saw me, I tiptoed past.

"Safe," I said, wiping my forehead.

Calico and Tabby. They had said, "We will wait for you here, we are in number 217."

Scurried home, dad up, "Where have you been!"

Angry, sad. Needs a hug. I am sorry, I am sorry, I am sorry.

Mom stretched, I stretch, dad stretch.

"Emily, we can go to the Mogao grottoes today! there's Grotto today," Mom says, ticking me until I laughed through my serious face.

We went to the grotto, mom and dad looking at the things I had seen before, I would not tell them where I had seen it, I went straight to number 217, I saw elegant apsaras, finally knew the dancing of Calico and Tabby.

They were no longer living cats, but now they were paintings on the wall, wiggling their hips, stretching their paws, legs kicking the air, so beautiful, and so elegant.

"Let's go home," I said, surprising dad. Go home, go home, go home, please.

On the car, when will we be there, when will we be there, when will we be there.

Silence dripped, falling asleep.

Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai Singapore International School, Lim, Siew Ming – 9

The Mogao Grottoes

Temple of the people,

As the big wind blows,

All the water flows.

In the huge rock,

Everybody bows.

So this is the Mogao Grottoes.

The Dream from the Past

Shanghai Singapore International School, Susanto, Stella Marcheline – 10

Listening to the desert wind
along the Great Silk Road
someone dreamed
the presence of a thousand

So he led thousands
monks, travelers, scholars
Hand-in-hand
they sculpt the dream

Mountain that was frozen,
now is butter to slice and cut
giving birth to
caves dressed in murals,
sutras tucked in their pockets

Gobi desert is no longer lonely,
as it is lined with pilgrims
who want to celebrate
as if it were Spring
in their orchard

This was the blessing from the dream
for they have opened a door
allowing the light inside

A millenium later,
you walk in Mogao Grottoes
and hope
If you get lost
maybe the dream will show you the way

A Thousand Buddhas

Shrewsbury International School Hong Kong, Madan, Akshadha – 10

Along the ancient path the silk road goes,
Stand a thousand buddha grottoes,
Paintings, sculptures, so many to see,
492 caves in total there be.

More than one and a half millennia ago,
Yuezun the monk created these grottoes to explore,
Of a thousand Buddhas, he had a vision,
To excavate these caves, he made the decision.

Vast temples carved from rock,
At which many visitors stop to gawk,
Grand balconies overlooking what lay beyond,
The sight like the spell from a magic wand.

A sea of intricate paintings,
Enveloping the walls and ceilings,
Amongst the bare rock they are a picturesque pop,
Realistic statues reaching the top.

Buddhas here, Buddhas there, Buddhas everywhere,
Hidden from the sunlight's glare,
Gasps of awe from tourists they bring,
Laden with bangles and golden rings.
To explore these caves would delight all,
To see the elaborate Buddhas, big and small.

New Tales From The Mogao Caves

St. Francis of Assisi's English Primary School, Fong, Hon Pok Hobart – 11

An oasis on the silk road
Lays the Mogao Caves
The more paintings you see
The more you crave
A Buddhist monk had a vision
He had made a decision
Got inspired
And started building a cave

A second monk joined the first monk
Then came another
By the time of the Northern Liang
A community of monks was founded
They meditated
From day to night
The sacred art and statues
What a beautiful sight

A thousand years later
Other routes the travellers took
Dunhuang Mogao Caves were forgotten
Becoming no more than a dusty legend
Scholar-explorers rediscovered
That of breathtaking secrets
The thousands of Buddhist architecture
Filled with uniqueness

The clay statues constructed on a wooden frame
Then padded with reed
Modelled in clay
And finished with paint
The glorious statues of the giant Buddha
However has a stone core
Often attended with mythical creatures
Looking at them, you could never be bored

Texts produced by a woodblock print
Like the oldest book
And other early images
There's plenty more in store
Silk banners, altar hangings
Wrapping for manuscripts and more
So many different textiles

...There's just too much to explore

A Life Well Spent

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Him Jonah – 10

My name is LeZun,
an ordinary Buddhist monk with an extraordinary life.
I feel very satisfied to have lived this fulfilling life,
blessed by gods and deities.
Let me tell you the thrilling story of my wonderful life.

I started off as a monk in my youth,
going through the motion day in and day out,
of praying, cleaning the temple, cooking for the monastery.
However, I was feeling empty and getting bored
of this mundane life.
So I decided to seek enlightenment in the Western Paradise.

I travelled for days, weeks and even months.
The terrain was rough and the journey lonely,
eventually I got lost in the middle of the vast Gobi Desert.
I was at the mercy of frosty chilling nights and scorching hot days.
Perishing from thirst and exhaustion,
I started to lose hope and faith in God.
I thought, *"Is there really a God in this world, does he actually care about me?"*

Then suddenly I stumble upon an oasis with a fountain inside!
'Is this a sign that the gods are preserving my life?' I wondered.
I took large gulps of the sweet cool waters from the fountain.
With my strength revived and my faith renewed,
I journeyed on, feeling grateful of this timely salvation.

Further on, to my utter amazement,
my sight was blinded by a radiant light.
I saw a beaming vision
of the glorious golden Maitreya Buddha,
looking at me with a tranquil smile,
sitting on heavenly music,
surrounded by a thousand more Buddhas
bathing in glistening light.
It was a sacred wonder!

What does this mean?
What are the gods saying to me?
Could it be that they are trying to send me a message through the vision?
So I knelt on the spot and made a vow
to the gods and I set to work
upon the sandy mountains and the porous caves
to recreate the vision sent to me.

I started hammering and chiselling the sandstone cliffs,
Carving, moulding, painting,
Constructing and adorning,
Until I saw before me my vision carved in a grotto.

Without noticing, a big community grew in this place.
It became a refuge for pilgrims, scholars and sojourners.
And this place I met the gods
gradually became a treasure trove
of Buddhist art, sculptures and murals.

This is my story, my life –
a life touched and used by the gods,
who gave me an earthly glimpse into otherworldly realms.
Now in my old age,
I am ready to greet my end with peace
and travel to where the gods and I would once again meet.

Caves of Wonder

St. Margaret's Co-educational English Secondary & Primary School, Kam, Matthew – 11

Caves of wonder.

Caves of beauty.

Caves of treasure.

In a barren desert, where silk meets spices, porcelain meets marble, where the famed silk path lays.

Hidden away and found again like a pearl in an ocean of sand.

Natural and rejuvenated wonders combine.

Gold in a desert, gems in a wasteland and historic wonders in caverns lost to time.

Towering statues, breath-taking paintings and spectacular pieces of art, wonderful splashes of colour, precise cuts of rock.

Where the West meets the East, where mosaic glass meets fine china.

Tucked away in a place of loneliness, is beauty!

Caves of Wonder

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Chan, Amelia Joanna - 9

I long to see what splendor lies
Within the Mogao caves.
Art and sculptures that dazzle the eye?
Or something our souls crave?

How did men from centuries past
With nothing but bare hands.
Carve these Buddhas tall and vast
In a mountain of rock and sand?

Legend says a monk was on a mission,
To search for paradise.
As he rested, he had a vision,
Where Buddhas filled the skies.

Inspired and touched by this scene divine,
The monk worked non-stop.
To recreate this glorious sublime,
Alone on a mountain top.

Years went by and the caves were forgotten,
As travelers took other routes.
The monk and his art became a dusty legend,
Whose existence were in doubt.

What secrets lie in these caves of wonder?
Is there more than what meets the eye?
Perhaps there is more to uncover,
Deep, deep under the sky.

The Other Lives of Mogao

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Yeung, Sin – 11

I am an ancient ant,
making my mark in tiny steps since time immemorial.
I have lived in the Mogao caves for over a millennium
and had the luck to meet and hear the tales of Master Hongbian
echo through the walls
as he talked about his dreams and wisdom
through sketches on the cave walls
and Buddhas with lively expressions
to encapture the beauty and sadness of humanity.

I am an insignificant rock,
sat here neglectfully since time immemorial.
I have seen the uprise and downfalls of dynasties,
the colossal statues glaring all day long at me
in the dark eyes from all directions
yearning to tell me secrets they hide
yet their mouths are sealed shut
despite their weathered faces telling all
etched with history and the sinister side of humanity.

I am an archaic arachnid
spinning webs in these caves since time immemorial.
I have explored all the nooks in this mystical place
sometimes it is dark and scary
with violent secrets encased in the walls.
Sometimes it is warm and loving,
with compassion flowing through the air.
hardening and softening time,
layer after layer,
just like my webs.

I am a statue
living in the timeworn Mogao cave since time immemorial.
I was once exquisite
I represented the prosperity and accomplishments of humans.
Dynasty after dynasty,
I was collateral damage.
I have seen the battles, the wars, and
The lights vanished from the souls
I could not tell the world my woes and suffering
There is no part of me that is left unbruised internally,
How long before will my facade hold up
Will I last till Judgement day?
Or will I fall in the hands who built me?

Mirages at Mogaoku – Ukoagom Ta Segarim

Tak Sun School, Law, Yu Ching – 11

A wanderer
Lost --
Anno Domini a distant PAST
Trenched in vast nothingness
En route an endeavor
Neither beaten nor alive
As Singing Sand after sand
Step after step
Draws a blank for
Months on end
Draws a blank for
Step after step
As Singing Sand after sand
Neither beaten nor alive
En route an endeavor
Trenched in vast nothingness
Anno Domini a distance PAST
Lost --
A wanderer
A discoverer
In awe --
Upon the surreal PRESENT
Stunned by mineral magnificence
Delicate creations of thousand hands
Buddhas and Sanskrit sutras
As scrolls after scrolls
Clay after clay
Devotion narrated
Millenia of alliances and wars
Devotion narrated
Clay after clay
As scrolls after scrolls
Buddhas and Sanskrit sutras
Delicate creations of thousand hands
Stunned by mineral magnificence
Upon the surreal PRESENT
In awe --
A discoverer
A scholar
Transcends --
Witnesses a farfetched FUTURE
The worldly to the unworldly
Paths to Nirvana in

A GrottOde

The British International School Shanghai, Puxi Campus, Davies, Neo – 11

A century ago,

The Mogao Grotto,

Where everyone used to go.

One day the wind stopped blowing,

People stopped going,

The reason nobody knows.

Centuries later,

A merchant selling graters,

Discovered a grotto full of art.

The merchant played his part,

In a discovery so large,

Even aliens from the planet Marge,

Heard of the astounding news,

And came with their crews.

Mogao Grottoes

The British International School Shanghai, Puxi Campus, Lambert, Sienna – 9

Many years ago,
There lived a monk,
Who lived far away in a bunk.

He created the pictures we see,
Yes he does, yes indeed,
He inspires me and you too,
And to give this to you!

The caves, oh the beautiful caves
We see them today and every other day,
The cave paintings as well also every day.

You can climb the mountains to see these,
Yay, yay indeed,
I saw them on the internet they look very pretty,
Oh, the Mogao Grottoes you should go there soon.

The pictures are sent all over the place,
In China they are found,
Especially this place,
You should really wish that you could go there.

So bye-bye I'm off there myself!!!!!!

The Mogao Grottoes

The British International School Shanghai, Puxi Campus, Lew, Olivia – 11

Far away, in a sea of sand,
Stood a temple of magic,
Left behind. This large temple,
Created by mankind,
Once a home to travelers journeying
On the ancient Silk Road.
In the caves,
The people drew and wrote their historical identity,
Until that day came,
When fate could not be changed,
These timeless treasures, the Mogao Caves,
Were forgotten, in the blink of an eye,
After being drowned in a sea of sand,
And sleeping for centuries,
One day, in one minute, in one second,
Wang Yuanlu found this cave of wonders,
An artist's dreamland.
And so, that's the story,
Of the caves of a Thousand Buddhas,
Now waiting...
For you to explore.

Cavern and Isolation

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Wong, Kwan Shun Charmaine – 11

Buses running past me every day,
Welcoming new tourists and roamers,
Visiting where I live.

Hot and sandy,
Sun Burning every day,
Desert,
Cactus,
Agaves,
Halfmens,
Camels,
And buses.

Tourists, roamers,
Come and go,
Flags waving everywhere.

Locals,
Visitors,
Tourists.
Everywhere around me.

Suddenly
In a cave out of nowhere.
Rocks above me,
Treasures next to me,
Scrolls withered on the nearby shelves.
Artifacts of
Silk,
Ink,
Diamond,
Jade,
and bone.
A tunnel to the lost,
The lost world of the past.

The Forgotten Caves

Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Leung, Ngo Him – 10

The shiny and yellow gold
In the Mangao Grottoes gets cold

Hans tales are told
Dangerous adventures unfold

Don't forget the past
As it can be vast



Poetry

Group 3

Mogao Histories

Carmel School – Elsa High School, Donnitz, Yair – 12

The Mogao Caves created by thousands of monks,
Told stories and literature of the Great Buddha,
Of his kindness and enlightened mind,
And how his teachings helped the world.

Its paintings are wonders to human eyes,
Their worthiness was tested as it was disguised,
As a trading place for ones who deceive,
And for those who wish to learn the way of the Buddha.

The monks were as wise as owls,
And knew that their work,
Would linger on this living world,
Rendering it immortal.

But the place was lost and isolated,
As the Silk Road era disappeared,
The stories and the power the caves had contained,
Were lost in the movement of time.

Its works and paintings of glory,
Now tarnished and ruined,
For its power was now transformed from that of a fierce and powerful lion,
To that of a small, tired lap dog.

But its transformation would not be long as hundreds of years later,
Explorers rediscovered the wonders of the caves,
And they penetrated the grottos, right to their very depths,
But found nothing of note.

Hope was wearing thin,
And the explorers were starting to give up,
But they were getting closer,
When they started hitting rock.

They finally entered the grottos through a cavern,
Engulfed in statues and paintings,
And saw many ancient manuscripts,
Made of skin and bound in leather.

They were written about the teachings,
And the Buddha with his enlightenment,
The explorers knew right then,
They had hit the jackpot.

The explorers came out and told the world,
Their findings below,
And the mission was set,
To reinstate the caves to its former glory.

Days were long and breaks were short,
As the world was anxious, waiting on it to be done.
The challenge was getting harder, as the paint needed to dry,
And they couldn't let the cave sculptures go and die.

The people worked harder than ever,
As the dust settled in,
But it was finally achieved,
And the grottoes returned with might.

Since then, the world has recognised,
And started to appreciate the caves again,
For their beauty and inspiration,
And for its impact on the history of religion.

And there is our story,
A beautiful place,
That was tarnished and lost,
Until we brought it to glory.

Western Caves

CCC Kei Yuen College, Kwok, Wing Chi – 14

I know they are in the west,
The caves.

So far away... they cannot be reached.
I walk for years....closer.

Closer.

Closer.

I reach them.
I feel a shiver passing me by, a whiff of arid air
From deep below the surface.

I find an opening.
It leaves me in shock.

After my eyes adjust, I gaze upon the walls.
It is the beauty I seek.

The old stories are here,
Kept so well.

It is beauty on hold.

Aubergine Grottoes

CCC Kei Yuen College, Law, Roniya – 13

Out here, in the desert.

On the walls, like a gallery.
Are paintings full of heart,

It is hard to imagine this level of beauty,
Especially in the evening light.

Mystery Script

CCC Kei Yuen College, Sarki, Pristina – 13

Far to the west, high up in the mountains,
Surrounded by desert,
A labyrinth of caves.

The cave mouth shines: an entrance.

I feel the whiff of cooler air.

Exhausted from trekking, I step inside,
And I am immediately astonished,
Art and treasure overflow.

I am drawn toward a jar in the corner,
But I dare not open it. Sealed shut.

Curiosity kicks in and I pick up the jar,
Only for a magical hand swats it away from my grip,
I cry out as it falls.

When it hits the cave floor, the shatter echoes through the chamber.

Stunned. Astonished by what's inside,
I look around to see if anyone is watching,
I dare not tell anyone. It's just for me.

Mogao Grottoes

Chinese International School, Cheung, Charlotte – 13

The monk sat down near the spring,
quenching his thirst with the sweet waters.
Across the land he peered, seeing
a thousand Buddhas on the cliffside,
basking and floating
in the golden light, in the sunshine.
Stunned by his vision,
he carved out the first cave,
giving way to a chamber of solace.

The cliff became honeycombed with aged painting,
by artists with the dream of paradise.
Frescos stretching from floor to ceiling,
filled with the statues and sculptures of gods.
Vibrant colors and saturated details,
flecks of paint so delicate.

The paintings.
Dragons, as orange as a pumpkin,
as black as the night sky,
soar towards the Buddha up high.
Sparkly deer run upwards,
escaping from the rocky spikes
and the rolling waves below in a crash.
A peacock, stretching its colorful wings,
zooms to the horizon in a flash.
Dark horses, scattered all over,
gallop forwards to the holy shrine.
Camels trot behind the merchants,
goods strapped to their backs,
ready for another day of trading and bickering.

The statues.
Some sit in silence, legs crossed,
robes drooping, painted in green and brown.
Some stand instead, hands clasped,
eyes closed, completely still.
One vast giant
reclines in a chamber someplace,
sleeping with a smile on his face.
Symbols of prayer,
to find one's peace,
to search for inner solace.

The man knelt down on the ground,
setting his eyes on the gigantic Buddha.
Across the room he glanced,
passing by a long road of history,
victories and defeats,
in the aura, in the reverie.
Astounded by his epiphany,
he found the clarity in his mind,
giving way to a realization of nirvana.

The Past Remembered

Chinese International School, Lent, Anabella – 11

The outside is
Red,
Dusty,
Cracked.
Old.
Inside, hallowed mysteries
Unfold
Passed by. Unremembered. Dead.
A voice, heeded at last, has said:
I have a secret. Many, in fact.
Unheard for ages, yet my voice is now back
I am treasures of silk and of ink and of stone.
I am coveted diamond, jade, fossil and bone.

Eons of knowledge from everywhere.
Here and there and nowhere.
I have seen many things, hard and true,
But now I emerge, born again through the new.

Rest here and listen.
To memories past.
Drink deeply from history
and learn from my mystery.
I am a labyrinth to the past
A tunnel that shall ever last.

The Ballerina and Her Trophy Dream of Mogao Dance

ESF King George V School, Wu, Kasper – 12

The ashes of burning dunes portrays the beauty
Of history, for a thousand cattles, million stories
Too close to the fame
Withstanding all climate and time – Dunhuang.

The stress of pointe shoes compresses the strong passion
In life, for a thousand pretties, one dance trophy
Too far to the dream
Dream my peerless practice on the Silk Road.

In the Endless Sea by ships of desert, long and slow
Pacing pace to follow my Polaris to the dance recital of Mogao
The lengthening tulle remarks no short-cut for a go, waiting a go
Since the little tutu ever desired to reach for the stars, a long time ago.

I walk by the emerald crescent, bearing new blisters, and old
Sinking sand noshes my every steps, a tug-of-war, tired never told
Not easy I win the chiffon of moony night, wait for the breezes' call
Reward my bony ankles with caress and champion's dream of all.

Slits of flash dazzle my drowsy eyes to open
Emancipated mural souls, springing alive in heaven
And said, "Get up to the stage, no time to wait
For your choreographing the Gateway of the grottoes, today."

"Shall we dance? Shall we fly? Shall I borrow your feather wands?"
I gaze at the Apsaras before me, waiting for her promise
She coaches me the right time to grab, grab tight
The softest scarfs and take off together
To the farthest of no name.
In a blink of an eye—
Elegantly I bend back on the rainbows
To see perfect inverted beehives of faith, who
Carved into cliffs on very still water, a dancing mirror
Reflects my faith in dance, as you teach
Only with sincere love can I really learn well.

Continuously I swift my leg high to my wrist, with your lift
To touch pinches of windswept rocks, pains drift
Across debris of the Great Walls, a recollection's call
For chronicling things that were not all roses, as you tell
Only with gratitude can I really manifest a life staging journal.

I learned your silken calligraphic note, a bolt from the blue
Is a farewell to the Sleeping Buddha in a pyramidal tomb and you?
"Cheer up for every fall," my dearest coach wrote,
"The smouldering incense end is calmness, if, you think through."
Only with intelligence can I really beat jitters in my shoes.

And after I sit on the nine-story grotto
The first sunray strikes on a faded face, illuminates
The blessing to caravanserais along the Silk
So clever am I, rolling up light beams into rhythmic sparklers
Turning silence into stage cheers.

A zither and a pipa narrate my sentiment overflown, oh dear

A dowry for homesick princesses, or a souvenir to Northwest from tears?
Rattling grief and joy in waves, far from my hometown
How close to the trophy?
I have to give the zither to a couple, a dragon and a phoenix
In exchange for a pair of lucky candles to warm up
The backstage for Princess Pipa.

The backstage with four book walls, altered from an antique library
Squeaks on the centipede ladders there introduce me old visitors, stealing scholars
Should I cogitate to mix their old footsteps to match my new choreo
Add an overture of rebirth from plunder?
"Sure you can." the couple assured
Reminiscing Mommy's whispers since I was a toddler.

I make a deer and a lotus embroidery with my fingers
The dragon teaches, I stitch
I wave an arc through the fragments of plundering with my wrist
The phoenix shows, I sew
A blessing in disguise, unfolding the world the treasures of millennia.

In a blink of an eye—

No time to wait, it is the sand of time, my show time
Nine—coloured deer furred my shoulder straps
Five—coloured clouds underpinned my flutter fluffy fringes
The alchemist of dance am I?
Even thousands of gods will gaze and never look away... on me.

I flick my legs to patter pipa's angry—looting notes
Hear my arm gliding over the heart—striking strings
Plucking behind my back, lean my back, hold your breath
I am beaming with pride, percussing the legend of Rebound
My jumps are larger and smaller pearls falling...on a jade plate.

Slowly my elbows draw enduring twirls, to salute
The glories and sorrows in Thousand Buddha Caves
Brushing the sand dust with my grand split leap, to dilute
The grief in grains of ignited bloody ruby
In the memorial of dynastic changes and interregnum days.

No time to wait, it is the sand of time, my show time
I absorb the energy on the stage, mesmerize the front
Revitalizing all the flying Apsaras riddles alive
I am a poetry in motion, the visible ballad in your eyes.

I

Close

My eyes

Hear my heart

Focus on the silence

Foot forward. Back straight

Head lowered, my last curtsy, to all.

A square of golden light falling from overhead

Head raised I clasp an imaginary Pipa in both hand

My signature to the world's curtain call.

Downstage.

Bursting into applause and a standing ovation
The trophy of mine reflects the cinematic glitters of Mogao
Coming true in my eyes and yours.

Trapped In Darkness

ESF Sha Tin College, Kwan, Nicholas – 14

One after another,
The caves uncover,
Long vast roads leading to caves of mystery,
Each discovery making history,

Down the long silk road,
Stories were being told,

For decades, stories and experiences echoed the caves,
Begging to be free, crying to be told,
Down the long silk road,

Stories were sitting there, confined like crime,
Testifying to be free, screaming to be heard,

One last cry, as that was all that was left,
Decades of hope, drained through time,
A cry that was heard, by our very own,

One after another,
The caves uncover,
Down the long silk road,
Stories were being discovered,

Like a tunnel to a realm,
The stories were overwhelmed,

Flying like a bird,
Running through the wind,
They were finally free,

The stories ran through the long silk road,
Maybe even beyond,
Now the whole world could hear them,
Stories that carried experiences, pain, happiness, anger, and sadness,
They were now being told.

A Portal to the Past

ESF Sha Tin College, Lee, Rosella – 13

Mò gāo, meaning none higher.

A collection of caves and crevices crushing together to create

A beautiful chest, full of magical wonders.

A grotto that doesn't reach any higher, but still stands tall and looming by the mountainside.

Layers of clay and dust gather by the entrance, but that's just what begs the question.

What's it like on the inside?

A grid-like structure with the crimson paint peeling from the sides.

The paint makes you wonder, what has happened to it?

A beautiful tardis, preserved perfectly with the piercing desert heat.

An entrance waiting for you to go through.

Walking through the opening of a cave,

Like walking through a time machine.

In one era then suddenly in the next.

You feel the familiarity of the Modern Era peel away.

Skin bare, stepping into something new and exotic.

The caves take off your thick coat of the present,

And the further you travel, the more you get dressed.

One by one.

Taking in each and every artefact passing by.

A Hebrew scripture from the 1000s,

A Tipitaka from the 400s,

A Bhudda's head from the 1500s,

An aroma of colours overwhelms you.

Inscriptions and scrolls.

As you stroll through the tunnels.

It seems like the further you enter,

The longer the road.

And so down and down the Rabbit Hole of Rabbit Holes

You venture further into.

Far from a wonderland, but still giving you the same high.

You see monks painted on the walls,

Eyelids closed, making you dare not make a sound to wake them.

Traditional Chinese instruments emulsified in the walls,

The muffled tunes of the Gǔqín echoing through the halls.

The light of the paintings end near the opening of the tunnel,

As the outside world beams you blindly.

And suddenly, you're back in the present.

Something sinks on your shoulders, wanting you to go back inside.

Though the knowledge of knowing and going through millennia of artwork and artefacts,

Can easily outweigh the desire to go through it once more.

New Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

French International School, Puyakoti, Namish – 13

I woke up to a throb in my head
I looked around positive I was dead
I'd fallen into a huge cave
Where awe hit me in a huge wave

As the beam of my torch moved about
I knew without a doubt
I had discovered a tunnel to the past
A place where beauty and wonder was surpassed

Color and knowledge was etched into the wall
But most beautiful of all
Were the statues and shrines
The patterns of lines

The faces and expressions
The posture and obsession
The details and hours
Put into the statues and towers

I'd discovered a historical find
On a magnitude enough to blow one's mind
There were remnants of Buddhism, Hinduism, and more
With literature and art galore

What secrets lay behind these doors
What knowledge was carved into the roofs and floors
Whose secrets might I discover?
What stories lie underneath this cover

This place of mystery
Was lost with history
But there was a tale to tell
About those who fell

A monk was the first observer of these caves
He taught a lesson to be remembered for decades
"You need not power nor wealth
To live a life full of happiness and health"

Made by Three sixty six hands
Filled with politicians, traders and their stands
It sat on top of the largest cross road
In a barren desert it was the people's humble abode

Filled with art and books millenia old
It held lessons untold
The home of early trading and politics
With roots in several cultural history and economics

I need to bring the lesson back to the world
As the cavern around me unfurled
I stood ready to explore
And the tales of the Grottoes began once more.

The Children, the Civilisations, and the Mogao Caves

Harrow International School Hong Kong, David, Antonin – 12

Do you know about the Mogao Caves
That Buddhist, Greco-Indian place?
I do because I went there,
That beautiful lair,
Where monks prayed at the mountain's base.

Why yes I do, because I'm Indian
And we were part of the Silk Road back then.
Anyway, what's your name?
My name is Trame
Where are you from, are you European?

Indeed I am, Indeed I am,
My name's Samuel short for Sam
I'm Italian
Nice to meet you Indian
My preferred book is Green Eggs and Ham.

Speaking of books, Trame poshly replied,
In the Mogao Caves, many books lie,
Books of philosophy,
Science and history,
But first I'll tell where the Mogao Caves lie.

I know this one, said Sam, in Asia
In Dunhuang, Jiuquan, Gansu, China
The Mogao Caves lie
Tall, proud and high,
But they're much more than some caves in China.

According to history, long ago
There was a China-to-Rome-road,
It was rich with tradition,
There civilisations,
Traded and communed on the Silk Road.

Trame spoke, the Mogao Caves were on that trail
And because the Silk Road went everywhere,
There was Hebrew stuff inside
Taoist, Greek stuff resides
And many more cultures, all lie there.

You do know, cultures get mixed up,
Like coffee added to milk, in a cup
And because of this,
This cultural haven was bliss
For people who wished to go to that cup.

People must have brought art with them too
And inventions of course, some old some new.
Of course! Sam cried,
That is the reason why

The caves have so much culture, old and new.

Back to the caves, continued Trame
Let me tell you some of the names
Of the Mogao Caves' caves,
That very sacred place
Nah, said Sam, now listen to me Trame.

The most important part of those caves
Is where all the manuscripts lay,
The Library Cave's books
Weren't gobbledygook,
But stored the oldest books to this day.

But the crystal, the heart, of that place
Is the oldest printed book in our race.
The Diamond Sutra,
Which is inside the
'Before sealed now unsealed', Library Cave.

But why was it sealed, why, O, why?
Some adults say that an army of guys
Was approaching the Cave,
And the people, afraid,
Sealed it to stop it being burned and fried.

Trame said, my mum said it ran out of space,
It couldn't hold more books of human race
As such it was sealed
But this doesn't feel
Right, why would you do that to such a place?

I think adults are thinking far too small
They're missing huge pictures of them all.
Why simply believe
It was humans who did
This to the Cave, this place we don't recall.

It could have been aliens from space,
Beeping aliens from another place,
They sealed up this Cave,
So humans would remain
Without knowledge so they could rule our race.

Of course not, laughed Sam, that's absurd
I mean, aliens don't live in any worlds.
No, this probably
Isn't the truth, let me
Tell you what quite likely occurred.

I think a nefarious novel nation
Hit Medusa's civilisation,
Killing so many of them
So Medusa then
Marched towards that human nation.

As monstrous, malevolent, malicious
Medusa marched, her plans merciless
 It was to seal the Cave
 To punish the human race
For slaughtering her kind which was vicious.

Really, jeered Trame, is that what you think?
That's pure silliness, you silly blink-link,
 That is so far off
 Your dad would laugh and scoff
At such a concept, now I have rethought.

The Cave was sealed by wizards of lore,
 Long, long ago, centuries before
 To protect magic books
 So humans could look
There, to learn spells to fight dark things of yore.

Or, decades ahead in the future,
 In a time-travel-computer
 Somebody time travelled
 And sealed up the cavern,
To prevent looting by time travellers.

Ha, smirked Sam, scoffing and snickering,
You really believe that? He said laughing,
 You have to be foolish
 To believe such silliesh
 Ideas, he said, sniggering.

Maybe I am wrong, it could be true
But then I could be right. Can you
 Prove I am incorrect?
 No, so we should respect
Each other's ideas, think it through.

Perhaps you are right, Sam mused,
 He was really rather bemused.
 Then I am sorry
 For being so jeeringly
To your thoughts, though they still to me confuse.

Wait, said both, isn't this the lesson
Of the Mogao Caves? Despite aggression,
 Nations get along,
 Trading, respecting all along
This is the Mogao Caves' lesson.

Civilisations only develop when they meet,
 Trade, share, which is no easy feat,
 Which is just how we
 Developed to respect each
Other, we only flourish when we meet.

Lost Colour

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Leung, Tan Kiu – 13

Paintings on silk and paper
but I am carved on solid rock.

An endless canvas that stretches from
the East
to the West.

Carrying the intricate patterns of
the artisans that
gave birth to my colour.

But
my colour has dimmed.
The sapphire blue,
brassy gold,
and lurid red
illustrations of
villages and the almighty Buddha.

Now specks of dust
 bit
 by
 bit...
 Decaying.

My heart aches
as I tell you my colour
had once been cherished
and praised.
Their eyes who beheld me with respect
and caressed me with admiration.

Have left me behind.

As time passes,
So does my age and
I can only dream of
and even so,
very faintly.
About how I was praised
and treasured.

Until one day a door in the caves opened,
Light shining through,
and I could feel the warmth tingling through my engravings.
And there the sound
of footsteps
and chatter of excitement.

Faces gleaming with joy that approached me.
Polishing and shining my surface.
And as they did so,
my colour was restored.

The pigment had not been lost,
just buried under the blanket of dust.
No longer concealed.

So I thanked them,
For giving me the hope and the admiration that I deserved.
For giving me my colour back.

The Epic Poem of Arcturus

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Li, Barton – 12

HATE:

*Howl Arcturus' hate,
Sinful and unholy, that cost his home
Myriads of pain and suffering, that will cost his later generations
Years of
Fury
Wrath
Vengeance*

*Let Arcturus
Drown and rot
In his own blood
In his own misery
Howl Arcturus' hate.*

*The anger of Arcturus could not be subdued
For he was
Exiled from his own tribe
Exiled from his very own family
He seethed
He loathed
He would not forgive—
Hate had reigned over him
Hate had marred him
Arcturus was rotten to the core.*

•••

Arcturus climbed up, up, up
His callused hands
Scraping
Against the craggy, juttied mountain of the Mogao Caves
Sand dripped down
Wind roared
Boulders clashed against the decaying desert, crumbling to dust upon impact
Arcturus, though haughty and conceited, feared his own death
His consciousness would not allow himself to die
At least, not now.
He had to prove himself to his
Righteous, self-indulgent tribe
He thought
Leave my family's bodies to rot as feasts
For crows
For ravens
Leave my family's bodies to rot as feasts.

Arcturus' muscles ached
His sturdy body was sore, numb and agonized
A hue of death and blisters swarmed over Arcturus' hand
Prophesying imminent danger and foreboding
That has yet to come

Begin the voyage of Arcturus
The despotic, dishonourable warrior.

• • •

RAGE:

*Jeer Arcturus' rage,
Felonious and errant, that deprived his tribe
Of countless lives, plunging many victims
Into hell's reign.*

Who murdered children in their sleep?

Arcturus

Who set the tribesmen at each other's throats?

Arcturus

*Charax's son and Otonia's, furious at his tribe's ignorance, offended,
By the chieftain. Charax had injured Arcturus' pride;
Seeing him unfit to be the future leader
Jeer Arcturus' rage.*

• • •

Sweat trickled down Arcturus' mottled face
His body felt
As if on fire,
Burning, searing
He looked up woefully, wishing he could reach the pinnacle.

Night fell upon the coarse mountain
Arcturus sighed, he would not reach his destination
Not yet.

He looked at the blood red moon,
Listened, to the eery, ominous roars of the wind
And took his last breath, before
He let silence and the dark take over him.

Sleeping
Twitching
Groaning

• • •

GUILT:

*Scorn Arcturus' guilt,
Which led to the tribesmen's demise--
Several banishments of victims
The deaths of countless souls
The disgrace brought about by Arcturus
Son of the imperious chieftain,
Charax
Scorn Arcturus' guilt.*

• • •

In the tribe of the Mogao Grottoes,

*Or, what used to be,
Caves started crumbling,
Abandoned,
And deserted,
Albeit the remnants of unfortunate tribesmen--
Corpses and bones,
Dirt and dust.*

•••

A pearly, rosy hue shone softly,
Reflecting upon the decaying desert of the Mogao Grottoes

Arcturus awoke, groggily
After dreaming
About the Mogao Grottoes
Decaying
Crumbling
Disintegrating out of existence
Looking at his surroundings--
A tree, swarming with maggots
Arid climate
Barren, deserted
Patches of lifeless sagebrushes, swaying.

Arcturus squinted
Hesitated
It couldn't be--
Not after several years
To the point of dying out of exhaustion
It couldn't be...
His home--
The Mogao Grottoes?

Arcturus
Still dazed by his discovery
Plodded aimlessly
His throat ached, eagerly desirous for water
His mind lingered on his
Exile
The emotions he felt--
Hate
Rage
And most of all, guilt.

Arcturus trudged on for ages,
His mind wandering aimlessly
Hate, rage, guilt
Hate, rage, guilt
Arcturus looked up
Gazing upon a towering, decaying piece of debris
Engraved were the words
"Here lie the Mogao Grottoes"
He grinned, dementedly
He was at home at last.

• • •

Arcturus' throat itched
Aching for water
And, as if on cue,
A pool of murky water appeared, in the doorsteps of the Mogao Grottoes
With scattered corpses of beetles
He scrambled down,
Gazing breathlessly
He cupped his
Filthy
Blotchy skin with
Water
Gulping it all down.

His eyes bulged
Veins popped out of his blotched face
His heart beat erratically
He started convulsing
His hands strangled at his neck, helplessly
Terror coiled in his stomach
Arcturus collapsed onto the grainy desert
Not breathing.
Not moving.

One step away.

• • •

*Let Arcturus
Drown and rot
In his own blood
In his own misery
For his sins must be punished*

*Let Arcturus
Decay and disintegrate
Out of existence
Erased from history*

*Let him suffer for what he did--
Unholy
Corrupted
Immoral.*

• • •

Ode to Mogao Caves

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lu, Angelina – 14

On the verge of the Gobi desert
In the heart of the Silk Road
Where streams of ancient monks
And indulging explorers
Once travelled through
Breathing the fierce flow
Of century old sand
An essence of the grottoes
I longed to strode
The Peerless Caves
Stand in front of me and glow

One Mogao Cave would be enough to dumbstruck
To put me under a trance
Let alone 735 heavenly caves
All worn with time,
From whose infallible hands
Gave me a chance
To open my unworthy eyes
500 walls of hand-carved paintings
So beautiful, worthy to be hung up in the sky
I feel my first romance
As I stand admiring the images of history, culture, and religion

Forget not
The additional 235 walls
Barren yet bewitching
Dark yet illuminating
A place for eternal peace
Blocking unwanted calls
For one to free the mind
Preparation for enlightenment
A pathway once followed by the Buddha
The one who awakens truth
A life always recalled

Unfailing patience, dedication
Embedded in rock
Preserve long lost stories and primitive life
The life prior to the ticking of a clock
Medieval China
Printing, paper, and the compass
Bedazzled gems of Asia
The time of Europe's greatest paintings
The Last Supper, The School of Athens
Mona Lisa and the Sistine Chapel ceiling
Brothers and sisters exploring truth and wisdom

The Mogao Caves
Through natural disasters, sandstorms
Marauding rebels, greedy explorers
And other dangers

Tests of creators and mankind
It survived with scratches on its breast
The battle scars of true bravery
But most honourably
It awakens and arises
The people of digital technology
Of entrepreneurs and voices wanting to be heard

I stand in front of the caves
My dream to take a selfie
Vanishes in the humid, scorching air
I've fallen in love
Conversing with those who came to seek and left reborn
And the serenity and escape
From the bustling city
I don't need a picture to represent my love
For the power and the roar and the life
Of the Mogao caves
Live on in me
Everywhere I go

The Search

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yan, Yutong – 13

Slowly,
stepping,
luring.
Allowing the heat to consume him like a hungry beast scavenging for its next meal.
Draining away.
Fabricating under the ruthless sun.
Each step was slower than the last;
his feet heavy on the deceiving sand beneath him.
Days
weeks
months.
How long has he been here?

(15 years ago)
He had first heard of the caves
as a young boy
who would get into trouble for;
digging up his neighbours' garden
or
making faces when
he thought
the teacher wasn't looking
or
throwing tiny pebbles at his classmates
when they irritated him
like red rashes growing
on your skin when you've been
sweating too much.
On days like those
his mother
would tenderly tuck him in the stiff bed;
the only bed
they could afford.
She would gingerly brush
his tangled hair,
attempting to use her fingers to
comb out the knots.
She would
lovingly stroke his bruised face
and tell the story her mother had once told her,
of the caves,
the ones filled with extraordinary relics;
the treasures of those who came before.
Her words flowed out of her mouth
like a steady stream of water
that soothed his restless mind
and comforted his uneasy heart.
But he had long neglected those stories.
They're just myths
after all;
forgotten fairytales.

(Present day)

The cloudless blue sky
formed a dome around Yuanlu
and dried him up
empty and hollow
and
hollow and empty.
Nothing more than a shell of a person;
an uncoiled machine.
Holding his lips tight
he wanted to scream;
to scream all those thoughts,
those swarming thoughts
invading his benumbed mind,
but his mouth
could no longer form words,
only a faint whisper managed to escape his chapped lips.
Finally,
his shaking knees gave out,
and he fell face-first onto the
caramel sand that seemed to stretch
so far.
So.Far.
So far it seemed to just fall down the side of the earth.

He didn't know what would consume him first,
the desert,
or the loneliness.
Loneliness.
It seems to have gotten heavier and heavier and heavier;
piling up like the dirt that had piled onto his skin.
Becoming thicker and thicker and thicker
with every vacant day he spent
and his hunger for human touch grew and grew and grew.
So he curled up into a tight ball
embracing himself
desperately trying to stimulate
any
sense of physical touch,
and fell into a deep
deep
slumber.

(5 years ago)

His mother had always expressed
her desire to experience the Mogao Caves for herself,
so when Yuanlu's mother passed,
he started to research about the caves;
desperate to fulfill his mother's
dying wish.
When he told others about it;
which he did plenty,
they would just laugh and shake his head
saying that those were just
fairy tales.

But when they started to realize
that this wasn't just a half-hearted
joke,
a look of concern
permanently painted itself on their
judging faces.
And all those faces;
hushed and still and staring,
so desperate to pursue his mother's last wish
Slowly, it started to become an obsession;
eating away at him little by little,
consumed by the accumulation of loose papers
and books.
Then finally,
after years of research,
with just the clothes on his body
and a rucksack on his back,
he was set to search for the
Mogao Caves;
in the memory of his beloved mother.

(Present day)

Yuanlu awoke
and through his half-opened eyes
he saw a swirling vision of
crimson reds and camel beiges.
A temple.
The temple stood alone
in front of the wall
that had previously obstructed Yuanlu's path.
Half engulfed in the rocky terrain.
There is no explanation for it,
a temple
an entrance to a cave
in the middle of the barren desert
that seems to stretch for miles in every direction.
There was no door
and even though the sun shone so mercilessly;
the temple seemed to swallow the light,
only eternal darkness;
a never-ending void.
Still half-awake,
Yuanlu rubbed his eyes
once,
twice,
three times.
But instead of dissolving into nothingness
like the mirage he expected,
the temple stood firm
as if its roots stretched far beneath the surface,
deep into the beating heart of the Earth.

A sudden desperation
took over of him;
Controlling him like a puppet,
and he ran towards the temple.
And as his frail,
blistered feet

stepped onto the ground for the first time,
he felt a wave of shock
overcome his body.
Had he been away so long that he'd
forgotten
how it felt to touch
of a solid surface?
He called out into the dark
and the only thing he was greeted back with,
was his own voice.
He reached into his frayed pocket
and took out a matchbox.
As he removed
a match
from the box,
a dazzling fire
blossomed in the murky darkness,
then watched the light
dance onto the barren walls of the cave.

Wandering through the labyrinth of caverns
the stillness of caves
created restlessness,
causing Yuanlu to be more paranoid
that there were other life present.
Something caught his eye;
in the coarse darkness
he could make out
human-like figures.
As he raised his tiny match
it suddenly explodes into a
mammoth bonfire,
soaking everything in its
brilliant light.
Yuanlu winced
as his eyes slowly adjusted to the dark,
and saw time-worn statues
looming over his trifling figure.
Deities frozen in time
unblinking eyes
that observed all that happened,
and for a moment,
Yuanlu forgot his agony,
he forgot his desolation
his aching body.
For a moment,
he forgot everything.
He forgot how to breathe.
Yuanlu stepped closer
to examine the artifacts.
The sandy palette
so soothing to the eye.
The murals on the walls so impossible intricate,
each stroke of the brush
so lovingly painted.
The lines curved and twisted
to form beautiful images,
and even though it has visibly faded with time,
it aged like fine wine;
each dent

each scratch
each mark
tells a story that has long been forgotten.

Tears filled Yuanlu's eyes
as the whole world turned into a blurry mess of colours,
with every beat of his heart
it grew louder and louder and louder.
He had finally found it,
all those doubts tearing him apart,
those glaring eyes
those restless nights.

His mother was right and so was he.

It wasn't just a forgotten fairy tale.
He could feel warm air by his cheek,
he could hear his mother's lips near his ear
"I'm proud of you Wang Yuanlu"
Tears started flowing down his face
like mighty rivers,
clearing his eyes of all the accumulated dust and sand.
He ran down through the maze of caverns;
paying no mind to his burning feet
and the deafening roar of his heartbeat,
he ran from grotto to grotto
in awe of the splendor and beauty
before him.
The fire led him
From one cavern to another,
illuminating the pathway before him;
the flame so unpredictable,
as if taunting and provoking him.
Despite that,
he felt like an ecstatic child
on a treasure hunt;
a state of pure euphoria.

When he finally resurfaced
to the empty desert,
a group of travelers spotted
a sluggish speck on the horizon of the desert.
Too exhausted to talk,
the travelers
hauled Yuanlu onto the back of one of the laborious camels,
then offered him food and water;
ready to take him home.
And whilst his body
sat slumped on the back of a traveler's camel,
his mind
still lay in the eternal halls of the Mogao Caves.

New Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Heep Yunn School, Shing, Yee Isis – 14

Magnificent cave, perched on a desert.
Abounded with uniqueness, as the monks assert.
Thousands of pilgrims took the advice,
As to view it with their own eyes.

The devotees dug their cave,
And decided to stay, they pave.
People created sacred arts and literature,
Knowing that pieces looked like no other.

But time elapsed and years passed,
The Mogao Grottoes were soon never asked.
It was no more than an arenaceous legend,
That anyone could have forgotten in a second.

Yet someone has rediscovered this extraordinary cave,
The breath-taking secrets were unlocked by the brave.
Hundreds of caverns were revealed upon them,
Paintings, sculptures, and literature sparked like a gem.

Howbeit the most astonishing one was the statue.
They knew it was ancient but it looked brand new.
It appeared to be majestic yet serene and ancient.
The Buddha stood before them with preordainment.

Abruptly the sand on the floor started to whirl,
And an archaic book was then revealed by the swirl.
The scholars felt as if they had time travelled,
Were destined to see the lost secrets of the past unravelled.

Taken aback by the real reason for Mogao's disappearing,
They found that the book was a diary that was missing.
It recorded all the deepest secrets of the place,
And witnessed the vicissitudes of the face.

The place was deserted because of two gigantic creatures,
Which were reluctant to let through the preachers.
They guarded the cave like it was a treasure,
And slaughtered the pilgrims since they had displeasure.

Diarist advised the monks to pause their coming,
But they were here to cease the creatures from thrumming.
Therefore, myriads of tragedies occurred,
They finally took the diarist's word to stop the absurd.

"Never challenge the nature," he said,
"It will just lead you to dread."
If only the travellers had listened to the diarist,
Their lives could have been cherished.

Hope

Hong Kong International School, Decatur, Connor David – 14

It was that one day I made the discovery of discoveries.
The pinch of salt that accumulated the very being of its existence
Oh, how sweet, oh, how lovely to receive
This cave was the cave of the free.

The texture of the walls,
So tender, so alive.
Oh, how immense the attitude of it lived inside.
It sought to belong, not drown nor forsake
This cave was the cave of those worthy to be safe.

Oh, and yes it grew,
It grew and increased.
The days passing by found more context underneath.
It continued to strive, not worsen or die
Oh, and yes it grew,
It grew and increased.

Growth was the name of the special
Had the special throw the name of growth away,
Had the cave gradually faded away.

What was the name of growth called again?
No sight, no existence
This discovery had no remembrance.

Was it 1000 years later?
Who even knew?
This cave was the cave of the free.

The growth of the special was isolated,
Abandoned, forsaken.
Oh, and yes it grew,
It grew and increased.

Seconds became minutes,
Minutes became hours,
Hours became days,
Days became weeks,
Weeks became months,
Months became years,
Years became decades,
Decades became centuries.

For hope was sought to be discovered again,
The cave had no need to continue.
However, it then became the day I made the discovery of discoveries.
Oh, how sweet, oh how lovely to receive
This cave was once again the cave of the free.

Caves may not be humans I must say,
For without hope humans nor caves would live till this day.

The Writing on the Wall

Hong Kong International School, Mei, Mollie Yufan – 13

Stalagmites shaped into
Humans of stone,
Lampblack ink made into
Art and scripture on the walls –
Faded but still there,
Lost but not gone.

Yet art
barely scratches
the surface
Of what was hidden
On purpose,
Shielding unwanted eyes
From the things that were not meant
To be seen.

Beyond safety,
Beyond humanity,
Beyond the present.
Backstage,
They hide
The pain.

My grandmother used to tell me
Forgotten things are never to be found,
And how one man's trash
Could not possibly
Be another's treasure.

Once upon a time,
I believed her.
Now?
I don't know
That she's right.

A voice
Behind the curtains
Screams.

Bad Dream

International College Hong Kong, Ho, Alyssa – 13

Fireflies,
Fill the
Still night of
China.

Flares of
Luminescence,
The
Nocturnal
Beings
Piercing the
Leaden sky.

A Man
Spellbind
By their
Beguiling glow,
An irresistible
Invitation
To the
Mogao Caves.

Passing
A threshold
From
Familiarity,
To the
Raw reality
Of the
Unknown.

Mogao Caves,
Alive with
Strife,
Imprints of
Good
And evil
Echoing
Boundlessly.

An unending
Battle
Between
The forces.

An aura of

Fear
Crowned
Upon him,
And the
Warning
Rhythm of
Danger
Invades.

Demons
Lunge
Towards the
Soul,
Unseen
To the
Naked eye,
Yet prevail in
Mankind's
Troubled
Thoughts.

The fireflies,
Engulfed by
The viscous
Shadows of
Blackness,
Lifeless fireflies
Engraved
Onto the
Indifferent
Walls of the
Mogao Caves.

But
Impermanence
Remains
In the
Ruthless
Triumphs
Of evil.

Ambiguity
Awakens
Mankind
To the
Victorious
Rise of
China's
Sun.

Above the
Mogao Caves,

Cascades of
Warmth
Heal the
Bad dreams
Of the
Chinese.

Treasure of the West

International School of Beijing, Ma, Andrew – 13

Far far away in the west,
The city of Dunhuang lies at rest.
Long ago a treasure was buried,
Through myths and legends it was carried.
Deep in the caves the treasure lies,
Those who seek it will meet their demise.
Through the crevices into the caves,
For those who linger it'll become their grave.
Millions of men seek the loot,
Searching desperately for the hidden fruit.
Long ago it was hidden there,
Waiting for its rightful heir.
For millennia it laid sunbathed,
Till this day it remains unscathed.

The Mogao Caves

Marymount Secondary School, Chan, Eugenia – 14

Organisation of space as unique and artistic,
Filled with antique sculptures that are mystic.
Paintings from the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties,
All are precious properties.

Caves of the Thousand Buddhas,
People around the world came to visit.
Breathtaking views and statues around,
Histories of Mogao Caves seem to surround.

Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heavenly fairies,
and motifs in murals holding mysteries.
They might not shine in everyone's heart,
But glows in every part in ancient times.

Oasis

Marymount Secondary School, Chow, Alvina – 14

A sense of wildness,
Surroundings seemingly suffering.
A sense of loneliness,
Alone I am standing.

Caves with Buddhist stories,
Caves with Chinese history.
Grottoes it comprises,
Civilisation is like a mystery.

On a camel I am riding,
Like an aboriginal in ancient times.
The breeze along the journey,
Gives a refreshing nudge of hope.

Poem about Dunhuang: The oasis city on the Silk Road and Mogao Caves

My Mogao Caves

Marymount Secondary School, Tsang, Ling Hei Angie – 14

A grotto, a history
Drawings, statues, scriptures, legend
The Buddha is sitting
The Bodhisattva is standing
Listening to the pleasant sound by the pipa

In a split second
Everything in silence
Is someone talking about me?
My journey spread into everyone's ears
Full of people worshipping me

Mogao Grottoes
A profound poetry
A salubrious song
A honourable history
A measureless mythology

Masterpiece

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Lau, Shannon – 13

I
was hauled from the heart
of virtuosos millennia ago
Carved into slabs of rock,
a dust-covered
Masterpiece.

I housed
Millions of stories.
Millions of people
encountered
this Masterpiece worth
Millions

Fingers traced the culture
as abounding as a thriving field
embedded in my walls
Eyes gazed upon the statues and libraries
the years of knowledge and wisdom
encased in me.

I
am a Masterpiece, with value
not in currencies
but in sentiment
Priceless
as some would say

But

I was forgotten.

I couldn't recollect
the last time a creature came across me
the last time someone breathed life into me
the last time somebody cared

Time passed me by
I was left alone, with nothing but History to keep me company
and I felt myself slipping away
corroding, disintegrating into the universe

I spent my days
grievously admiring the fading paintings and sculptures
Dwelling on the fact that I, as a Masterpiece,
was gone, banished from existence.

Until

Slivers of light
peeked into my void
Something—

No—
Someone.

Finally.

I
am a Masterpiece, who was
uncovered
discovered
restored to my former glory.

My sorrowful heart
was unravelled
The silence I was habituated to
was muffled by gasps
of awe and wonderment

The world now
knew my name
The deserved prestige
Finally
in my palm

It was Wang Yuanlu
who tossed me the lifebelt.
On behalf of the pilgrims and monks
Thank you, Yuanlu
We shall be eternally grateful.

The Thousand Buddha Grottoes

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Ng, Isabella – 12

In a mystical place, far, far away
Hidden from both Night and Day
His prying eyes, meant for none to see
There once was a cave where the Buddha lived.

There once was a man, they say, as well
Who built the cave after he said they'd tell
Him, his soul, of what the far future held:
The past, present, and who'd stand at the helm.

(By they, he explained, he meant the great One;
The One who was near; the One who was far.)
Where he preached in golden glory, radiant in his prime
And warned, not yet – now was not the time.

This he proclaimed with such melancholy as he grieved,
Struck upon his sweet face as he heaved,
Like damasked red roses, said a wise man –
That once was yet lost its tentative touch by hand.

(Flowers' scent, stolen from his fragrant breath
Why did the sun above, his fiery eyes?
The colour of coral, dyed from his lips
Where pretty pearls of ivory stood tall and fair

He swore, Adonis in the blood and flesh
Was not half as pretty as him, my prince
As his beauty, famed, did evince
Numbness; mere shadows imitated in death.)

All of this passed through the mind of the man
As he stood in dumb awe in front of the stand
Up where the Buddha sat, high on his plinth
Where once, the soul of a man had lived.

(But after the first, curious vision
More came free from the dark bars of prison
One after another under the shining sun,
Lasting ever after as History spun.)

Fear me not, they murmured, one and all,
“We are the bringers of time,” they said in the halls.
Until decades later, they were heard through the walls,
Enshrined with the beauty of him at his call.

More captivating still were the pictures of art,
Where of Nature's grace he inscribed on his heart,
Threw down his luxury and left down his cart
Filled with mortal baggage at the castle with bards.

He wandered the world, a gentle white dove,
Compassioned with sharp wit and delicate love.

His famed weapon, the tranquil peace he brought
To ease out the sins that the net of Men caught.

Everywhere he preached, and everywhere he taught –
Flowers, they grew where men knew naught.
Beauty hidden in the fragile masks within
Were unveiled, cast, 'neath the heels.

So the man, unmasked to see such in a haze,
Built up a grotto through his dreams in a daze.
And all that came by, from closer or further away,
Exclaimed, "The soul of the Buddha still stays."

Yet now, we must ask, was that really it?
For the years went by, bit by bit –
There it lay in the desert, blown over by sand,
What those in their pilgrimage built by hand.

The statues and carvings and paintings from distant lands,
And literature, those books! written in brilliant fervour, an expanse,
Of areas sketched, details captured in wordings of eld;
But gathered in dust, yet to be blown off, unfulfilled.

An abundance of art, a magnificent library,
Bibliotecas, tomes, and opuses – more than one could carry.
(Could jewels rich in culture stay 'till distant now?
The mighty scabbard of Strength; the carved wooden bow.)

Crumbling, forgotten, mildewed treasure lost
In glittering gold and dazzling diamonds, not without a cost
And now dozens flock to sight the Thousand Buddha Grottoes
Where the statues come to life, where the paintings are aglow.

(Those puzzle pieces of hopes, of a faraway mirage,
Shattered and dashed into pieces of ash,
In conflagrations lost with the workings of Time –
Tick, tock, goes his scythe, and so do brazen bells chime.)

And even as the decades of musty years bray
"Fate and kindness are of equal weight," as the Buddha says.

The World Within: The Mogao Caves

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Wong, Matthew – 13

Stumbling, staggering
Over a boundless, vast sea
Of irate Sand jarring.
Stumbling, staggering.

Blind steps in the callous cold,
Ragged cloth and waning resolve,
Sleep deprived, rest forestalled.
Fragile warmth— monk's humble abode.

Sadistic grit on tender flesh.
Stumbling, staggering.

A flood of ecstasy,
Buoyant burst of rejoice, jubilation!
In dusty sea all so heartless and hostile,
Lies a sanctuary, an oasis so lush!

He staggered into Trāyastriṃśa,
The vibrant glow of emerald life,
A light, deep within
The unforgiving Sea of Darkness.

Many suns have set,
In this island of verdure,
Where he desperately scavenged,
determined to endure.

Yet this was bliss,
After the trod and stumble in the endless sea,
One not of the soft touch of silk,
But the biting frost of sand.

Yet now he ambled.
Not stumbling, nor staggering, carefree.

In this lush paradise,
He came across a cave so cold and damp,
Yet devoid of malice or contempt.
A radical, primal urge for the monk
To bring forth a fire, a light,
And delve into the black.

The fire was lit,
A gasp let out.
Whimsical stumble into treasure trove,
Preciousness worth more than gold.

Over the span of countless centuries,
The cave drew people like flame to moths,
And the cave at last was homely and warm,
Revelry as loud as storms.

Senseless bloodbaths and wars,
No blood could stain the timeless cave.
Yet the dust of time can't tarnish but it will cover,
The inexorable fate where
Layers
And
Layers
Of ancient history and ceaseless, flowing time
Cover the cave in the coffin of Myth.
And the revelry faded,
The prosperity—forgotten.

Till a youthful scholar coincided
On the cave, stumbling, staggering.

A world untouched,
A civilisation pure and united,
Untainted by the polluted ideals
Of the human world.
People free to live,
While others stumbled, staggered across the arduous journey that they call "life".

Saga of Mogao Grottoes

Shangahi American School – Pudong, Jain, Neev – 13

“Man of Tabgach, clan of Xian–Bei,
Son of Bahamut.
Dismantle your dwellings, build a shrine.
Reject Hindrance and acknowledge clines!
Put aboard the sprout of Shakya's, into the shrine.
The shrine you are to build
Shall have a thousand' enlightened ones,
Their width and length shall be in polyphony,
Enclose them with hints of Confucianism.”
For a thousand years and 7 nights
The mistral blew, boulders and grime overwhelmed the land;
When the seventh night arrived the sweat, fatigue, and yearning onslaught
Which had struggled like the woman in labor, like notorious whipping and fines,
Blew themselves out, confined.
The chattel became tranquilized, the inhallu wind grew quiet, the desperation held back.
They sought the sky; silence became apparent,
For centuries have elapsed, mankind became as clay.
One opened a porthole and light poured on his cheeks.
He bent down, then sat. He wept.
Tears of charisma and charm, fell from his eyes.
Serenity, Astonishment, quietude transfixed his mind,
He looked far down, eyes upon him;
And shouted, “它的壮丽, 它的辉煌 让我眼花缭乱!” (Its magnificent, its glorious blinded me!).”
“Man of Tabgach, clan of Xian–Bei, Son of Bahamut.
Youth of delight and future, come hither,
Reckon' the Stele of Buddha Maitreya.
Reckon' the Vajrapāṇi,
Reckon' the pulchritude of Bodhisattva.”
Twas' the eyes of lustrous ocher; mouth of virtue;
Speckle of memoir; twinkle of ebullience.
Beauty itself' was the contrapuntal Bhudas;
Enchantment, Twas' the result of purity.
Polyphony, Twere' the legacy of diligence.
The 14th century soon progressed, worship and pilgrimage soon became apparent,
In the Mogao Grottoes.
Now, as I look towards the idiosyncrasies of the thousand Shakya's,
I am nonplused,
The shrouded stories; secrets that show no lie.
Oh' great: Yuezun; why was your vision?
Yuezun; What was your vision?
Yuezun; How was your vision?
Was destiny chosen, given, or built?

Dusty Legend

Shanghai American School – Pudong, Bolstein, Alicia – 13

Our planet is like the old artifacts
Of the Mogao Grottoes.
Delicate. *So delicate.*
Remarkable. *So remarkable.*
Beautiful. *So beautiful.*

It can be wiped away with
One.
Single.
Touch.

The caves of the Mogao Grottoes
Began as a place for meditation.
Home to

Peace *and quiet.*

Later, as people built
More and more and more Caves,
It became a place

worshipped *and loved.*

Soon, the caves of the Mogao Grottoes
Were painted beautifully
with

Care *and respect.*

Oh, were these caves
Special.

The caves were a way to meditate
with it's

Peace *and quiet*

The caves were a way to teach the younglings
to be

Worshipped *and loved*

The caves were a way to show the beauty of Chinese culture
with

Care *and respect*

But soon, the darkest side of humankind
began to
Reveal
Itself.

Us.
Humans.
Decided.
To.
Stop.
Acknowledging.
The caves.
Of Mogao Grottoes.

The beauty of the Mogao Grottoes.
Was forgotten.

Merely
A dusty legend.

That held
treasures,
Stories,
And the beauty of humankind
Inside all the caverns.

All.
Forgotten.

As if the past was something not
Worth commemorating for.
As if the past was something not
Worth caring for.
As if the past was something not
Worth fighting for.

The caves of Mogao Grottoes
Had not been touched since
the Silk Road had ended.

Humans thinking everything else
Is more important
than the Mogao Grottoes.

Not caring about
The sand
That slowly started to build up in the caves.

The caves
With all those
Precious paintings,
Amazing artifacts,
Spectacular sculptures.

Like the magnificent mural of Avalokitesvara,
Or the marvelous Maitreya Buddha,
And the confounding Chinese Diamond Sutra.

All that love

beneath
The sand.

The silk road
Had been
A place,
Road,
Thing
Historians were curious about.
Because they did not know
Or forgotten
What it was.

Explorers
Looked,
And looked,
And looked.
Until a person named Wang Yuan Lu
Was credited for
discovering/not discovering
The Mogao Grottoes.

People began to take much interest
in the treasures.

Taking it
From the sacred walls,
Stealing it
From the magnificent cave,
Breaking it
From its home.

Now, after the discovery, and loads of drama,
UNESCO finally made the Mogao Grottoes
a world heritage site.
Making sure that every
Detail,
Care,
And love still there
Is kept safely.

The Mogao Grottoes
Is like
Our planet.

Earth.

Once a place
full of

peace *and quiet,*

A place
That was

Worshipped *and loved,*

A place
Full of

Care *and respect*

Has lost all the memories
Beneath the layers of rock
Within itself.

The Mogao Grottoes
Are sacred
But our planet
Is much more.
And unlike we did to the marvelous Mogao Grottoes
We must do our part in not forgetting
The beauty of our planet's past
And do our best
To keep,
And not steal,
The precious artifacts
Of our planet.

Earth
is just a droplet of life
In the midst of a
Never-ending, vast universe.

If we take the precious artifacts of our planet,
our planet
Delicate. *So delicate.*
Remarkable. *So remarkable.*
Beautiful. *So beautiful.*

Can be wiped away with
One.
Single.
Touch.

If we don't do anything save our planet from ourselves,
All the amazing artifacts of the past
Will be buried and forgotten by our descendants
Who might not be as lucky as the explorers
And find the treasure beneath
The sand
Of our future.

But hope.

A word that people use for
the good *Or the bad*
The mighty *Or the weak*
The powerless *Or the powerful*

Is something that we must keep forever in our minds
Because it is what will help us

Put an end to our old propensity
And rewrite the story
of our planet.

Cite for the history incorporated within the poem: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogao_Caves#History

AUTHORS NOTE:

The Mogao Grottoes is a spectacular place. It's full of beautiful artifacts, amazing treasures, and a glimpse of how Chinese culture was like at the time of the silk road. These grottoes also have a big history behind them too. This is why I used the Mogao Grottoes as a metaphor to emphasize how carelessly and how irresponsibly we are caring for our planet. Obviously, us, humans, have been taking the world for granted. The resources Earth has given us, the life Earth has given us, the happiness Earth has given us have never been fully appreciated. All we have ever done is taken from our planet and not given back. Not only that, but we have forgotten the beauty of nature that we disrupted as the way we live now in the modern day slowly became a common practice and humans started focusing on others things supposedly more important than our planet. I hope that this poem will remind people of the beauty of our Earth and inspire everyone to learn more about how our actions are affecting and hurting the planet. As long as there is hope, we will be able to fix the damage that we have done.

Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai American School – Pudong, Wei, Joy – 14

*Life is a candle, time is the glimmering embers,
our existence gradually burns away,
time cannot be fought against or reversed,
but we can travel along its passing.*

In the naïve conscience of my diminished youth,
I dreamed of living forever,
exceeding life,
escaping the demise that awaited every soul.

Upon the crossroads of Dunhuang my childhood flourished,
blooming in a golden age;
my roots lay in Mogao,
guarded by the endless desert,
drenched by the blistering sun;
perched upon the sand, the Silk Roads stretched far,
twin pathways of the East and West,
the oasis of commerce and intrigue,
where difference mingled, merchants hawked their wares;
livelihood brought by trade and travel,
fought the monotony of the dunes.

Amongst the architecture, the Grottoes of Mogao loomed tall,
its rocky hills steep and resolute,
etched and carved from the cliffs,
its eastward cave faces greeted the sun.

Hums of chanting,
tolling of sacred bells,
prayers and incense rose to the heavens,
belief and religion swelled.

My house sat on wheels, accompanied by herds of cattle,
we ate meat and drank milk, we bartered for fruit,
we wore straw sandals,
dressed in garments of woven hemp and cotton.

My father was a wise merchant,
I gaze wonderingly at father as he exchanged elegant boxes of gleaming porcelain,
his gentle brow furrowed, carving deep crevasses across his forehead,
his nod of approval,
signaled agreements made, deals sealed.

Mother was a skilled seamstress,
At night, I peeked over my covers,
as mother sat and wove handsome brocades,
the threads crossing and splitting, sorting and cutting;
her folklore filled my mind with great warriors, dragons, people grasping the reach of immortality.
Xian.

Immortal life.
Mere mortals becoming eternal beings,
unbothered by war and bloodshed,
untouched by the elements,
they live an effortless existence,
separate of the bloodied world of mankind.

I imagined that life,
free,
unburdened,
impossible.

From that point on,
I wanted to win the race against the hours,
it was only a matter of time before my life goes out,
my candle snuffed.

I vow to defy that end,
I won't let the flame catch on,
I will always move forward,
I shall escape that destiny.

Time burns on.

I have grown old,
my view sharpened,
my gaze broadened,
my childhood playfulness gone.

I am dissatisfied,
ever desiring more to life,
for that nagging fear of demise,
like a beast of chasing from behind,
waiting glean my soul,
kept me scurrying forwards.

Lost in the tumult,
wandering on the busy streets of Mogao,
seeing people dancing, greeting, trading;
they lived unbothered, no trace of dread or worry,
merchants called,
sheep bleated,
horses pawed the dust,
craftsmen bent over copper, silver, gold,
tools dancing in metallic reflections,
the symphony of hammering and chatter.

Overwhelmed, I pace through the grottoes,
hoping to find clarity;
their numbers have grown,
from afar like anthills,
each grottoe yawned their openings.
I follow the trodden paths through the caves,
becoming lost,
encircled by this labyrinth.

Murals lay motionless,
they stretched across the ceiling,
stood on sandstone walls,
mingled with intricate carvings and delicate text;
They danced to the distant chanting,
Illuminated in the sunlight.
They depicted legends, deities, paradise
rich culture visualized by bright pigments of peacock green, deep aqua,
ruby red and warm amber,
adorned with gold and silver leaves.
Statues sat cross-legged, in serene meditation,

Feitian graced the skies, or amongst sumptuous palaces,
Buddha reclined upon daises, dressed in elaborate robes and grand headdresses.
Their sentient faces,
their air of reverence and neutrality,
rested in perpetual peace.

Time burns on.

I continue my race,
I followed the Silk Road on my own, westward,
journeying to foreign lands.
my old fears ever lingered,
driving my nomadic life forward.

Time burns on.

Decades have swung by,
carving crude canyons across my skin,
wrinkles and scars, scattering like constellations,
I have seen the world far and wide,
I need not travel further.

Tired, weary, bedraggled,
I lose the gaiety of laughter,
I forget the grandeur of youth,
I sink into contempt and cynicism,
wallowing in my own ennui,
doubting trust like a miser with hidden gold.

I can no longer move on.
I slowly lose race with the hour.

Time burns on.

Abandoning travel,
I trace the worn roads to my roots,
to those soaring sandstone cliffs,
and the deep caverns.

Time burns on.

Before the threshold of the Grottoes, I am again,
this time I gaze with clouded eyes,
balanced on creaky joints,
shaky hands grasping the walls.

The murals again greet me,
the painted gods and sacred text,
people swirling in an eternal dance;
their color hardly changed,
their faces clear and young.

I slump before their serene countenance,
hands frayed beyond recognition,
body landing into the incessant trickle of the hourglass,
my once fair frame contorted by the second;
I remember my wish,
so long ago,
that impossible dream to live forever,
now I reminisce in sorrow.

With one last effort,
driven by no clear rationale,
I write down my life on an empty cavern wall,
painted in gilded characters.
now, perhaps, I will live again,
my story can stay within these Grottoes;
turn into a myth, a folklore,
I will remain in the memory of humankind,
becoming part of that antiqued past,
but in living consciousness I shall last.

Time burns on.

I lay there, near the dunes,
buried beneath wisps of sand,
the future clouded as my eyes dimmed,
stillness encompassed my broken form,
as a final thought drifted across my mind:
*If my wandering conscience had stayed,
paused my stubbornness to notice the world around me,
then, I could have beheld
the true beauty of the present.*

Stop this useless struggle,
I had lived in worry,
but now, I find clarity
I relent and let time burn on.

The candle neared its end,
the wax trickling away,
time, at last caught up,
and I allow the flames to burn out.

Epilogue

Time, again, burns on,
centuries drift past, carried upon its curling smoke;
soft footsteps, echo upon deserted caverns,
a new exploration takes place,
daring to seek the pathways of Dunhuang's lost world.
They hear the voices, the whispered songs,
they read the gilded text whose bearer forgotten,
but listen to the stories, his unfinished scroll,
and envision that wandering boy, who lived long ago.

The Universal Ruler

Singapore International School, Kwong, Cheuk Yin Jonathan – 13

In the ages of dynasties,
In the era of crusades,
A boy was born,
Into a baptism of fire and wrath.

Great things he was destined for,
Born with a destiny to lead the greats,
Can Temüjin¹ rise to unite
His peoples across the steppe?

Lesser men may have relied upon armies of flesh and bronze,
But Temüjin united the Mongolians
Not through fear and death,
But with tolerance and freedom, diversity and religion

An army built through skill and merit,
Mongol tribes united under one banner,
All his enemies subdued,
Temüjin was crowned as the universal ruler, Genghis Khan!

With his loyal followers behind him,
And his army of cavalry in front of him,
He set his eyes on the Eurasian Steppe,
But this would be his last great act to come.

A fire extinguished in the same way it was ignited,
Genghis Khan died in his great conquests across China.
And left Mongolia as a blazing flame that would expand even after his death.
And taught the terrifying cacophony of his cavalry to the world.

¹ Genghis Khan's name before he was crowned the "Genghis" title.

Carvings of the Caves

Singapore International School, Mak, Chun Ho – 13

At the dawn of creation I was nothing
But hard rock and stone.
Until that fateful day
Where my creator came
From his homeland of China.

Seeing the come and go of men
From homes of faraway land.
To see the blessings of our lord¹
With it their tired spirits restored

Glimpsing the day where I would be gone.
As with death comes life,
I saw the loss of many.
With every winter, every eclipse, every war²,
I saw the broken dreams of men, washing ashore.

At that time my youthful mind still thought
My beauty, my youth, my history, all unrivaled,
My name, Mogao³, peerless and unequalled.
Until that fateful day a thousand years after
No one came to see me.
Gradually, slowly,

My caves, my carvings, crumbling,
My existence dwindling
Disappearing into the void.

My slumber felt peaceful, blissful
Yet I knew it would end
But how did it end
I have never imagined.

As sunlight showered me with her golden halo
The sand⁴ in my walls soon evaporated,
Leaving me bare
And people, people pointing at me.

As they entered my caverns
I realised
How did humanity change so much
With their special tools and magic
So different, did they look

As they entered, they gasped
Gasping at my history
My art, my world.

As more and more came
They themselves chose
To once again paint their history, their lives, their legacies,
On these very walls, just like their ancestors did
Bringing shards of memory being restored
To my soul.

For many years then

I rediscovered life
The brilliant, radiant green hue
That beautiful smell of life.
The sketches that was with me since the beginning
Grew even broader in their old age
Growing ever so wiser
With their ever growing canvas
Extending beyond the reach of our understanding.

As time goes on
More and more people come
Without knowing it
They paint a piece of art everytime
Breathing life into my walls

Proving how much humanity has grown
Has progressed, has adapted,
Has developed,
From a tiny, orange flame
To a red, glowing inferno.

The battles they have fought and lost
The trials they have overcome and failed
All recorded inside my walls.

So you see now,
I am not just a hole in the ground.
In my walls hold
The untold truth of humanity
In my caves hold
The paintings of our history
In me I feel
The carvings set me free.

Notes:

lord¹ – Buddha, the heavenly god whom the monks worship

war² – The devastating wars the Chinese fought. One of them most notably the An Lushan Rebellion, where General An Lushan declared himself emperor of Northern China, and fought the Tang Dynasty. This lasted through the reigns of three Tang emperors.

Mogao³ – The name that the caves were given, which means “Peerless”.

sand⁴ – Referring to the sands of the Gobi Desert, where the Mogao Caves are situated at its edge. The Gobi Desert is one of the world’s largest deserts, and is between China and Mongolia.

Faithful Follower

Singapore International School, Yan, Heidi Wye En – 12

I am a faithful follower of the great buddhas,
What they represent; true enlightenment.
Withstanding the golden death rays of the scorching sun,
And the isolating cold of this desert which seemed to stretch for ages.
Beads of pearls slid down my forehead.
My vision blurred,
my legs couldn't keep up.
My body ached and wore me down
But I had to continue, 'twas my life's motto, my mission.
As I gave my all to push.
A little more was all I needed.
My legs gave their last and fell out under me,
Gasping for air to breathe.
Everything blurred,
My mind, a mess.
A white fog clouded my vision.
Knowing there was a light somewhere,
I dragged my numb body upwards,
Barely moving an inch,
I used the power left.
I knew this was all in my head.
But,
I caught sight of something,
A blinding light,
A flare.
Stretching out into the horizon
across my vision,
It was clear as day.
The message was clear,
That even one's eyes whom
Have befallen upon would know.
And before that iridescent bead dripped down into the solid abyss,
I had my mission.
In my hand,
Life's essence.
The labor,
The patience,
The purpose,
Foretold.

And so,

With purpose I spent my years.
With patience I worked them away.
With punitive labour did I busy my hands,
For I had my mission.
I knew to complete
I knew alone, my task
would I fail to undertake, so
I called out, told others word of the mission
And Henceforth they came,
And they labored,

To sought enlightenment.
I'm glad others understood my urgency
To praise Enlightenment,
To follow their directs,
To labor.
To give effort to the Thousand Buddhas I glimpsed
So perhaps, later in my life
May I find Enlightenment,
And be free from this world
...Of Mortal recoil.

Our blood,
sweat.
Our mission.
All were endorsed in the caverns and patterns.
Each fine dent, and curve
Each swirl and carve,
All the small, fine details.
To make a wondrous big picture.
All held meaning.
Art with defined definition,
Indeed a sight to behold.
An empty yet elegant space,
Waiting to be filled with the artifacts it deserves.
Scrolls and books with frail, dry pages,
Each with a tint of yellow.
Containing the golden secrets
Frozen in the past, yet to be told.
Great towering arches,
Painted with vibrant colors.
The geometrical yet organic shapes engraved against the painted walls,
The outburst of creativity and sole dedication to this location
All could be noticed.
The strong, unique aura of this location,
Could be noticed.
This was a sign of our dedication.
The is was the successful proof, of my mission.
Our mission.
This was to be remembered,
Was so they would realize; The great buddha.

time passed,

My calls spread as if a wildfire had begun in the dry bushes.
Followers addressed the mission and contributed valuable amounts.
Even after my time in this life was over,
My legacy still remained,
As if an invincible pillar of steel.

I am a faithful follower of the great buddhas,
I am a story of many;
A grain of sand,
in the great Taklamakan desert.

A New Journey to the Mogao Grottoes

St. Paul's Co-educational College, Lai, Caitlin Gretchen - 12

I am tired.

Tired of the sand in my socks
That managed to wriggle its way in
Through the plastic shoe covers
Tired of the sweat in my shirt
That never seems to evaporate
Though the sun blazes

But I am here.

Here at the reception desk
Holding the ticket between my fingers
Hoping the trek was worth it
Here at the famous Mogao Grottoes
Holding a map in my hands
Hordes of tourists pushing me around

Cameras click as people pose
In front of the grottoes, centuries old
So unremarkable, only marked by two doors
But all that glitters isn't gold

So I enter.

Enter a world rivalling
Even that of Machu Picchu
Every sculpture carefully chiselled to perfection
Enter the caves and hallways where
Even the hardest of stones comes to life
Ever so slightly, robes fluttering, hair waving

And I am back.

Back when monks were stuffing the Library Caves with
Buddhist scriptures and documents to be sealed away
By them more than a thousand years ago
Back when they feared, perhaps, that
Borders were weak and an attack was coming
Better to keep their knowledge safe

An oasis of knowledge in the midst of war
Like the lakes of Dunhuang far from the desert's core
As the country split and reunified
Knowledge sprouted like the fruit the trees bore

And I marvel.

Marvel at the paintings on the walls with
Monks sitting cross-legged on the floor
Meditating with eyes closed
Marvel at the murals on the walls
Many showing donors doing heroic deeds or
Mythical creatures and cross-legged Buddhas copied again and again

Now I am leaving.

Leaving the Mogao Grottoes behind me
Looking back at the fading shadows of the cliff
Lost in the darkness of the night
Leaving sacred secrets behind me
Looking forward again, hoping that they will

Last forever, never forgotten again

As my feet once again tread on concrete, not stone
I think of the Grottoes so accident prone
Easily destroyed by bombs or even lost
But we all carry on, with legacies of our own

Lonely Star

St. Paul's Co-educational College, Ma, Tuen Hang Luann – 13

blood
flashing
bright on swords,
smirks on faces,
life

memories, dreams crumpled in heaps of ash
but i'm rising, gleeful, above them.
people died because i lived? true.
i dismiss the water "to
clean your hands, general"
sneers. i've stopped for years –
wastes water, so
i just leave
them stained
–red–
best hue,
i figure. how
funny it is that
both the start and end
of one is signified
by the same colour – red
metallic, unforgiving,
the difference is large, honestly,
see how they say "kill or be killed"? i
couldn't agree more. quick now, leave the scene.

what?
just puppets!
cut their strings
get it done with
quick!

sprawled on the ground, glassy-eyed, looking up at...
me. no, they wouldn't know it was me who
stole their breath, watched them murmur names,
whisper of a smile twitching
at their last. or would they?
no, impossible,
they would never.
but...their eyes
shout they
–do–
know my
viciousness,
how i want to
prove myself strong, prized,
powerful general.
the first time i've looked at them
so close, but surely, it has been

a century they have been loathing
us, (who am i kidding?) me, “general”.

voice
calling
come, come now
or simply
regret

the “r” word i never truly felt for –
radius of damage, radar, and
radioactive, roger, ruse
but not regret. then would i
understand it one day?
round the corner
my footsteps
leaded
–by–
nothing
nothing but
“r”adar? “r”oger?
no. by haunted eyes
staring up at me, by
letters of love slipping out
from their pockets – “can’t wait to see
my beautiful girls again” of course,
they’ll see you “he was a very brave man”.

do
monsters
make wars, or
do wars make
monsters

i breathe, *skies, what in the world is this place*
pale mud-coloured walls engulf me whole
tightly packed inscriptions, symbols
seem to swirl my vision, fill
my heart with only this
shouldn't've done it
it echoes, swirls,
it's only
regret,
–me–
what if
i'm someone
i don't want now,

what if suffering
just doesn't make you strong
doesn't build your character
it just hurts. me? the sufferer?
not at all, i'm just a poised mess, a
lonely star. i know, facts remain the same.

i
run fast
not enough
to just run from
me

empty storeys of brick red pillars reach
up into the heavens, with its top
out of sight – no one higher, or
peerless. lonely star. i see
fearful faces, low bows
hushed voices “my own
honour to be
at your knees”
monster's
–slaves–
but slaves
aren't peers
filled with people
who either bow deep,
or point a finger “go!”
my world, my universe, it's
just me, killing, hurting, myself.
all the fellow monks smile down at me
serenely, *stars shouldn't be seen alone.*

all
of us,
at least one
chapter we don't
read

i became all of them, haunted eyes, and
nurturing inner night, dark chambers
flicker and swish as one by one,
their faces appear, soulful,
and ruthless general
looks away. no more
is the pride of
not flinching
as he
–kills–
my kills

seem to fade
as i work on
manuscripts, building,
ploughing the fields again.
they still echo in my mind
but it's still pretty amazing
that i'm here right now, not back there in
the battlegrounds, smirking, unflinching.

they
say i've
become weak?
quite the opposite,
strong

someday i'll meet my fellow star right here
because soulmates have same hiding spots,
and i know – maybe i've done too
much to deserve it, but i'll
just be up there myself
until you come too.
faces visit
i still fail
but i
–try–
the word,
three letters
too many hidden
emotions – love, joy
trust, failing, victorious...
i don't always end up well
but that's life, isn't it – just a
perfectly put together mess and
i love it, wild and free, wonderfully chaotic.

The Lonely Monk

St. Paul's Co-educational College, Mok, Si Kei - 14

I was born in a hidden grotto
Tucked securely on the Mogao mountains
But not long
Everyone in the grotto died
To be buried under dust
So, I never had my childhood
And I became its sole guardian

At first
I was thrilled to have this mysterious cavern
All to myself
Being the childish boy I was
I roamed the halls that echoed with age
I traced paintings of the Buddha with a branch
I flipped through the countless pages
Suspended on shelves that were too high
But
As I grew taller with time
I realised
I was alone
The Crescent Spring in the distance could not pacify me
However clearly it sparkled
The flowers that grew every spring could not fill my life with colour
However colourful they grew to be
The Mingsha Mountain was a giant I could not rely upon
However steady it stayed
I was alone
And lonely

Often, I would roam the halls
Just searching for an echo
That signalled some holy presence
I would sit in the centre of my room
Where the echoes were the loudest
And recite endless chants
That fooled me into thinking I was not alone
Although I was still lonely

On every sacred festival
I was the only one there to glorify the gods
On every early morning
I was the only one who saw the sunrise
Each smile the sunbeams radiated
I could not return
And when winter came
I was the only one who was cold
And lonely

One day
When I was already an old monk
Three strangers entered my cave
They were from a faraway land
And called themselves a strange word
It sounded like archangels
Or maybe it was archaeologists
Captivated by the beauty of my home

They stayed and brought other company
Soon life bustled

At first
I was thrilled to see them
Regardless of how they were strangers
I took them around the place
And told them the secrets the walls had to whisper
But slowly
The people grew
Tourists started to come
Photographers flocked in
Lost in the middle of all this commotion
I stared and thought
“I’m not alone now
But am I lonely?”

When I was on my deathbed
I looked out the window
And saw a tiny bird singing on a branch
I smiled and faintly recited my favourite chant
To hear echoes filling up my room
The sun was rising
Its rays flooding my eyes with light
For the last time, I smiled
And serenely drifted away
For I understood
With nature by my side
I was never lonely

The Secrets Of Mogao Grottoes

St. Stephen's Girls' College, Chan, Man Yan Hailey – 13

Once in the good ol' land of China
A dragon said to me,
“Those are the caves of Mogao Grottos!
Don't just leave them be!
It's where the monks warmed their toes!”
The dragon was heard to say,
“Please don't leave me at bay!”

“This cave is a book,
Only for those who will look.
No, it won't teach you how to cook,
But please come and have a look!”

“Stare and stare,
Many eyes do glare,
Will they get at last,
The secrets of the past?”

“The statues and paintings,
The murals and carvings,
Are not only a piece of art,
I always get upset,
When children only come and fart!”

Will You be the one to get at last,
The secrets draped in a mask?

Wishing to be remembered

St. Stephen's Girls' College, Goh, Zi En Hannah – 14

Over a thousand years old,
Remembering when I was still being built,
From just emptiness inside me
To full of art, writing and prophecies.
Someone come be with me,
Come and look at me:
I'm full of art, but forgotten.

Come and understand me, I'm full of mystery
But I have been erased from human minds.
I have a tale to tell, but no one stays to listen.
I long to be appreciated.
Don't leave me alone and forgotten;
I need to tell you something.

Another 100 years have passed.
I've only heard birds chirping as the sun rises
And ear-buzzing silence when all is dark.
Minutes pass, hours pass, days pass,
Even years pass. I've lost count.

I hear an unfamiliar sound.
Something that's tickling,
Which feels new to me.
It's the footsteps of monks.
Does this mean someone's willing to listen to my story?
After all these centuries?

The delicate touch.
The soft brushing I feel,
Over stories that were carved a millennium ago.
The warnings, the premonitions. Please tell the world!
Please come back!
You've only discovered a small part of me...
Will I be forgotten again?

Many years have since passed yet again.
Am I so easily forgotten?
But soon enough,
I feel footprints again, more and more.
Are they visiting me? Or is it just my imagination?
I hear chatting, photo-taking clicks,
Fingers brushing.
I missed it.

I can finally reveal my creator's message
Which was hidden longer than the ice age.
Let me speak!
Listen to me!

Unveiling the Past

St. Stephen's Girls' College, Kar, Narvarro Charmaine – 13

Something was hidden in the cave,
Buried in silence like a grave.
The cave itself was hallow.
Filled with art in layers of shadow.

As time flew by, everything had been forgotten.
Everything in there seemed to be rotten.
But then the secrets were unveiled,
So their stories were exhaled.

Going through the cave from long ago
Was dangerous, so we went slow.
Then the rocks started crumbling,
And I started to hear rumbling.

Boom! Went the inner wall.
I must admit it was a close call!
Then treasures revealed as I watched it fall.
I was fascinated to see it all.

New Tales from the Mogao Grottoes

Wellington College, Shanghai, Hong, Yixuan – 14

Think and wonder,
Who untied the winds?
Set them free to roam and
Sweep a layer of thin sand off the vast body of gold.
Every grain of sand a piece of history.

Glimpse and stare;
Before you is a millenium of silent stories.
Stories voiced with every crack and rift
Etched by the skillful hand of time.
Flawed but flawless.

Whisper and hush,
Refrain from disturbing the slumbering statues.
Statues wearing coats of grey dust and time
Overlooking us majestically.
Hiding the past in dead black eyes.

Sink and drown,
In an oasis of history.
So allured to such dreamlike landscapes
That time vanishes into a river of sand.
Flowing back from the blossoming Tang.

Yet sand is ungraspable, and stories are soundless.
I look up from hypnosis, eyes hazy
To find myself
Before
The Mogao Grottoes.

Footprints

Wellington College, Shanghai, Lin, Lola – 12

When she spoke, she spoke quietly.
Lucid verses smothered by her dubious heartbeats that thud so loudly
Her words never stumbling, each breath subtly inciting anticipation.

When she sang, she sang quietly.
Her voice a sharpened knife that cut through the lulling atmosphere.
The birds turned to stare, rapid flutters silenced by curiosity.

When she painted, she painted loud.
Each stroke a breathless siren that flew off of the rocky walls of her property.
Forming the words, the final wishes of a thousand voices.

She never took a moment to breathe or rest
Under the burden of the mind of one desperate for expression
Her voice never heard, this was her one call for freedom
Dreams clouded by doubt as of her true identity
Whether she was fit to be the muse she claimed
Happiness fading, nightmares clouding
Her dreams the prison that sent her crying
Wisps of the future to come passing by
But she never took them seriously.

Bad omens warned her
Scattered across her imagination
Running through her vivid mind
The horrors that waded their way into the cracks

From then on, the terrors flocked
Grabbing her and tearing away at the foundations that kept the place standing
The masterpieces, which she had breathed soul and heart into.

Now I step through the same coven
Through the gateway into the kingdom she once entertained
With her fine arts and graces

Walls splashed with peeling paints
Once shining and vibrant with eons of color
And no rubbing can remove the dullness in their eyes
The dullness which her influence has left behind

All that remains are the marks made on the stretched canvas
Carven engravings that grow like wisteria rose across the covenant
So far away from the misery

Her story left untold
Hidden between the lines
Left to search for blindly
Or, as they sometimes call it
Follow in the muse's

Footprints.

Greed

Wellington College, Shanghai, Zhang, Anna – 12

Curling in the deep,
Shining with mystery.
It suddenly awakens,
But why does it?

With lustrous eyes,
And a dazzling look,
Razor sharp claws digs into the seemingly soft soil.
Auburn pupils gaze wisely into the vast plains,
Swishing and smashing, goes the luminous tail.
And down it falls, a precious and irreplaceable pearl of nature,
Unnoticed by the humongous scaled body.

Time passed, day and day,
Abnormal things happened year and year.
Trees burned down,
Rivers started flooding,
Disasters occurred occasionally.
Crack—
Went a tree.
Swish—
went the water.
Scream—
From the villagers.

Roaring and snorting,
The humongous beast realizes the problem.
The wilted blossoms,
The destroyed victims,
Means that one thing —
The priceless treasure is gone.

Going round and round in circles,
Looking around and around, searching for miracles.
The pearl remains lost,
And the world sank into disaster.

Whoosh, the great beast flies,
Into the vast skies.
Sharp eyes focused,
To find the pearl unnoticed,
And identify the conniving thief,
who stole the treasure.

Then it came, a smart and sharp-witted idea,
The Mogao Grottoes might be of some help.
Prancing around in the skies,
It aims for a destination and finally dives.
Thump! Thump!
The area is clear.
Inside the grottoes the mighty creature went,
to search for help with the nymphs, the gods, and all he could find.
Smashing furniture, breathing smoke,
The vast dragon reached a cave.
Inside it went,
Without caution,

With no guarantee of safety.
Then all went dark,
And in another world he emerged.

Old Chinese style,
Filled with creatures.
Gods, nymphs, temples, and fairies.
A tiny whisper into its ear.
“I will be your guide to find the treasure.”
He knew that this sound came from his inner heart,
And the last time of his life was spent here,
In the Mogao Grottoes.

He came to a God, and asked for the lost treasure.
“Your treasure is in the mountains, but be cautious the weather.
There you may find things that may make you have danger
Explore with your true heart and all will not wither.”

Down and down,
The dragon went.
Treasure after treasure,
Was all he could find.
He soon became greedy,
And lost track of time.
He forgot what he should have done,
Instead grabbed for gold,
that was all he had in mind.
The sky turned dark,
he noticed the time.
Now all he had,
Was treasure that was bad.
As soon as he went back to grotto number 2,
The treasure vanished and left the dragon to cry.
The priceless pearl still remained lost,
Wretched with guilt,
The dragon watched as the world withered and died.

Poetry

Group 4



Legends and Lies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Temple

Creative Secondary School, Chan, Rody – 15

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

The Temple

Creative Secondary School, Chard, Chloe – 15

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

When the Doves Cry

Creative Secondary School, Clarkson, Ethan – 15

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

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

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

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

Summer in the Grotto

Creative Secondary School, Gabutina, Kimiko – 16

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

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

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

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

What is Left

Creative Secondary School, Harper, Sanibel – 16

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

Grotto

Creative Secondary School, Hui, Keon – 16

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

Realisation

Creative Secondary School, Lai, Sharon – 15

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

Darkness

Creative Secondary School, Lee, Isaac – 15

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

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

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

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

Trapped,
Desperate,
Hopeless,
Praying for light.

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

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

Leaving the caves,

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

Promised Land

Creative Secondary School, Lee, Jasper – 15

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

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

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

The arrival of peace and unity
Forming harmonious communities

Winter in the Grotto

Creative Secondary School, Tessariol, Asia – 15

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

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

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

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

Sonnet de Grotto

Creative Secondary School, Wong, Danny – 16

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

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

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

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

The Story of Yuanku

Creative Secondary School, Yu, Justin – 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes – In the Place of Apogee

ESF Island School, Babu, Nivedha – 14

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

A thousand of the Awakened One's Shone

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

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

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

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

Honesty, Sivi
Commendable Honour
Filial, Syama
Love is Stronger

The Stories which brought Apogee Together

Perfection

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

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

But.. is it really?

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

A library of walls
The cave of a thousand Buddhas

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

But...

I am worthless

I am pitiful

I am trash

No...

I will show them all
Wicked and divine

I am infinite

My art is infinite

My art is infinite

My...?

My art?

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

My pain?

My struggles?

My... my life

My

...?

Timelessness

Heep Yunn School, Chan, Lok Yan Betty – 17

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

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

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

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

to attain

Enlightenment —

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

to learn

self-sacrifice —

scrolls in the Library Cave

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

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

And then they leave.

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

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

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

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

All but the caves.
The caves were forsaken.

And
eventually
forgotten.

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

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

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

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

And then...

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

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

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

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

Sacred Buddha

Heep Yunn School, Chen, Man Chin – 17

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

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

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

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

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

and finally

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

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

innumerable

pieces

and mixed me

with other ingredients

then glued everything again

I forgot

how

long

I

had

slumbered

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

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

The “*Sacred Buddha*”
so they call me

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

*“O Blessed One,
Honourable Buddha!*

*Our goodness and glee!
Conferrer of philanthropy!*

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

I just stared blankly.

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

but was soon disrupted
by man’s maddening chanting:

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

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

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

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

I remain silent
and unmoved

★★ Qiu Fen (the Autumnal Equinox) ★★

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

and never had I felt so tired before

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

BOOM! BOOM!

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

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

Buddhaaaa

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

Catastrophee has landed aaand

My peeple are in a freenzied commoootion!

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

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

★★ Da Han (Great Cold) ★★

The country is
nothing
but burnt
rubbles and remnants

One can occasionally discern
the suffocating smoke smouldering in unresting ashes

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

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

Sigh

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

“Here comes spring again”

To: Whomever Seeking an Adventure

Heep Yunn School, Fong, Hoi Ching – 17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nirvana

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

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

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

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

~

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

~

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

~

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

~

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

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

Peerless Reminiscence

International College Hong Kong, Senaratne, Sera – 15

Hidden –

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Great Mogao Caves

Marymount Secondary School, To, Etta – 16

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

The Mogao Grottoes

Shanghai Singapore International School, Shao, Hsiang Han – 15

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

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

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

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

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

The Tunnel to a Lost World

Shanghai Singapore International School, Shirley, Katija Isabella – 15

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

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

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

Route's change, dust settles.

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

Adored creations,
crumble
after years of isolation.

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

Sources

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

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

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

Who am I?

Singapore International School, Boey, Jun Wei – 15

What am I?

I am your existence.

I am your intelligence.

I am your history.

Buried within me, the knowledge you seek.

I am no god.

I am no deity.

I am no undying being.

I am but a keeper of time. Slowly waiting.

I must hold back.

I cannot release, the knowledge I keep

For if done too early, wars shall rage

And conflicts shall scorch the earth to black.

What knowledge you ask,

What information must I mask

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

Mysteries which you cannot yet comprehend.

But a day will come

When you are all ready.

To welcome and accept the knowledge I keep.

But till then, I will hold within me

the information that you need,

that you always seek

Patience, and answers shall come.

Your curiosity shall be satisfied.

Wait many more years.

And I shall extend further,

my winding tunnels and endless knowledge.

And you shall finally have your questions answered.

Crumbling, crumbs—

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

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

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

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

all that fly were
dead.

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

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

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

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

Alas,
they had to forgo treasures.

In reality,
the treasures were rotting.

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

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

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

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

Samsara

Singapore International School, Tom, Qian Ya Sara – 14

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

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

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

The Forgotten Dream

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From Hero to Zero

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Wish to Mogao Grottoes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rebirth & a new beginning

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

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

Daffodils, have a connotation for rebirth.

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

Daffodils, have a connotation for new beginnings.

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

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

Poem by a Paper

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Immortal Glory

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Video Game

The Chinese Foundation Secondary School, Kon, Akina – 15

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

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

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

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

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

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



Poetry

Group 5

Of Secrets Kept

American International School, Chaudhuri, Aishani – 17

A stone skitters, loosed by the wind,
lonely;
with no one to hear it, does it make a sound?
Many say it doesn't, and some
say it wasn't ever anything at all.

A space is carved out of rock, a
haven
forced out of unforgiving sandstone;
but the threshold remains uncrossed for centuries—
who does it protect, if it ever did?

A brush sweeps across stone,
crimson,
the colour of stories to tell, lives to record,
but red is not red in the darkness, absent light.
Was there ever a hand there?

A book is filled, carefully inked—in
wisdom
gathered over the years— reaching across time
to guide those that come after,
but what if it stays unread?

A husband climbs too high for favourite
flowers,
forever immortalised in art as he
wasn't in flesh, if he ever was flesh—
but what of his love?

Love was carved into these walls centuries
ago,
shaped into poetry and paintings lost to time.
What happened to the love in its forgetting?
Was it there, once, without anyone to remember?

Perhaps ghosts wove through grottoes they had
haunted
when alive; perhaps they loved the love
they had left behind in these spaces when
there was no one else to love it, and that was enough.

we love, and perhaps that is enough.

Silent Dawn

Dulwich College Beijing, Afian, Adib Maxwell – 17

Spoils of conquests past
Relics of joys and sorrows
Condemned to eternal silence
In the depths of the Mogao Grottoes
A timeless cavern of ancient dust
Beneath a hundred shining Buddhas
Behind the veil of mystic rust
I have found you Maitreya

What was once hidden is now revealed
What was foretold has come to pass
The light breaks once more upon your face
And your presence beams back as if to say
I have watched over you
I have prayed for you

But all the scripts and sutras were to them
As jewels and diamonds to sell and send
To distant lands where they might be contained
In a dim, silent vault behind locks and bulletproof windowpanes
Your tears of liquid gold how they rain
A thousand years more till the light dawns again

Graying Grottoes

Dulwich College Beijing, Zhao, Helena – 18

I have a thousand brothers and sisters,
Yet I'm lost in the sea of whispers
Of a forgotten past,
Hauntingly, leaving me aghast.
I'm right here, upholding militant, firmly.
Though time — my mortal enemy — is deadly.
Inside, I'm a rotting beauty.
To be my bolster is now your duty,
For I've kept a thousand lives and histories
Within me — too long. I'm exploding memories,

Which, in turn, mangle me.
Open your eyes and see
Past such temporary victories,
For I'm full of invisible injuries.
Save me, before time becomes your inescapable enemy.
Understanding my anatomy is no blasphemy;
On the contrary,
It's quite visionary,
For you are discovering mysteries
Of ancient monasteries:

My head is a ceiling of paintings;
My body is covered with wonderous writings;
My arms open wide to all humankind —
Millennials ago you may find
Sinners sitting by my side
In lotus leaves, for I shall guide
Them through tough times
With my purifying, heavenly chimes;
My feet, once prayed over, cleaned, and shined,
Now have become slightly unrefined.

So, if you may please
Free me from the disease
Of negligence. I want to be free
But don't just let me be.
I need more than mere company —
I need yin–yang harmony
From the sunny moon
And moony sun at noon.
My enigmatic interior is covered
In tales–old secrets to be discovered.

Within me resides the lives of brazen hearts
Who've withstood sandstorms and devilish arts,
Trading their last breaths for so–called treasures,
Fulfilling their days with picturesque pleasures.
Though, if you look deeply into their souls
You may find lost smiles in abysmal holes.
Human beings — oh, such strange creatures,
Trying to find purpose via adventures,
When instead, here I reside,
Full of lessons to be learned inside:

There once was a prince so terribly kind,
Who fled his palace of jewels behind
With his parents upon a malicious murder attempt.
Days passed, ravenous for food, none are exempt
From the pains of hunger and destitute.
Yet, such circumstances did not alter his attitude,
For the prince offered his flesh to his parents,
In which they devoured relentlessly; remnants
Are left by the roadside, yet, unfortunately,
A hungry lion comes by. Naturally,

The prince, so generous and magnanimous,
Self-sacrificed his final remains. Felicitous
Deeds and a good heart all conquer ill fate,
And are given fruitful treats in trade,
For the lion is the mighty god Indra,
Who restored him and gave back extra.
You see, fortune is in your puny human hand,
Changeable upon our gracious command.
Serendipity is like a blooming Peach Blossom.
Water it with goodness for prosperity and wisdom.

I am the Mogao cave, full of narratives, stories
Of forgotten pasts, full of glories.
Yet I still worry I'm losing my sense of identity.
Who am I really? Is my existence a necessity?
If so, then why do I feel deeply dilapidated?
I'm exasperated, for I was once, oh, so sophisticated.
Now, my delicate face is marred by people
Who come not to pray or learn, but to scramble,
Babble, mingle, stumble, and treat me without care.
They pollute me inside out, toxifying my air

With trash, carbon dioxide, and humidity,
Deteriorating my dignity and divinity.
I think I need antioxidants, for my skin
Is wrinkling with cracks and human sin.
I, too, need to be loved and cherished.
I, too, need to be continuously nourished
With gems, courage, beliefs, wisdom.
My vast history can feed a kingdom,
So treat me like a king, with love and respect.
Let the past, present, and future reconnect.

Wandering War Soldier

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Lam, Haidee – 17

A soldier trudges along the desert
Wandering, lonely, guilty.
He is young, with no home, no country to return to
Not after the blood that stains his armor crimson
Drying to rust.

A robed figure in the distance.
“Where are you going?” He questions.
His face is weathered with blemishes
And his eyes crinkle with reminiscence.

“I am—”

The battle cries, the war horn—
Blood glistening as he avenges the slain
With his sheathing sword; hissing in pain
Adrenaline overpowers his mourning.
The thrill of savagery overrides his guilt.

“I have nowhere to go,” the soldier murmurs.
Nowhere to live, nowhere to run.
“The desert seems most fitting for a man
who has committed
unspeakable sins.”

The monk studies the soldier closely.
“You have suffered,” he says.
“Come.” He gestures.
“Buddha awaits.”

If you walk 15 miles away from Dunhuang,
Across the mirage of deserts—
You will find
A haven.
A place of recuperation, of forgiveness,
Of enlightenment.

The History of light

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Tsai, Solomon – 16

It's so different from before,
how so?

So different
from the monks' zen
while reciting the Diamond Sutra,
twirling their prayer beads.

It's so different from before,
from when it started, and when it flourished—
and from how the color ebbed
while a monk painted his religion's histories.

It was a tranquil oasis on the south of Dunhuang:
Trees that rose from the ground,
flowers that bloomed at the twigs.
Under the brilliance of the sun

lay a lonely hill—
and the monk's lonely journey to the west
was different from anybody else's.
Here is the monk's testimony.

What happened, then?

*I was bearing my baggage,
I was running out of water,*

*the journey had no end—
until ten thousand rays of light*

*coming from every side,
layering, scattering...*

*I closed my eyes for a second
only wanting to open them again.*

*I took it as a sign
and I started to dig—*

*whistling breeze blowing at my sleeves.
It will be the best place to meditate.*

How is it, now?

A little fish splashed in the stream,
a light ray
peeked through.
casting itself on the tall, wide walls:

the deities flying, soaring high,
towards the sunlit sky,
the plucking, gliding notes from the pipa ensemble.
A painter finished with a wide smile, because

he's done it, one of so many thousands.
What did time do to them?
Paint fades into specks of
mirages.

What was sat by monks
are now sat by spider webs.
So much for that light ray, lonely and late—
Nothing is the same.

Is it a sign that it is destined to vanish away?
How shall it wait
for its former glory and peace
again?

Serenade to Stone

Singapore International School, Boey, Jun Xin – 16

On the cliff they knocked a hole
First drew the face, moulded the chest
Then they shaped the nose

of the leader they so worshipped,
clad in an orange robe.
Enlightenment is on their minds
As paintbrushes fly and thoughts translate.

Preaching scripture has never been so visual,
they add colour to dusty faces,
assign names without words, tell
stories without action –
that's done and good, cast in stone.
Literally.

The monks arrive, there is no room.
But as one knows, space is a construct
when you're in a cave.
And so new halls appear
with a snap of the fingers, a shovel or two,
Soon chanting brings the murals to life,
intonations undulating as the tongue flies;

Wang Jie brought the first book–
Pinnacle of the ancient world
It sat heavily on carved shelves
conserved, untouched, gathering dust,
with its paper siblings behind shadowy doors...

Open sesame, you cry
And so knowledge rains down
As if from the sky.

Tales of Mogao Caves

St. Joseph's College, Siu, Sung Yan Ronald – 16

Eight hundred years slipp'd by buried in sand,
The wonderful works, we relish with rhyme.
Lift the veil, and so light from wonder's land
Reach us, refracted through the Lake of Time.

It was sunset sixteen centuries ago,
When a monk caught sight of bright golden lights,
Buddhas appearing above the grottoes.
Here laid the foundation of hist'ry's might.

Time, so childish, came and went silently.
Pieces of rocks met, and sculptures were form'd,
Paint coloured Eagles and Deers ardently.
Telling tales of how Buddhism transform'd.

Until mankind's reincarnation's eve,
Indestructible, forever they live.

An Elegy for Decades Past

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Moore, Genevieve – 17

Surging winds traverse the desert floor,
Rippling the surface with the undulations of the snake's back.
Coarse, hot sands fall from nature's hourglass over cavernous cliffs,
And cascade upon the endless expanse of jagged rock.

Some force of nature, its untamed storms or blistering sun,
Effaces the roughness from the rock,
Etches steady lines into the cliff,
Engraves hidden patterns onto the precipice.

At the cliff's face stands the cleft that leads to the ancient grottoes,
Older than the skull-lined walls of the Parisian catacombs,
More unexplored than the unlit tombs of the Egyptian pyramids.
What buried treasures lie concealed within the ancient grottoes?

Daylight falls upon the stone effigy shrouded by darkness,
The golden palm outstretched beyond blue silken robes.
By whose hand, that of man or divine presence,
Was this pillar of the past shaped?

I saw the defeat of the Byzantine Empire.
I watched the fall of the Roman Empire.
I witnessed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.
I stood in awe as history was bisected into past and present, bygone and enduring.

Each age has yielded to another,
Every era has ceded its power to the next.
Here stands a monument of generations and dynasties past,
The relics of the long-forgotten entombed within the grotto's walls.

Gilded sands glide across the desert floor,
Beyond the cavern all is still; but now I see
That winged beasts were roused from a millennium's rest,
To adorn the grotto's divine statue in a canopy beneath the sky.

Poetry

Group 6



Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Chen, Ue – 13

Reaching up to the sky
Opening a gate to a temple
Close to Dunhuang in China
Kenneth worships the Buddha in a cave
Young men like him are all impressed

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Choi, Mattea Abbey – 13

Caves of the holy carved mountains.
History says it shone because of the golden light.
Ideas came from the legend of the Silk Road.
Nothing but sand rocks and the strong wind.
The name of Dunhuang's temple is Mogao Grottoes.

3 Mice

Korean International School Springboard, Chu, Ka Lok – 11

Three mice went in a temple.
One stepped on a staple;
One went in the cave;
One was not so brave.
I gave each an apple
Oh no! It got trampled!

Creepy Dark Cave

Korean International School Springboard, Robin, Asher – 9

It was cold.
It was damp.
It was creepy and chilly and scary.
There is the Mogao Cave.

I stumble and I trip.
I tiptoe and I reach.
It's so quiet!

“Eek!”
WHAT IS THAT?
Here is a Buddha.
He is a stone.
He has a smile.
He is gentle and good and kind.
Here is the Mogao Cave.

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Ryan, Ffion Angela – 13

Go to a Silk Road town called Dunhuang
I see a big Buddha from afar
Northwest of China is his home
Originated in India
Rocky mountain hides his temple
Much like a cave for the bears
'Oh, wow!' is all I can say
Utterly amazing it is
Shining through the whole wide world

Mogao Cave

Korean International School Springboard, Wong, Euan – 11

Wow!

Be
Big
Bold
Brave
Buddha.
Temple
Toilet?
Tissue?
Toys?
No!



Poetry

Group 7

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Chau, Kirsten Hannah – 18

Mogao caves are in Dunhuang China.
Old statues are delicate.
Gigantic grottoes.
Amazing temples are tall.
Original paintings are colorful.

Chinese culture everywhere.
Angry statues are very scary.
Very pretty sculptures.
Exciting place to visit.
Stories to be told.

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Ching, Jonathan Liam – 16

Tales from the Mogao Grottoes
Friends of the sea
In the water very damp
Sidney looks bright
Hot like the summer story

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Ching, Matthew James – 20

Mysterious caves in western China.
Original history can be found there.
Geographic landscapes filled with hills and mountains.
Amazing statues that are huge and plenty.
Old temples are grand and interesting.

Creative pictures on the ceiling.
Awesome museums, lots of sculptures and different stories.
Vacation in Dunhuang.
Everyone can go visit.
Special place to go.

Ancient Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Kwan, Jordan – 15

- A – A lot of people gather together inside to worship Buddha.
- N – Nice view outside the grotto.
- C – Centre of attraction is a different old painting.
- I – Inside you can see different Buddha sculptures.
- E – Elevated structure from the desert.
- N – Nice architectural design that lasted many years.
- T – To those people who visited the Mogao Grottoes, they experienced peace of mind within.

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Chor, Dannien – 14

Made from the mountains
Open heart for the world
Great historical moment
A long long time ago
Opening to the world

Giant leaves to explore
Rough Land
Over the mainland
Turn of the twentieth century
Tales of mystery
On the way
Eastern destination
Scattering places

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Leung, Chun Yin, Darren – 14

Dunhuang is the place to go
If you want to visit a big Buddha
Very dry weather keeps him well
Inside a cave is his temple
Northwest of China in Asia
Excellent place to visit indeed

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Lin, Adrian – 16

Valued for its history.
Impeccable carvings of caves.
Standing still for many years.
Introduced by a monk named Yuezun.
Overflowing with prayers.
Narrated through hundreds of years.

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Lowther, Jessica Kate – 15

Place of prayer
Range of thousands of paintings
Ancient tradition kept alive
You can find a divine culture
Everyone goes there to see the famous Buddhist art
Rocky mountain is where the temple was built

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Mak, Arthur – 19

Magnificent caves
Origins
Golden age
Awesome
Omega

Cool
Amazing
Vitality
Elegant
Secrets

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, So, Yan Tung – 16

Mountains are where people pray
On hot burning sand
Nobody live in the desert
Kind souls deep in the caves
Special secrets of Buddha

Mogao Caves

Korean International School Springboard, Tang, Sze Chai Adrienne – 17

Thousands of monks
Enter the open caves
Magnificent culture
Projected from an image of Buddha
Located in ancient land Dunhuang
Exhibition of a great history